



## HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

“‘It’s like the gladiators’ was the way he once described it. ‘It’s like the Christians and the lions, like Caesar standing up there and saying yay or nay. There’s nineteen thousand fans in the stands and they can’t do what you’re doing, and they’re all cheering for one thing, they’re cheering for you.’”

*Jerrod McDougal*

Jerrod McDougal - quoted on the left - and Mike Winchell - on the right - are characters from a factually-based novel by H.G. Bissinger titled "Friday Night Lights." The story takes place in Odessa, Texas, a medium-sized town whose economy depends on oil and where the Panthers high school football team gives the citizens a sense of purpose. You can now watch the movie based on the book starring Billy Bob Thornton. Available also in Polish movie rental stores under the title: "Światła stadionów."

“...the game had a funny hold on him. The elemental savagery of it appealed to him and he was good at it, damn good, strong, fast, quick, a gifted middle linebacker with a future potential he didn't begin to fathom. He loved it and he hated it and he hated it and he loved it.”

*About Mike Winchell*

In 2003, 58 percent of boys and 51 percent of girls in American high schools played on a sports team.

The most popular sports for boys are American football, basketball, track and field, baseball, and soccer. For girls, the most popular are basketball, track and field, volleyball, softball, and soccer. Girls' participation in high school athletics has increased by 800 percent over the past 30 years!

Other organized high school sports often include gymnastics, wrestling, swimming, tennis, and golf.

*Text on this and the following page adapted from the Department of State electronic journal American Teenagers available at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itsv/0705/ijse/ijse0705.htm>*



Base image: © Murat Cokal

# High School Athletes



Eduardo (Eddie) Arguello, 18, grade 12, Belen Jesuit Preparatory School, Miami, Florida



David Foster, 17, grade 11, Sweet Grass County High School, Big Timber, Montana

I started running track in the seventh grade because I was good at running in football. I just never got tired.

Sports have played a huge role in teaching me discipline, actually waking up at 5:45 in the morning to go train and to go to practice seven days a week.

My father, who died last year, has really served as my motivation whenever I wanted to give up, whether in school or in running. He fought cancer for nine years, went through two 14-hour surgeries, chemotherapy, and radiation. My parents came from Nicaragua, but I was born and raised in Miami in a neighborhood that is 90 percent Hispanic.

I'd estimate that I spend two to three hours per day practicing American football and/or basketball, including weight lifting (...) Why? Well, the first reason I put so much into it is I love sports. It just comes natural to me that I want to play. (...)

When you've got a team doing well, everybody [at school] is so much more involved in everything. You have more kids wanting to come out for sports, you have more people coming to the games. It unites the community, and all that motivates us who are playing.

The other thing I'm sure of is that being in sports makes me a better student. If you don't have good enough grades, you don't get to play.

Another teenager - David Currie from Baltimore - talks about his love for an activity that is a sports discipline and a performing art at the same time in a video you can watch on our website. You'll be surprised what his passion is! You need to have Windows Media Player installed on your computer to watch this video:  
[www.usinfo.pl/zoom/files/September2005/lowrezskating.wmv](http://www.usinfo.pl/zoom/files/September2005/lowrezskating.wmv)

## Language tip!

Why do David and Eddie (on the left) **practice** sports rather than **practise** them? This is one of many examples of spelling differences between American and British English. Remember also about:

American	British
program	programme
apologize	apologize <b>or</b> apologise
analyze	analyse
criticize	criticize <b>or</b> criticise
center	centre
kilometer	kilometre
liter	litre
theater	theatre
color	colour
behavior	behaviour
favor	favour
honor	honour
neighbor	neighbour
airplane	aeroplane

"Football stood at the very core of what the town was about, not on the outskirts, not on the periphery. It had nothing to do with entertainment and everything to do with how people felt about themselves."

Quote from H.G. Bissinger's "Friday Night Lights"

## Discuss

Having read the text on the left, think how you would answer the following questions:

*For what different reasons do young people practice sports?*

*Should schools encourage students to play sports? Why?*

*Should only students with good grades be allowed to be on a school team? Why?*

# ■ Meet Shannon Johnson

**Zoom** talked to Shannon about sports, school and health.

## When did you start practicing sports and for what reason?

I first begin playing softball (*the counterpart of baseball for women*) when I was 12 years old just to stay active. I really enjoyed playing sports because it kept me out of trouble.

## What benefits for teenagers are there in sports?

Staying active is great for kids because they are involved in some activity and not on the streets. Kids can also learn about keeping their bodies in shape and eating things that are good for their bodies.



**Name:** Shannon Johnson  
**Age:** 31 years old  
**Education:** graduate of South Carolina University  
Currently playing in Womens' National Basketball Association (WNBA).  
Team member of San Antonio Silver Stars from San Antonio, Texas.  
Last season (2004/2005) in Wisla Can Pack Krakow.  
Selected Most Valuable Player in Polish women's basketball.  
**Nickname:** Pee Wee



Photos of Shannon Johnson courtesy of Wisla Can Pack image of a badge © Nick Winchester (stock.xchng)

## Do teenagers who don't practice sports miss out on anything?

Kids that don't play sports may do other things, such as reading books or playing instruments. I think playing sports is great but there are other things that kids can be good at.

## Do you think juggling sports and study can be difficult for young people? How did you deal with it as a teenager?

I think playing sports and education goes together because you learn different things in school that can help you with sports. All kids need to know is that education comes first and sports comes second. I live by saying that my body will stop playing one day but my brain will always be able to add information.

## What other benefits does being good at sports offer?

Playing sports has helped me meet many people, visit different countries and learn different languages. Sport also provides for me and my family.

## Do you try to encourage young people to practice more sports?

Yes, I'm involved in a program here in the United States called *Be Smart, Be Fit and Be Yourself*. This program is about kids and teenagers being smart by putting school first and knowing that learning is the key. *Be Fit* is about taking care of their bodies and learning to stay in shape. *Be Yourself* is about kids making decision on their own and not because their friends are doing something.

# Activity Page

## Win a Prize!

To win a prize answer this question:

### What is softball?

Send your answer to [zoom@usinfo.pl](mailto:zoom@usinfo.pl).

Give your name and address.

The deadline is September 30.

## Good Luck!

The winners from the previous issue will soon receive their prizes by mail.

**ZOOM**  
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## About ZOOM

Zoom is online at [www.usinfo.pl/zoom/](http://www.usinfo.pl/zoom/)

Subscription issues [www.usinfo.pl/zoom/subscribe.htm](http://www.usinfo.pl/zoom/subscribe.htm)

Contact us at [zoom@usinfo.pl](mailto:zoom@usinfo.pl)

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**Krakow**  
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Find answers to activities on this page at [www.usinfo.pl/zoom/](http://www.usinfo.pl/zoom/)

## ■ Basketball in the Works

Fill each blank with one of the words or expressions from below the text.

The structure of basketball \_\_\_\_\_(1) almost entirely on the size of the players, therefore on the individual. Over the years, the dimensions of the court have changed because players were getting bigger and taller; lines were changed; rules about dunking the ball changed, and changed back \_\_\_\_\_(2) the same reason.

The game also demonstrates the delicate balance between individual and team play. Extraordinary players of the past showed that the \_\_\_\_\_(3) of basketball was teamwork; victory required \_\_\_\_\_(4) the player in the best position for a shot, and getting the ball to him. A winning team was a selfless team. In recent years, most professional teams have abandoned that idea \_\_\_\_\_(5) the exceptional talents of an individual. Yet it \_\_\_\_\_(6) more often than not that if the individual leaves the rest of the team behind, everybody loses.

*Adapted from: "Reflections: Why We Play the Game" by Roger Rosenblatt - "Sports in America" eJournal (December 2003) of the U.S. State Department.*

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|----------------|----------------|--------------------|
| 1.             | 2.             | 3.                 |
| a. makes       | a. for         | a. essence         |
| b. fits        | b. about       | b. question        |
| c. depends     | c. on          | c. reason          |
| d. relates     | d. from        | d. problem         |
| 4.             | 5.             | 6.                 |
| a. being       | a. instead     | a. proved          |
| b. asking      | b. in favor of | b. had been proved |
| c. looking for | c. besides     | c. would prove     |
| d. staying     | d. despite     | d. has been proved |

## ■ No Regrets

Using the word given, change each sentence so that it keeps its original meaning. Do not change the word.

### Example:

I regret not taking good care of my plants.

**WISH:** I wish I had taken better care of my plants.

We haven't seen the Jacksons since 2004.

### LAST:

His parents don't let him go camping.

### ALLOWED:

Barbara began her work at the drugstore last summer.

### WORKING:

I'd rather you didn't tell anybody about it.

### PREFER:

Who owns this house?

### BELONG:

There were not as many storks in our village this year as last.

### THAN:

## ■ Glossary

community - people living in a particular area

to estimate - to judge approximately

to dunk - to throw a basketball into the basket from above the rim

to fathom - to understand  
juggle - to perform more than one activity at a time

linebacker - in football: a defensive player

say - an old way of saying no

to provide for - to supply means for living

savagery - very violent behavior

yay - here: yes