

Writing Sport History for the Popular Market

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Writing sport history articles for non-professional publications can be stimulating, enjoyable, and profitable. Hundreds of magazines and newspapers will accept and pay for sport history articles; but the trick is to find the right publication for your article and to deliver an acceptable manuscript.

The writer should begin by doing enough preliminary research to be able to briefly explain what happened and to explain why anyone would read an article about that topic. *Writer's Markets* (an annual), *The Writer* and *Writer's Digest* (magazines) provide information about publishing needs of thousands of periodicals. *Sports Heritage* and *Sports History*, two magazines which began publication in 1987, are excellent places to consider sending articles.

Writers should use query letters to sell story ideas. The query letter should tell what you propose to do, how you are going to do it, and why you are qualified. The responses most often given by editors are assignment, acceptance on speculation, or rejection. Speculation means that the editor would like to see the article but will not guarantee purchasing the article (usually 50 to 75 percent rate).

If your article is accepted you may wish to follow these five tips: (1) don't be afraid to describe what things looked like, (Randy Roberts), (2) keep on the track, (3) don't write for another sport historian (such as John Lucas), but for an intelligent lay reader, and (4) educate through art. Good luck.