

**Telling Stories:  
Writing about sports,  
Writing about history.**

### **Sports provide constant stories.**

- Like the games themselves, sports stories present a mix of real stories about real people and real events, presented within the framework of an artificial, symplified, and stylized competition.
- This artificially constructed world of sports offers a complicated mix between the real life experiences of participants and observers, and the artificial contests constructed for our entertainment and inspiration.
- Telling sports stories requires us to use the methods of real history to talk about these artificially created contests, crises, and results and at the same time connect the artificial entertainment enterprise to the real lives of participants and observers.
- In general terms, any story we tell can be a made-up fiction or an accurate reflection of reality.
- Fiction and history share structure but follow different rules.

**Fiction** stories often follow some general structural conventions associated with the idea of a **Story Arc** that describes the process of moving a dramatic situation through time



### **Story Arc**

Begins with a set of circumstances and basic elements.

Creates the fundamental conflicts.

Develops the situations and the evolves the character of the participants.

Resolves conflicts and captures the essence of the participants' character

It then often identifies new, related conflicts, and projects the story arc into a subsequent story or sequel.

**Fiction** Story Telling gives us great freedom to invent people, circumstances, facts, situations, places, and times.



The **Fiction** Story Arc only requires:

- A logical structure
- Internal consistency within our imaginary time, space, and action
- Credible action and motivation by our imagined characters within the constraints of our Story Arc.

# History or Sports Stories have the same narrative arc structure as fiction



**History and sports stories** have the same requirements for logic and internal consistency within their narrative as fiction, **BUT**

Their **Story Arc** must deal with the actual facts that establish the story elements of

time

place

people

events

circumstances.

## The Required Elements of a Real Story: Data or Facts

What is a data element or **fact**? We think we know what a fact is, but often we find ourselves arguing about the existence and meaning of information that we might imagine is clear.

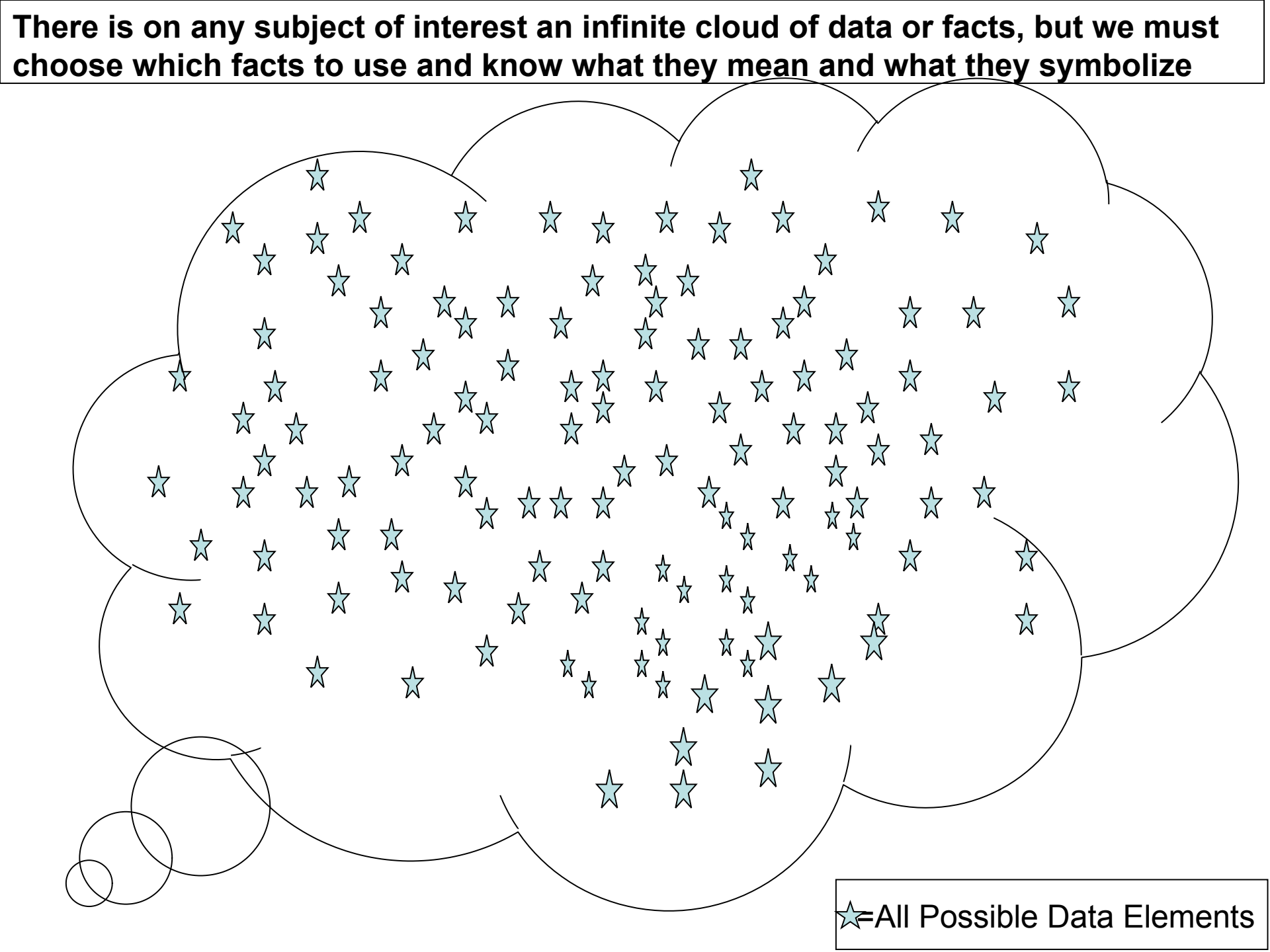
When we see, read, or think we know about a fact, we have to ask:

- What does it **mean**?
- Is the information or fact **verifiable**?
- How do we determine the **meaning** of the fact?
- Is the meaning of this faculty **unambiguous**, in that we all understand this fact the same way?
- Is the fact really a **symbol** for something else?
- Is the fact **important** and if so, why?



The following Facts that we all recognize  
(**dates, names, documents**) have easily verified accuracy  
but **often controversial meaning**

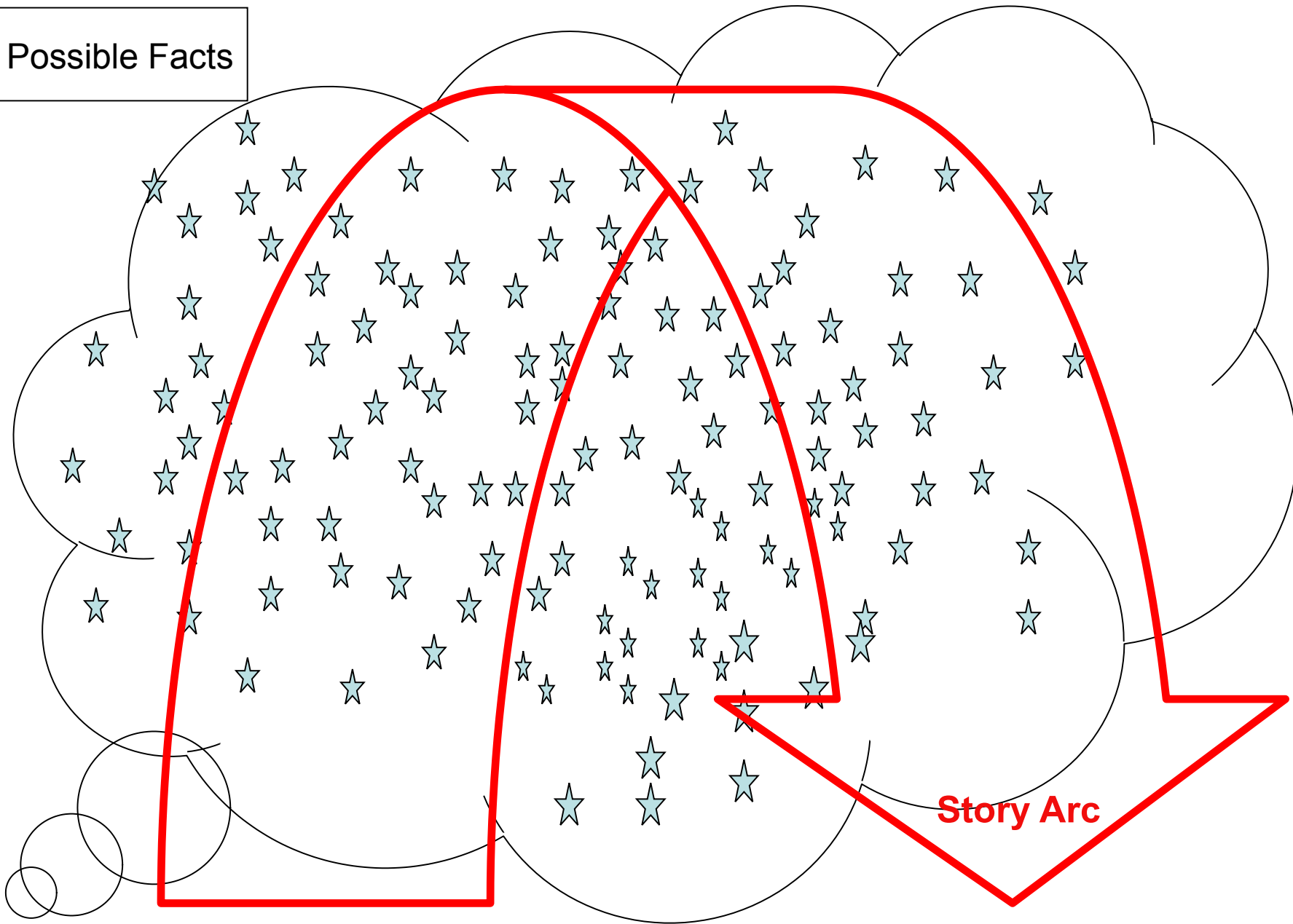
- 1492--A **date**, but also a **symbol** for the expansion of Europe into the Americas. We can easily agree on the accuracy of the date, but perhaps not agree on the significance of the events it symbolizes.
- 1942--A **date**, but a **symbol** for the last World War and the consequences of its conclusion
- September 11--A **date**, but a **symbol** for a major terrorist attack on the US and the international political circumstances surrounding the event.
- 1776--A **date**, but a **symbol** for the beginning of an independent US and the launch of a political revolution
- Abraham Lincoln--A specific **individual**, but a **symbol** for the US Civil War and the abolition of slavery
- Martin Luther King--A specific **individual**, but a **symbol** for the inspirational leadership of the civil rights movement
- Title IX--A legislative **document**, but a **symbol** for women in Sports among other principles of equal opportunity





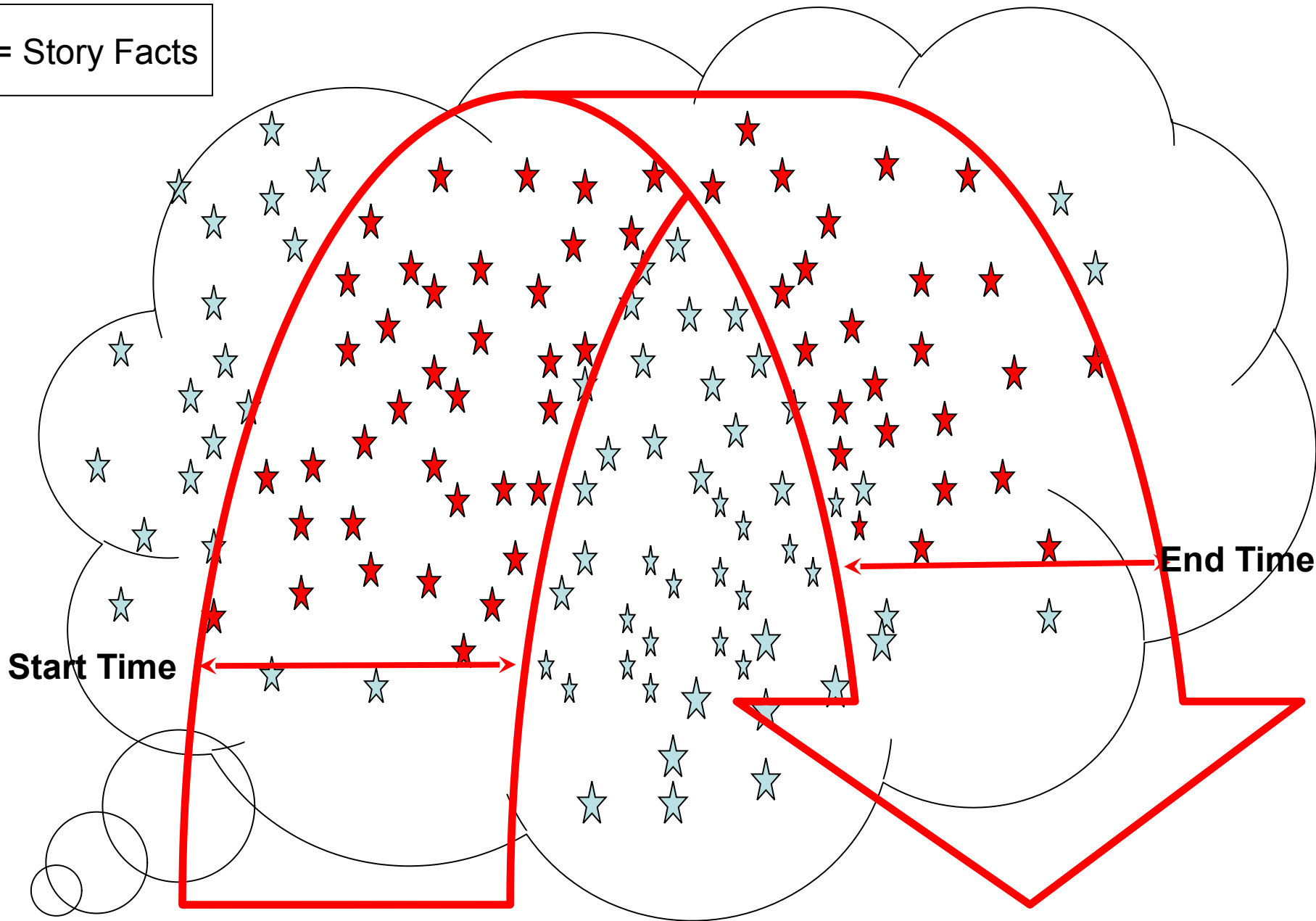
# The Story Arc Identifies Relevant Facts Within the Definition of Time and Space

★ =All Possible Facts



# Relevant Story Facts Within the Story Arc Are Limited by Time and Space.

★ = Story Facts



# Take what should be a simple story

## The baseball home run champion

- Facts are clear, so why is this story controversial?

It's one of the most revered, yet controversial, records in all of sports. Officially, Barry Bonds hit more home runs than any player in the history of baseball, but many purists still consider Hank Aaron to be the true "Home Run King." Whether you are willing to overlook certain players' alleged involvement in steroids in the late '90s/early 2000s — which led to some astounding home run totals — is a personal decision, but there is no denying that every player on this list will forever hold a special place in baseball history.

1. **Barry Bonds** – 762 home runs The controversial Bonds — who is not in the Hall of Fame — sits atop the list for most home runs in a career (762) and most in a single season (73 in 2001). The seven-time MVP is also the all-time leader in walks (2,558) and led the league in on-base percentage 10 times.
2. **Hank Aaron** – 755 home runs Hammerin' Hank hit 755 homers in his career without hitting 50 in a single season and leading MLB only four times. A model of consistency, the Alabama native smacked at least 40 bombs in a season eight times, with a high of 47 in 1971.
3. **Babe Ruth** – 714 home runs The Sultan of Swat was by far the greatest power hitter of his era, leading the majors in home runs 12 times in a 14-year stretch from 1918-1931. Maybe the best stat to explain his dominance: In 1920, his 54 home runs (then a single-season record) were more than the total for each of the other 15 teams in the major leagues.
4. **Alex Rodriguez** – 696 home runs Another controversial figure on this list, A-Rod enjoyed an incredible mid-career run in which he averaged 46 home runs during a nine-year period from 1999-2007. He had 613 home runs at the conclusion of the 2010 season (while still only 35) but managed only 83 more due to injury and suspension.
5. **Willie Mays** – 660 home runs Mays is recognized as one of the greatest all-around players in the history of the game. In addition to hitting 660 home runs, he stole 338 bases (while leading the league in four straight seasons, 1956-59), scored 2,062 runs and collected 3,283 hits.

**Facts Are Often Not As Clear As We Might Want:  
This is how the Encyclopedia Britannica answered the question**

The only reason for baseball to keep accurate counts and statistics is to be able to compare players throughout history....

While it is true that Maris was permitted to play in eight more games than Ruth (seven actually, as the 1927 Yankees played 155 games), it is also true that Maris hit his 60th home run during his 684th plate appearance, whereas Ruth hit his 60th home run during his 689th plate appearance.

Further, while Ruth set the record in 1927, several years after the dead-ball era, there is a persistent belief that in modern times the ball is far more lively and therefore easier to hit for a home run.

On the other hand, several major league ball fields (Cleveland, St. Louis, and Boston) were considerably smaller in 1927 than they were in 1961.

Such variables as pitching quality for a given baseball era, a player's position in the batting lineup, and whether a player's team was in pennant contention for the season in question could also be factored into major league records, and this eventually would lead to a situation in which no two players could ever be compared.

## **Why We Tell the Story**

When we tell stories about sports or any other significant subject, we always tell the story for a reason. If we just list the facts, we don't have a story although we might have a chronology or a data table. A story has a purpose, it explains something, it dramatizes something, it has a reason for its existence.

When we read or write a story, we always need to recognize the story's purpose, it's goal, it's mission. What do storytellers, authors, want us to know? Is what they want us to know different than what they think we know?

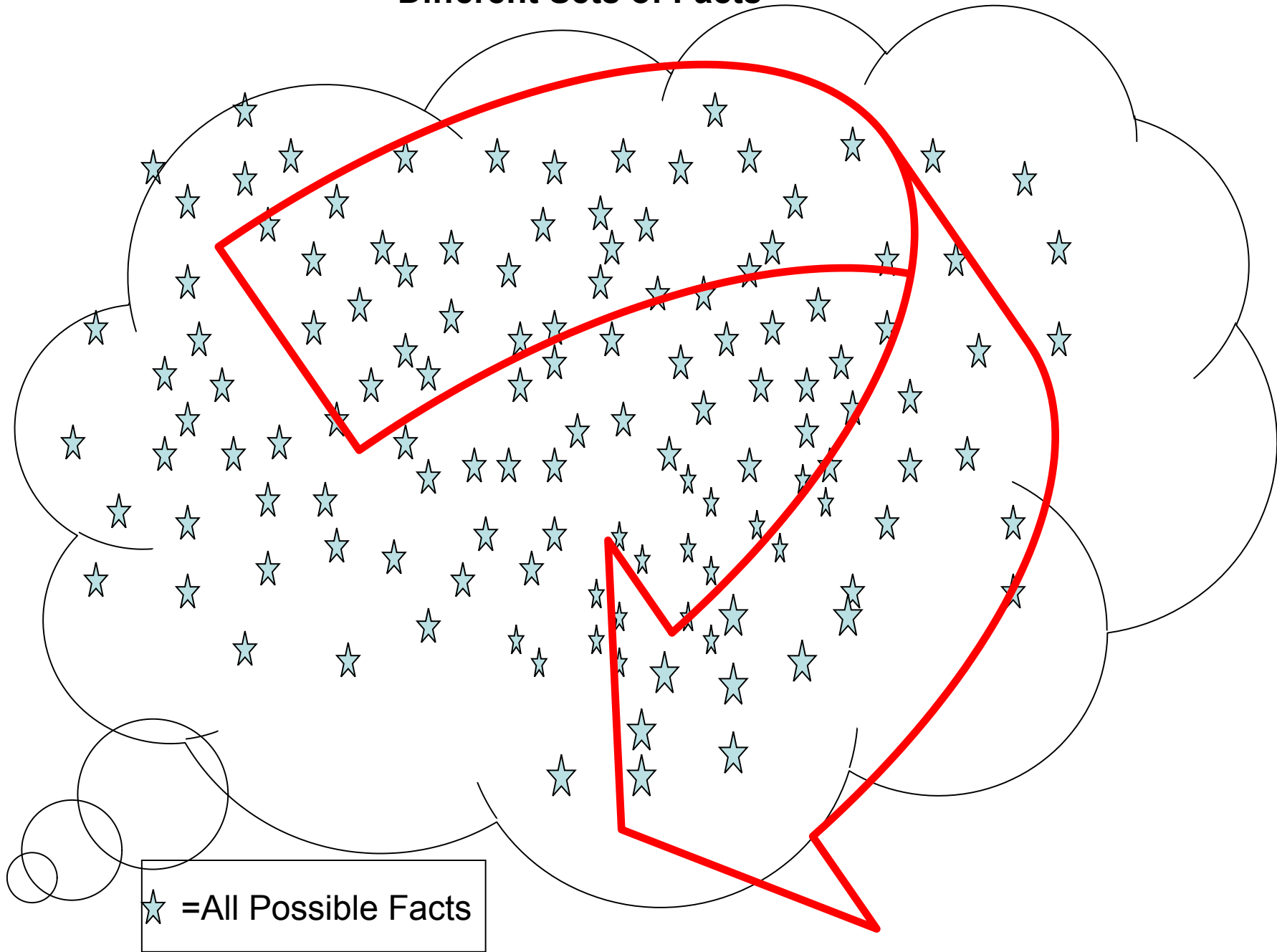
When we know what story our authors want us to know, we can better evaluate how well they have told the story, how reliable their interpretations might be, and how effective their selection of facts out of all the possible facts is in supporting the purpose of their story.

Sports stories are particularly difficult because many sports stories have two purposes. One is to describe, within the artificial constraints of the sport, what took place in the competition. But because the game is an artificial competition, a constructed event built for entertainment, another purpose is to tell the human story of the participants who, while they participate in a constructed artificial entertainment event, are nonetheless engaged in a real, personal, and consequential activity.

This dual dimension has grown increasingly important over the years in college sports as the back stories, which often tend towards celebrity profiles, can even become more consequential than the game stories about the direct competition.

We, who read and perhaps write these stories, need to be clear about which part of the story is a personal celebrity story and which is a game result story.

**As an Example, Note that Each Generation Constructs Story Arcs that Need Different Sets of Facts**



### In sports:

- We have ritualized, structured events in time and space.
- We control and measure all aspects of the event.
- Sports generate finite and unambiguous results.

Yet the story arc for a football game, for example, varies by generation.

## **Nebraska Shocks Michigan State With Late Drive**

{Story focuses on the action and behavior of individuals in this team sport}

Tommy Armstrong drove Nebraska 91 yards in the final minute, hitting Brandon Reilly with a 30-yard touchdown pass with 17 seconds left that survived a video review and handed No. 6 Michigan State a 39-38 loss. The defeat will probably ruin the Spartans' hopes of making the College Football Playoff.

Armstrong rallied the host Cornhuskers (4-6, 2-4 Big Ten) from 12 points down in the final four and a half minutes. He scored on a short run with 1 minute 47 seconds left to make it 38-33. After Michigan State (8-1, 4-1) went three-and-out, Armstrong led the winning drive.

Starting at his own 9, he hit Jordan Westerkamp for passes of 28 and 33 yards. Two plays later, he found Reilly for the winning score. Reilly went out of bounds and came back in to make the catch, but officials ruled it was legal because cornerback Jermaine Edmondson had forced him out.

The Spartans got a final chance, but Connor Cook passed out of bounds from the Nebraska 41 as time ran out.



These short college sports stories appeared in the *New York Times*, October, 22, 1884

{These stories focus on the team results and only mention individuals in terms of injuries}

The Harvard **football eleven** was whitewashed at football this afternoon on their own grounds, at Cambridge, in a close and exciting struggle with the **eleven** of the University of Pennsylvania. Neither **side** scored in the first inning. In the second **Smith** of the University Pennsylvania, made a touchdown at the end of ... minutes' of play. This was the only point scored, the game being therefore won by the **Pennsylvanians** by a score of 4 to 0. In the first half hour **Fell** of the visiting team was injured in a scrimmage and **Matlety** took his place.

.....

Springfield, Oct.22--The Williams College **football team** beat the Trinity College **team** at Williamstown to-day 51 points to 0.

.....

New-Haven, Conn., Oct. 22-- **Yale** beat **Rutgers** at football at New-Brunswick, N.J., to-day 76 points to 10. **Rutgers** made the largest score against **Yale** that has been made for years. She also scored the first goal against **Yale** made in two years.

## **What do we emphasize when we talk about football?**

(or any other sport)

Is it about the competition in the game or season?

Is it about the players?

Is it about the school?

Is it about the values of those who play?

Is it about the character of those who watch?

Is it about the careers and self interest of those involved?

**Why do we talk about different subjects at different times?**

If we are focused on war, then we will tell sports stories that speak to the values and interests of the war. If we are at war, we will tell sports stories that illustrate the value of sports for the war effort. Even though the sport is an artificially constructed competition, it is in the interests of the sport to highlight its value to a major national interest--the War effort

# SPORTS' WAR VALUE CITED AT MEETING

E. I. F. A. Moves to Carry On  
1942 Program—Speakers  
Stress Morale Effect

M'ARTHUR STEP RECALLED

Installed West Point Athletic  
Program—College Events  
in Summer Suggested

By ROBERT F. KELLEY

The first formal resolution of a college sports governing body calling for continuation of football in the East through a full season of 1942 featured the second day's meetings at the Central Office for Eastern Intercollegiate Athletics in the Biltmore yesterday.

The Eastern Intercollegiate Football Association, which includes the so-called Ivy League colleges, unanimously adopted this resolution at the meeting which closed the day's activities.

"For the past two days," read the resolution, "more than fifty Eastern college athletic directors have been actively engaged in drafting full schedules for the academic year 1942-43.

"In support of their unanimous belief that maintenance of intercollegiate programs, thereby guaranteeing physical fitness and a high state of morale, is a basic and invaluable contribution toward winning permanent peace, the members of the Eastern Intercollegiate Football Association hereby resolve to carry out 1942 schedules to the full extent of their ability."

## Reflects Tenor of Meeting

This resolution was in keeping with the tone of the day's discussions. The annual convention of the Central Office, in its morning session, had heard three speakers call for continued and intensified competition in the present emergency. They were John Da Grossa, from the office of John B. Kelly, Assistant Director of Civilian Defense in charge of physical fitness; Dean Le Roy Mercer of Pennsylvania and Thurston B. Davies, president of Colorado College.

Mr. Da Grossa, speaking from the standpoint of the national effort administered by Mr. Kelly, called for better physical fitness among civilians. He told the delegates of his office's satisfaction with the action of the city of Philadelphia, which, he said, has authorized the expenditure of \$100,000 to devote to an athletic program in that city.

The plan is to use the equipment of eighty-seven schools there, training rejected draftees, men and women in defense branches and industry. He said the city hoped to give the benefit of this to 485,000 in the first year.

## Told "Not to Fumble"

Mr. Da Grossa called on his hearers to "go ahead and intensify intramural and intercollegiate athletics" as a contribution to morale and the war effort. "You gentlemen are holding the ball," he said. "Don't punt and don't fumble. Run with it."

Dean Mercer reviewed the experience of the last war and quoted from various written opinions. He stated that athletics was an important part of the war effort and recalled that when General Douglas MacArthur was superintendent of the United States Military Academy in 1919 he installed the wide sports program still in effect there as part of the training of cadets.

"This is no time for resignation," he said. "The best way to meet this challenge for us is to see to it our boys have the opportunity for continuing to play the games of their choice, subject to any limitations called for by a democracy at war."

Mr. Davies said he felt the war called for intensified activity in all branches of college work. "If we believed in competitive sport as a good thing in peacetimes, and were honest in that belief, how much more valuable it must seem to us now."

## Shorter Course Cited

During the scheduling talks Eppie Barnes, assistant director of athletics at Colgate, expressed an interest in the possibility of scheduling college games as late as Aug. 20.

This arose from the plans in several colleges for telescoping the four-year course into three years, with Summer terms. Several delegates viewed Summer sports dates as a possibility.

The football association elected L. P. Andreas of Syracuse as president to succeed William H. McCarter of Dartmouth and re-elected H. Jamison Swarts of Pennsylvania treasurer and Asa Bushnell secretary. William J. Bingham of Harvard, Thomas J. McCabe of Holy Cross and Earl R. Yeomans of Temple were elected to the executive committee.

## Eastern College Football Association Resolves to Play Full Card This Year

By ROBERT F. KELLEY

New York Times 1857; Jan 10, 1942; ProQuest  
Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 -  
2003)  
pg. 20

1942

**War Boosts Football, Says Bell**

*New York Times (1857-Current file); Jan 17, 1942; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2003)*  
pg. 10

**War Boosts Football, Says Bell**

**DALLAS, Jan. 16 (AP)—Matty Bell, president of the American Football Coaches Association, predicts the war will increase college football activities. "Those who feared the game would be curtailed can look forward to even more emphasis because the Army and Navy believe football valuable in training fighting men," the Southern Methodist University coach said. He expects colleges to make special efforts to schedule games with service teams.**

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If we worry about the damaging effects of competitive sports on the values of college and on the education of students, we tell a different story that focuses on the mismatch between academic values and purpose and the operation of hyper competitive college sports. This is a constant and recurring theme in story-telling about college sports. The damage reflected changes with the times but the message is constant: hypercompetitive college sports is an inappropriate activity for an academic institution.

## ATHLETIC SPORTS IN COLLEGE.

The Faculty of Cornell take a rational and advanced view of college athletics, and the interviews with President ADAMS and a number of the Professors published in yesterday's TIMES will meet with cordial approval, not only from the Alumni of Cornell and other universities, but from sensible undergraduates as well. The question of athletics is becoming an important one in all higher institutions of learning, and it is one that will have to be settled very soon one way or the other by the different Faculties. When the students first began to row and play ball, the advantages of the exercises were admitted by all, but as the field of collegiate athletic sports has widened, and as inter-collegiate contests have become more frequent, abuses have grown up which threaten not simply to destroy whatever of good the sports might accomplish, but to result in positive detriment to the discipline of the colleges. Under this condition of affairs the alternative is plain—the abuses must be reformed or athletic sports, as they are now understood, must be abolished from the college course of education.

It would seem that this was a simple proposition which every student of average intelligence--and it is presumed that there are no students below average intelligence—would at once accept. The primary object of attendance at college is to strengthen and develop the mind. This object can be aided by judiciously strengthening and developing the physical powers, which is the prime function of athletic exercises properly pursued. “A healthy mind comes of a healthy body” is an axiom the truth of which nobody will question. But to sacrifice the discipline of the mind to the training of the body is to destroy the very foundation upon which a collegiate education is based. Athletics can be engaged in as well out of college as in it, and if they are the main object to be pursued by the student, wisdom would seem to dictate that he save his tuition fees and expend them on shells and baseball outfits.

## ATHLETIC SPORTS IN COLLEGE.

*New York Times (1857-Current file)*; Jan 28, 1889; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2003)  
pg. 4

## HARVARD MAN HITS COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Sport Has Become a Major  
Scandal in Recent Years,  
Says Dean Bender

EXETER, N. H., Feb. 10 (AP)—  
"No college can have a consistently  
top-notch, big-time football team  
without buying it," according to  
the dean of Harvard College.

Speaking at Phillips Exeter  
Academy yesterday, Dean Wilbur  
J. Bender said:

"A little sanity is clearly needed  
to make football again an amateur  
college sport. This means no more  
recruiting or subsidizing of play-  
ers. Organization of practice and  
schedules must be arranged so that  
they can fit into academic needs  
rather than vice versa. The college  
is not an annex to a football  
team."

Dean Bender said he was ex-  
pressing his own views and not  
speaking for Harvard.

Bender said of football: "This  
relatively minor college activity  
has in recent years become a  
major scandal which, in my opin-  
ion, threatens the integrity of  
American college education."

Bender said he saw no reason  
why football could not be handled  
in the same way as other sports,  
such as crew and soccer, adding:

"Colleges then would have a  
game which could contribute some-  
thing to college education."



## **The Challenge of Television**

All stories offer many explanations, and it is usually beneficial to identify whose self-interest is at stake in the conversation reported in the story.

For example, in the initial stages of television, college football had some difficulty deciding where its self-interest lay:

- exploit television for revenue or
- restrict television to preserve attendance.

In the end, of course, self-interest found a home in television, and not only did everyone join but the conferences grew larger to capture more lucrative television markets.

The stories, sampled below, recounting the facts, tell us more than just the facts.

## Big Ten Bars 'Live' Television Of Its Football Games This Year

By The Associated Press.

CHICAGO, April 16 — The Western Conference, in the first major move of its kind in the nation, today barred "live" television of all its 1950 football games.

Complete films of games will be made available for television purposes the day following the games. On a Saturday game the release time for showing TV films would be 6 P. M., Central standard time, Sunday.

A Big Ten spokesman said that the decision of conference athletic directors, reached by an "overwhelming majority," would eliminate an estimated \$500,000 in television revenue rights that would have accrued throughout the conference for games next fall.

"It was the conclusion of the directors of both conference and non-conference institutions," a Big Ten statement said, "that the 'live' television of football games will be more harmful than helpful to col-

lege athletics in general and college football in particular."

Sitting in with Big Ten officials at the two-day policy parley were representatives of Notre Dame, Marquette, Pittsburgh and Nebraska. Notre Dame already has signed for network "live" television of all its 1950 home games.

The Big Ten statement said:

"The conference sanctions 'deferred television' of its football games. It has not banned television; it has merely made an adjustment as to when the game may be viewed on television."

Under this policy the provisions were that simultaneous or "live" television of conference football games would not be permitted; that complete films of games would be available for TV the following day, and that post-game highlights of conference games also would be available.

The Big Ten will meet again

**Continued on Page 27, Column 6**

## C.F.A. Unveils Plan for Telecasts

**DALLAS, June 1 (AP) — ABC and CBS would retain telecast rights for college football games next season under a contingency plan unveiled today at the opening of the annual meeting of the College Football Association.**

Delegates from the 60 C.F.A. schools considered two similar national television plans, one put together by a committee from the C.F.A. and another by a group of CFA officials and representatives from the Big Ten and Pac-10 conferences. Those two conferences are the only major college football leagues that do not hold C.F.A. membership.

But both sides reached a tenuous agreement to work together in a television plan in case the Supreme Court rules that the National Collegiate Athletic Association's controls of college football television rights is illegal. The court's decision is expected this summer.

# N.C.A.A. Setback on TV Poses Threat of Disorder

By GORDON S. WHITE Jr.

*New York Times (1857-Current file); Jul 15, 1984; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2003)*

pg. 193

## N.C.A.A. Setback on TV Poses Threat of Disorder

By GORDON S. WHITE Jr.

Now that the National Collegiate Athletic Association has lost its controls over college football television for the 1984 season and possibly beyond, serious concerns have arisen among educators about the ability of major college football institutions to abide by the rules governing all aspects of intercollegiate athletics.

The N.C.A.A.'s 33 years of strong control over Saturday football television rights were declared in violation of antitrust laws in a Supreme Court decision June 27. The decision upheld a United States District Court ruling in Oklahoma City in 1982.

The N.C.A.A. quickly drew up a new plan for 1984 football packaging that it hoped would pass inspection by the lower court, which ruled against the N.C.A.A. in a suit originally brought by the Universities of Georgia and Oklahoma in 1981.

But the new N.C.A.A. plan was rejected by a vote of the major football colleges last Tuesday. It left the five-year-old College Football Association as the largest single entity with a viable television plan for 1984. The C.F.A. consists of 63 of the N.C.A.A.'s 105 major football teams (Division I-A). A majority of these 63 schools joined to carry the vote against the television plan.

The Pacific Ten and Big Ten Conferences have formulated another 20-team television

### Analysis

plan. These conferences have refused to join the C.F.A.

Both the C.F.A. and the Big Ten-Pac-10 group will meet with the three major networks separately this week in contract talks. Both groups will also meet with ESPN and the Turner Broadcasting System about cable-television contracts.

But the major differences within the N.C.A.A. have educators worried.

"The least important aspect of this is the television situation," said Wesley W. Posvar, chancellor of the University of Pittsburgh. "I think there has been a polarization by that vote Tuesday. The potential for unraveling discipline and rules and order in intercollegiate athletics is the major issue. If we didn't have an N.C.A.A., we'd have to reinvent it."

Pittsburgh was among the handful of C.F.A. members that voted for the N.C.A.A. plan. Since then Pitt has agreed to join in the C.F.A. plan.

Ed Bozik, Pittsburgh's athletic director, said, "It may be a crooked wheel, but it is the only wheel in town."

Irving Shain, chancellor of the University of Wisconsin, said, "I have considerable concern about the future of intercollegiate ath-

letics. I'm very concerned that the recent vote by the C.F.A. basically to repudiate the N.C.A.A. is a signal that there may be no real mechanism in the future to curb abuses of exploitation of college athletes."

Wisconsin is a member of the Big Ten Conference.

"We are not challenging the N.C.A.A.'s rights to enforce its rules," Chuck Neinas, executive director of the C.F.A., said. "But if the courts were to find that the N.C.A.A. could not do it, then obviously the institutions would have to do something else for enforcement."

Bill Hunt, the N.C.A.A. assistant executive director for enforcement, said, "Enforcement procedures always concern us, and I do have some concerns about what all this may mean. But we fully intend to enforce our regulations governing recruiting and other aspects of athletics."

In the past, the N.C.A.A. had a big financial weapon to use in its enforcement procedures. If a school was found in violation of rules, the association's committee on infractions often imposed probations that included sanctions against television appearances for one, two and even three years. This was costly, because a football game on national television could be worth as much as \$320,000 to a major college.

Hunt explained that even though the N.C.A.A. would not have control over football television for 1984 it retained the power to impose such sanctions against colleges involved in a C.F.A. television plan or the Big Ten/Pac-10 plan.

He said that under a rule passed by the N.C.A.A. in January 1982, the association could prohibit a college football team from appearing on television, no matter which organization controls the television rights. That rule was originally passed in order to give the N.C.A.A. control over basketball infractions because the N.C.A.A. had never held control over regular-season basketball television.

"Now this rule fits the football situation for 1984," Hunt said.

Despite the concerns by officials of intercollegiate athletics, the viewer may have a fall of more football than ever. College games may be on television more than 12 hours each Saturday in some locations.

This abundance of football on television is the type of thing that happened in the open market of basketball last winter, and two things resulted:

¶ Fans got to see their fill of games.

¶ Colleges got paid a lot less for each game because of the glut on the market.

The next week of negotiations will determine the prices and the exact hours of dis-

play and just which networks and cable companies are willing to buy the product.

Jim Spence, senior vice president for ABC Sports, said that his network was not very interested in buying the C.F.A. or Big Ten/Pac-10 packages if it went directly against another network that buys the major package ABC does not buy.

"We think from an economic standpoint it is not very feasible," Spence said.

### Prices Will Go Down

ABC Sports has televised Saturday college football since 1966, with exclusive rights to N.C.A.A. football until 1982. Then ABC and CBS had rights to college football television showing their games consecutively on Saturdays, not simultaneously. Those games were worth as much as \$850,000 each.

No one expects to receive that much for a game this year, when so many teams will be seen and the sponsorship money will be spread more thinly over more markets.

Each team in the C.F.A. will be able to appear three times a season in the C.F.A. time periods if only one network buys its package. Each team will receive 75 percent of the price of the game to be set in contract negotiations. The remaining 25 percent will go into a pool to be divided 63 ways among all C.F.A. members.

# Big College Football Leagues Are Trying to Get Bigger Still

1990

By WILLIAM C. RHODEN

Like superpowers dividing up the globe to expand their empires, the nation's major football conferences are raiding other conferences and courting independent schools for stronger teams. Inspired by the lure of larger television market shares, the conferences are setting the stage for regional college football monopolies by the middle of the 1990's.

In the wake of Notre Dame's exit from the College Football Association's television contract to set up its own television package and Penn State's admission to the Big Ten Conference beginning in 1995, an effort appears to be under way to establish territorial strongholds in football, guarantee television networks larger audiences and generate increased revenue for schools.

"The 90's are predicted to be moving in the direction of three superconferences," said Frank Broyles, the University of Arkansas athletic director. "Currently there are three networks — CBS, ABC and ESPN — involved in televising major college football. The future may see each of the three superconferences with a major network partnership."

Although the number of superconfer-

ences is uncertain, by the middle of the decade there could be an expanded Atlantic Coast Conference with schools from the Middle Atlantic and Northeastern states, a revised Southeastern Conference stretching from Texas to South Carolina, a Midwest conference encompassing the Big Ten, plus Penn State and other regional powers from the present Big Eight, and a Far West conference comprising the Pacific-10, plus Colorado and other regional teams.

In essence, college football's six major conferences and eight major independent schools would be formed

*Continued on Page 45, Column 2*

## **Generations and Tools**

History's stories change over time. We do history not so much to understand the past as to clarify the present. Each of us lives but a short historical time. We make decisions about our lives based on the experience and information that we can acquire up to the moment we have to decide. Rarely do we have the opportunity to remain aloof until we are old and wise from the experience of observation. Instead, we look to stories of the past to provide us with the vicarious experience that may give us the wisdom and perspective to make better decisions today.

**Generations**: History's stories speak to different issues at different times. Although history itself, the occurrence of past events, never changes, what we need to learn by studying that history changes. When we worried about our place in the international community, we studied diplomatic history to learn about the conduct of formal relationships among nations. When we needed to understand trade and commerce, we studied economic history. When we worried about the social structure of our society, we studied issues of race, class, and gender.

Each generation must engage the challenges of its time by revisiting the past for experience that speaks to the present. This is why historians reinterpret major events (the American Civil War, the conquest and colonization of the Americas, the fall of Rome, the rise of China). Sometimes we find new information when we revisit the past because we now need to know different things and so look for different information that did not matter before. The data and evidence needed to understand diplomatic history may not matter as much for the study of social conflict, a topic requiring different information and evidence. Each generation speaks to its own problems, its sense of opportunity now and in the future.

Although history never repeats itself exactly, it nonetheless reflects a continuous process of change and adaptation. Today's version of a continuing process is best understood when we know more than the surface events of the current scandal, crisis, or triumph. For sports people, this present-mindedness conflicts with what appears to be a remarkable interest in the history of their sport, or the history of their university's sports program. The web sites of every university are filled with chronologies of the institution's glorious athletic past. Yet this retrospective enthusiasm for past triumphs is usually highly selective, focused on celebratory elements in the past that reinforce today's agenda. Sports history of this type looks not to yesterday's games to understand today's issues but, instead, seeks to glorify today's anticipated triumphs with a partial history of the past.

Sometimes history helps us recognize that our moment, challenges, and opportunities are not as unique as we imagine them to be. We want to believe that we live in special times. That our moment of history is significant and unusual and that our problems are particularly important. This may be true, but in most cases it is not. Humans have experienced much in recorded history, and often what appears new is but a somewhat different recurrence of things done before. What we see around us today is indeed important and significant to us, personally, but that does not make today's challenges unique in every respect.

Sports history is particularly prone to this misconception. Sports fans, by the nature of the games they love, focus primarily on the current season, rarely look beyond yesterday to understand today. They imagine that today's challenges of college sports are far greater than at any time in the past, without knowing the past. When someone looks back, of course, today's sports story appears remarkably similar in many ways to yesterday's.

**Tools of History:** Historians use a wide range of tools in their work. These include reference works of statistical compilations or documentary collections, dictionaries, and general histories, but in all cases historians use the materials left by the past. These materials vary in quality, scope, completeness, and relevance, and historians use a careful methodology to validate documents, detect false reports, compare statistics, and assess the completeness of information. Because history is an accessible discipline, many people think they understand history, but they underestimate the work involved.

If history is an exercise in imagination and creativity, it is also an artisan craft. Historians, like other builders of complex things, must have a design, a plan, appropriate materials, and a set of tools. They must use the right materials for the right purpose and follow a logical design for their project.

A mason who shows up with any kind of brick and hopes to make a good wall will end up with an ugly unstable structure. A true artisan will have a design for the wall, a plan for its construction, and a list of the type and quantities of brick and mortar required. The mason's plan will specify the sequence of actions required to construct the wall. Our mason may well be creative and design a beautiful wall, with curves and decorations, but if the mason as artisan does not have the skills, materials, and tools to build the wall or builds it with inappropriate materials and inadequate tools, then all the creativity will not produce a quality wall, but a false and weak structure.

Historians, too, can imagine a beautiful historical story, but if they do not do the artisan work required to design, plan, and build that story, the resulting history will be weak, unpersuasive, and false. Much of what historians do in their training and in their work is artisan craft: finding sources, constructing arguments, and testing them against the available information for validity and logic.

When we watch the master bricklayer at work building a wall, it appears effortless, natural, and the result admirable. When we read the accomplished historian's work we see what also looks effortless, natural, and admirable. If we, as amateurs, try to build a brick wall, we immediately discover that there is much about bricklaying we do not know, there are skills we have not learned, and there are tools we cannot use. If we rush to write history without a clear understanding of the tools and training the project requires, we too will find the task a challenge and the result unsatisfactory.



## Interpreting the Facts We Think We Know

Even when we can establish all the relevant facts and verify all issues of time and place and causation, we still must interpret what we know.

Often, more than one interpretation is possible from the facts.

These multiple interpretations may be logically consistent, accurately and logically connect to the facts.

How do we know which one is the “right” interpretation?

If we predict the future from our study of the past:

*The team will win the game because their defense has been the best.*

We'll find out quickly whether our story is the right interpretation.

When we explain the past behavior of individuals or groups, the right interpretation may depend on the purpose of the story.

Biography is a constant source of differential interpretation

Accuracy  
Validation  
Consistency  
Perspective  
Completeness  
Bias  
Context

**Who is this famous person**

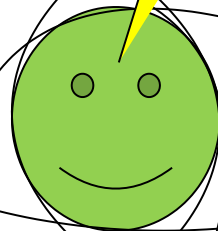
An opportunist who used the ideas and work of others

A personal disaster for his family

A hero for all time

Leader of his party

An example of ruling class exploitation



## **Generations and Tools:**

*History's stories change over time.*

***We do history not so much to understand the past as to clarify the present.***

*Each of us lives but a short historical time.*

*We look to stories of the past to provide us with the vicarious experience that gives us the wisdom to make better decisions today.*

***As a result, history's stories speak to different issues at different times.***

## **We reinterpret past events and reevaluate the actions of people**

We can use the same data to answer different questions:

- What characteristics made George Washington a great leader?
- What personal motivations conditioned George Washington's policies?
- Why did others support or oppose George Washington?
- What economic conditions made George Washington successful?
- What other people had greater impact than George Washington?

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An interpretation can change because we find new data:

- George Washington's diary is found which clarifies his personal relationships.
- The account books of George Washington's surveying firm are discovered, illustrating his land interests and ownership of slaves.
- The records of George Washington's business partner are found.

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Sometimes we learn more about a process:

- We understand the finances of international commerce better.
- We understand the influence of genetics.

All these change our understanding, but most importantly, we revisit the facts of history and construct new stories primarily because we have different questions to answer in our generation than others had in a previous one.

## **Resources Tools Methods**

Books

Journal Articles

Newspapers

Magazines

Television

Movies

Radio

Interviews

Biography

Autobiography

Manuscripts

Statistical information

Opinion pieces

Official Organization Records

Government Documents

Private letters

Internet Research

## **Story & Fact**

### **Generations, Tools & Projects**

#### **Questions for the discussion:**

What questions seem important today for your generation that perhaps did not interest your parents?

What data do we need to understand the social structure of intercollegiate sports?

How would you design a story about the emergence of women's sports in America?

What skills would you need as a historian to write about the significance of golf in America?

How do we separate our opinions from our data as we develop our story as historians?

What is historical objectivity? Is it a useful goal?

What is the historical project of this course?

What are some other sports stories and the project design needed to tell them?