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- C. Knowing the Score: Insights into the World of Sports**  
*Melissa Isaacson, Assistant Professor, The Medill School of Journalism*  
**Thursdays, 9:30 - 11:00 a.m. Norris University Center**

**Apr. 3 Chicago Bulls: The Glory Days**

From 1991 to 1998, the Chicago Bulls won six NBA titles, including two “Three-Peats,” and were considered one of the great sports dynasties of all-time. For the first four years of that time span, your instructor was the Tribune’s principal Bulls beat writer, the first woman to hold that job. The author of *Transition Game: An Inside Look at Life with the Chicago Bulls* will regale you with stories from that special period -- some published, some she reserves only for friends, which you now are!

**Apr. 10 The Final Four: Men’s and Women’s**

Branded officially as “NCAA March Madness” in 2016, the men’s college basketball tournament’s broadcast rights are now worth \$891 million annually with a contract that runs through 2032. In 2021, the women’s tournament also got a piece of the “March Madness” branding, while happily seeing “Men’s Final Four,” used, beginning in 2022 as the “Women’s Final Four” had done since 1987. One of the world’s most popular sporting events continues to draw record-breaking audiences, with the women’s championship game eclipsing the men’s last year. We’ll take a look at the ’25 edition and historic highlights.

**Apr. 17 Sports and Mental Health: Why Are So Many Athletes Hurting?**

According to stats from the NCAA and the American College of Sports Medicine, up to 35% of college athletes show signs of depression or other mental health challenges. For elite athletes, the toll is just as high. The U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee consequently created a mental health task force in 2020 and reported that psychological service providers worked with more than 1,200 athletes in 2023. In pro sports, the NBA last year announced its first-ever director of mental health and wellness. As stigmas are lifted, we will discuss this hot-button issue.

**Apr. 24 Pickleball: How Did It Get So Big and Why Do Some Still Hate It?**

Pickleball participation has grown an estimated 224 percent since 2020 to about 8.9 million people in 2022. Chances are you play it and if you don’t, you know friends who are begging you to take it up. How did this phenomenon start? How did it grow to such a booming level of popularity and a multi-million dollar industry, and why is it still such a source of resentment by some? Let’s talk pickle.

### **May 1            The NFL Draft**

Since 1936, when the Philadelphia Eagles selected Heisman Trophy winner Jay Berwanger from the University of Chicago, the NFL Draft has attempted to level the playing field. But that first draft, which came from a pool of 90 players compiled from newspaper reports, team execs visiting local colleges, and recommendations to front-office personnel, bore no resemblance to the extravaganza it is today. We'll look at today's Draft, its spectacle and what the Bears may do.

### **May 8            The Multi-Billion Dollar Sports Betting Industry: An Update**

The American sports betting industry continues to grow, posting a record \$10.92 billion in revenue in 2023, which represented a 44.5 percent increase from the year before and was also a record, according to the American Gaming Association. It was estimated that 35 billion people gambled on NFL games in 2024. As of November, 2024, 38 states and the District of Columbia have legalized sports betting, meaning single-game betting may be offered to consumers through legal retail or online and mobile sportsbooks. We'll look at the state of this still-growing industry.

### **May 15           Title IX's Impact 53 Years Later**

When the 50th anniversary of the passage of Title IX was observed in the summer of 2022, it was more a time of introspection than celebration. Were women truly in a position of equality on the athletic field, in scholarship distribution, with team facilities, outside opportunities? We took stock three years ago of the lack of women administrators in colleges sports; of women coaches and front office personnel in the pros. Where are we now and why are we still talking about the law that was passed in 1972?

### **May 22           NO CLASS**

### **May 29           The Current Landscape of College Sports**

*Forbes Magazine* called it the "rightsizing" of college sports. Universities are grappling with the NCAA's name, image and likeness policy while controlling athletic spending, adjusting priorities on winning and dealing with the inherent pressures on athletes and coaches. The transfer portal and recruiting rule has turned college sports into a free agency free-for-all. And then there's the rise of developer-led stadium and arena projects. We'll discuss the latest trends that impact college sports.

### **June 5            The Caitlin Clark Phenomenon**

From her college career at the University of Iowa to her rocky welcome into the WNBA, Caitlin Clark has endured while establishing herself as one of the top basketball players in the women's game. Now one of the greatest attractions in all of sports, she earns tens of millions of dollars in endorsement money. As this WNBA season gets underway, we'll look back to what all the fuss has been about and take a look at her second pro season.