

Code of Ethics

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### **Preamble**

In terms of my ideal future career, I am aspiring to get into the field of broadcasting, particularly sports broadcasting, and calling games as a play-by-play sports broadcaster. I have started building a foundation to help myself become a professional play-by-play sports broadcaster by calling many sporting events for the John Carroll University Sports Information Department. I have also called football and basketball games for John Carroll's radio station, WJCU 88.7 FM, and, at the time this initial Code of Ethics has been written, serve as Sports Director for the station. I am writing this Code of Ethics because I plan for it to serve as a personal guide, providing an ethical framework to base my actions and behaviors on as I make my way into the field of professional sports broadcasting. This Code of Ethics consists of four different elements: values, ethical dilemmas, philosophy, and revision. For values, I discuss the personal values which I feel are most important to me, and how they relate to sports broadcasting. Next, for ethical dilemmas, I address some ethical issues present in the field of sports broadcasting. After that, for philosophy, I explain the ethical framework of Aristotle, and how it relates to both myself being a professional sports broadcaster and the ethical dilemmas I discuss. Finally, for revision, I explain why I would revise this Code of Ethics, how often it would be revised, and who I believe should be involved in the process. Ultimately, I feel that if I can follow this Code of Ethics well, I can put myself into a good position to succeed as a professional sports broadcaster.

### **Values**

I believe that there are five core values which are most important to me, in terms of being a sports broadcaster. One of these core values is integrity. According to Merriam-Webster

(2021), the word “integrity” means, “firm adherence to a code of especially moral or artistic values: INCORRUPTIBILITY” (Full Definition of *integrity* section, para. 1). In the field of sports broadcasting, I feel that “integrity” means preparing for games, as well as gathering and reporting information for broadcasts, truthfully, and doing what I feel is the right thing in all situations without being told to do so. Another core value is kindness. According to Lexico (2021), “kindness” means, “The quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate” (Noun section, para. 1). In terms of sports broadcasting, I believe that “kindness” means treating my audience and broadcasting colleagues well, and being both respectful and friendly to them. A third core value I have is respect. According to Lexico, “respect” means, “Due regard for the feelings, wishes, rights, or traditions of others” (Noun section, para. 2). For sports broadcasting, I feel that “respect” is the idea of listening to my audience and broadcasting colleagues, and having empathy with them for what they both think and have to say. A fourth core value I have is honesty. According to Merriam-Webster (2021), “honesty” means, “fairness and straightforwardness of conduct” (Definition of *honesty* section, para. 1b). Regarding sports broadcasting, I believe that “honesty” means never lying about what is occurring during games, nor lying about information related to sports games and teams. Additionally, a fifth core value that I have is loyalty. According to Lexico (2021), “loyalty” means, “A strong feeling of support or allegiance” (para. 1.1). For sports broadcasting, I feel that “loyalty” means never betraying my sports broadcasting colleagues, audience, or sports broadcasting organizations that I work for. All in all, I think that if I can maintain these values, I will have a good chance of entering and remaining in the sports broadcasting industry, because they will enable me to have a good rapport with not only my colleagues, but my audience as well.

### **Ethical Dilemmas**

There are multiple ethical dilemmas present in the field of sports broadcasting. One of these dilemmas is the idea of people in the industry allowing others to share misinformation with the public. An example of this occurring was earlier this year, in 2021, involving Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers of the National Football League, and “The Pat McAfee Show.” According to Jones (2021), Rodgers, “...said that he had not been vaccinated after previously telling reporters, ‘Yeah, I’ve been immunized’” (para. 1). Despite having relayed false information to the media, McAfee invited Rodgers onto his show again. According to Jones (2021), “McAfee, once again... handed Rodgers a megaphone to amplify his message with not a whole lot of pushback” (para. 6). Rodgers was spreading misinformation about COVID-19 treatment, and McAfee failed to point it out with statistical or scientific counterevidence (Jones, 2021, para. 7).

Another ethical dilemma present in the field of sports broadcasting is the idea of reporting information too quickly. An example of this occurring was back in 2015, involving the New York Mets of Major League Baseball. During a game, it was reported on social media that two New York Mets players were being traded to another team, one of whom, Wilmer Flores, was playing in the game (Berkman, 2015). Upon hearing this report while playing, Flores became very emotional. According to Berkman (2015), “...in the top of the eighth, when Flores dutifully ran back out to his shortstop position, the television cameras that zoomed in on him showed that he was crying” (para. 8). However, it was determined that the deal had fallen through, and thus would not be completed. According to Berkman (2015), “...it was only when [then-Mets] General Manager Sandy Alderson spoke to reporters... that it actually became clear that there was indeed no deal” (para. 13).

### Philosophy

While there are many different philosophical frameworks used to determine ethical issues, the one that I will use in my personal Code of Ethics is the framework of Aristotle. One of the main ideas of this framework, according to Neher (2020), is that, "...Aristotle says that living an ethical life implies knowing the purposes of human life" (p. 23). In this framework, when determining whether or not an action or behavior is ethical, there are three principles to consider. One of these principles is knowledge. According to Neher (2020), "First, they must *know* what they are doing, and not be acting rightly or wrongly because of accident, chance, or understanding" (p. 23). In other words, when doing something, one understands exactly what they are doing on their own terms. The second principle is choice. According to Neher (2020), "Second, people must *choose* to act in the way that they do" (p. 23). This means that when behaving or acting in a certain manner, one makes a purposeful decision to behave or act that way. The third principle to consider is character. According to Neher (2020), "Third, according to Aristotle, the decision to act in a certain way is based on the *character* of the speaker..." (p. 23). This means that when a person does something, it is due to what values and traits he or she has or favors.

Additionally, Aristotle's ethical framework stresses what is called the "Golden Mean." In terms of the "Golden Mean," according to Neher (2020), "Aristotle's belief that a virtue allows a person to achieve excellence explains his notion that a virtue is a *mean* (average) between two extremes" (p. 24). There are also many virtues in line with Aristotle's ethical framework, including self-control, generosity, an appropriate desire to achieve or excel, friendliness, and truthfulness (Neher, 2020, p. 24-5). Aristotle's ethical framework, which places an emphasis on

character, is ultimately a form of virtue ethics. In virtue ethics, according to Neher (2020), “A behavior is right or ethical because of the *character* of the person performing it” (p. 28).

Aristotle’s ethical framework applies to my potential career of sports broadcasting because it can make me reflect on what I am saying on the air before I actually say it. Furthermore, it gives me many virtues to adhere to if I were to have a career in the field, including courage, friendliness, and truthfulness. I would need courage to pursue new sports broadcasting opportunities, friendliness to gain positive connections in the field, and truthfulness to provide accurate information while on the air. Regarding the ethical dilemma involving Aaron Rodgers and “The Pat McAfee Show,” Aristotle’s ethical framework can be applied by considering the principles of knowledge, choice, and character. For knowledge, McAfee understood that Rodgers was spreading misinformation about COVID-19. For choice, despite knowing Rodgers was expressing misinformation about COVID-19, McAfee made the conscious decision of allowing him to speak on his show again, without disproving his misinformation. Thirdly, in terms of character, McAfee showed that he did not have good character, because he allowed misinformation to be spread on his show. As a result, McAfee’s decision was not ethical.

Furthermore, regarding the ethical dilemma involving the New York Mets, firstly, the public knew about the reports of the trade on social media, which was why they told Flores about it. Next, the journalists and organizations knowingly chose to report the deal, even though it was not official. Thirdly, in terms of character, those who reported the trade without it being official displayed negative character, because they reported the deal too early. Because of this examination of the situation using Aristotle’s ethical framework, the decision to report the trade early was not ethical.

### **Revision**

I feel that my personal Code of Ethics can potentially be revised for multiple reasons. One reason why is because there are new ethical issues and dilemmas in the field of sports broadcasting inevitably on the horizon. Another reason why is because new questions about the sports broadcasting industry are constantly trying to be answered. In terms of a revision timeframe, I believe that my Code of Ethics should be revised every year, because it can be adjusted to dealing with new ethical issues in sports broadcasting on a consistent basis, thus keeping me well-informed about ethics in sports broadcasting. Additionally, I feel that both the Society of Professional Journalists and the National Sports Media Association should be involved in the ongoing revision of my Code of Ethics because I feel that they are two of the most prominent organizations involved in setting industry standards in sports reporting and broadcasting. By constantly revising my Code of Ethics, I believe that I can actively increase my knowledge of what it takes to demonstrate positive ethics in the field of sports broadcasting.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

I am striving to have a career in the field of professional sports broadcasting, particularly providing play-by-play commentary for sporting events on television, radio, or both. My Code of Ethics is based on the core values of integrity, kindness, respect, honesty, and loyalty. Additionally, two of the main ethical dilemmas in sports broadcasting are the ideas of allowing people to spread misinformation and reporting information too quickly. Aristotle's ethical framework, which stresses virtues and character-based ethics, is the philosophical basis of my Code of Ethics. All in all, this Code of Ethics is important to me as a professional because it both holds myself accountable to not deceiving my audience and will likely lead me to establishing positive connections with others in the sports broadcasting field.

## References

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