



John McDonnell/The Washington Post/Getty Images

Have you seen photos of horrific sports injuries like this one that Washington Redskins quarterback Robert Griffin III suffered to his knee during a 2013 playoff game against the Seattle Seahawks? What is your reaction to this photo? Does a photo like this belong on the front of the sports page of the newspaper?

Why or why not? ■

quarterback Robert Griffin III twist his knee in a direction that no knee is supposed to go. The next morning, readers of the *Washington Post* saw the incredibly clear image of RGIII's injury, taken by *Post* photographer John McDonnell, spread out across the top of the sports section.¹³

A longtime friend of mine (and journalism grad) was bothered by the photo and questioned the need for the paper publishing it. I tweeted about the photo and got an almost immediate response from a student in Iowa who also really didn't think the photo should have been published, saying, "I'm not good with seeing things like that—makes me cringe. I can't look at it!"¹⁴

Similar debates have emerged over video being shown over and over again on television of basketball players getting hurt during games, such as when Louisville's Kevin Ware suffered a

Horrific Sports Injuries

The television audience for the Redskins vs. Seahawks NFL playoff game was huge on Sunday, January 6, 2013. And everyone watching was horrified when they saw Redskins

compound fracture of his tibia and fibula playing against Duke in 2013, or when Indiana Pacers' Paul George suffered a horribly broken leg during a Team USA showcase.¹⁵

WHAT does this photo say?

What does this photo of Robert Griffin III say? What news value does it have? Does it tell you anything important about football and about that Sunday's game?

WHY was this photo published?

Why do you think the *Washington Post* published this photo? Why would editors decide not to publish the photo?

HOW do you and your classmates interpret this photo?

How does this photo make you feel? Does it change your understanding of professional football? Are still images any better or worse than video? Does it matter whether the photo or video has explicit gore? Does that make it any less disturbing? You will have the opportunity to think about this photo and revisit these questions as you work your way through the first portion of this chapter.



Web 14.1: See coverage of a variety of sports injuries here.