

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## News Article: “Athletes Find the Power of their Collective Voice in Jacob Blake Protests”

*Instructions:* Read the excerpts of the news article and answer the questions that follow. As you read, place a star next to key phrases and ideas and underline any words and names that you don’t know or have questions about.

### “Athletes find the power of their collective voice in Jacob Blake protests”

By David Wharton, Staff Writer

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The full article is available at <<https://www.latimes.com/sports/story/2020-08-30/athletes-find-the-power-of-their-collective-voice-in-jacob-blake-protests>>

When Colin Kaepernick took a knee during the national anthem, critics labeled him unpatriotic. When LeBron James talked politics, a television news host told him to “shut up and dribble.”

This time feels different.

The wave of athlete walkouts last week, sparked by the police shooting in Kenosha, Wis., of Jacob Blake, a 29-year-old Black man, could not be as easily dismissed because it wasn’t only one or two voices speaking out.

This time, when the Milwaukee Bucks decided to sit out an NBA playoff game, their protest swept quickly through the league and across all of sport, forcing postponements in baseball, soccer, hockey and tennis....

To say the walkouts represented an evolution, the next step in a history of athlete activism — like Muhammad Ali refusing to report for military induction or Tommie Smith and John Carlos raising their fists on the Olympic podium [in 1968] — doesn’t quite suffice.

The players this time had the same moral conviction, the same desire for social change, with the addition of something more — a confluence of circumstances and opportunities their predecessors never had. They just needed the confidence to act.

Sometimes sports lead the way, such as when Jackie Robinson broke baseball’s color barrier in 1947, years before the civil rights movement. Other

times, sports merely reflect society.

Ali’s refusal to go to Vietnam in 1967 was bolstered by the anti-war movement. This summer, player walkouts were preceded by nationwide protest over the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and others.

A majority of Americans have come to see racism as a problem, according to polls that have detected another shift in attitude — more people believe it is appropriate for athletes to protest by kneeling during the anthem....

After the Bucks refused to take the court Wednesday — abruptly launching the walkout — there were questions about what to do next. Unlike athletes who came before, these players had options.

The 24-hour news cycle afforded them a broader platform to voice their concerns. Social media allowed them to speak directly to fans....

This wasn’t going to be like before, when Ali sacrificed three years in the prime of his boxing career while protesting the war. It wasn’t going to be like Smith and Carlos being shunned by track and field or Kaepernick getting ostracized by the NFL.

Athletes united this time in large enough numbers to shield themselves against reprisal. They had another, unexpected advantage.

By the time the COVID-19 shutdown began to ease, the nation was hungry to watch sports again. Players held the power to snatch the games right back....

In the span of 48 hours, much of the sports world had ground to halt — like at the start of the pandemic — with both players and fans wondering how long it might last.

It remains to be seen if the walkout will help produce real change, which would require something more than the NBA sticking a “Black Lives

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Matter” logo on the court or the NHL publicly  
condemning racism....

The last week has witnessed a new template for  
activism in sport, a game plan that figures to alter  
the landscape for years to come. Players from every  
kind of game have discovered that by acting as a  
collective they can leverage their celebrity for social  
change....

**Questions:**

1. What historical examples of athletes protesting does the article describe? Record two examples.
2. According to the article, how has public opinion about athletes protesting changed?