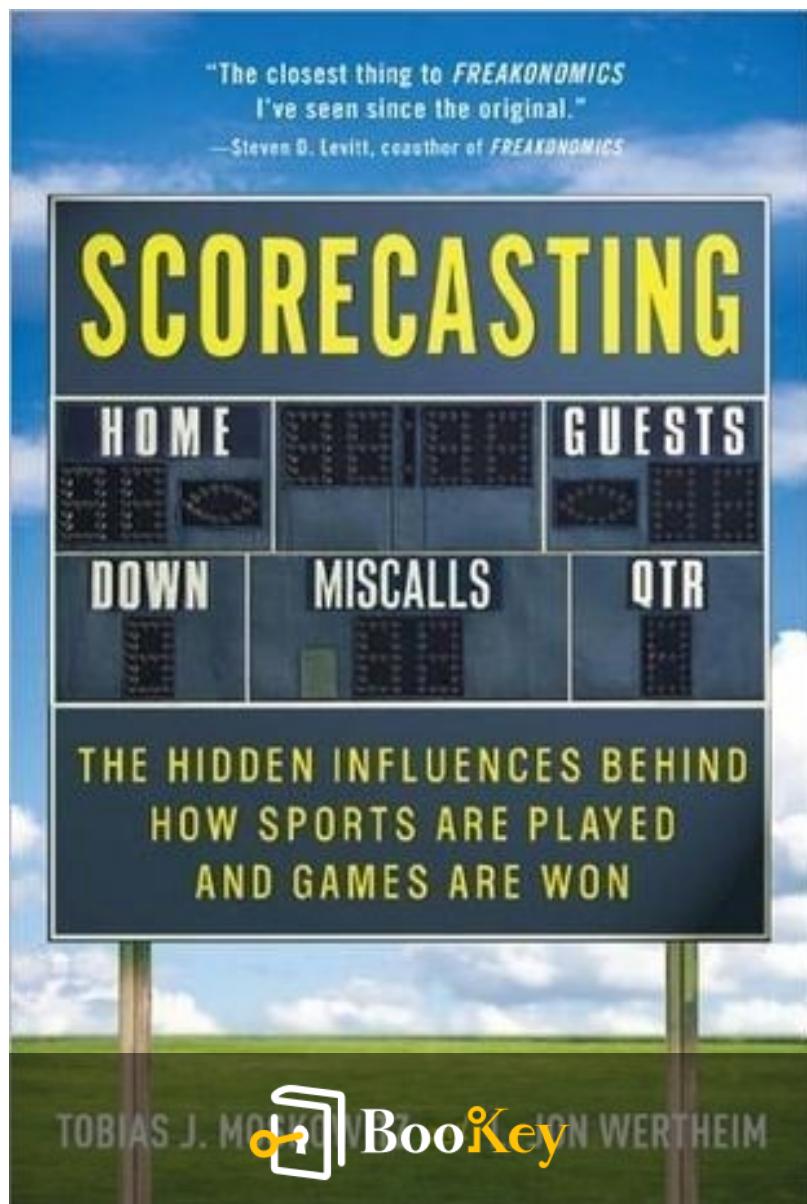


# Scorecasting PDF

Tobias J. Moskowitz



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Unraveling Sports Myths Through Data and  
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## About the book

In "Scorecasting," Tobias J. Moskowitz and L. Jon Wertheim challenge conventional wisdom in the sports world with a compelling mix of statistics and analysis. Dispelling the well-worn adage that "defense wins championships," they reveal that offense is equally critical across various sports. Through meticulous data examination, the authors unravel the true nature of home-field advantage, attributing it not to fatigue among visiting teams, but rather to the bias of referees influenced by enthusiastic crowds. They also delve into off-field behaviors, shedding light on athletes' substance use patterns and dissecting the notorious curse of the Chicago Cubs by examining fan loyalty over folklore. For sports enthusiasts eager to spark engaging debates, "Scorecasting" offers a revelatory perspective that redefines what we think we know about the games we love.

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# About the author

Tobias J. Moskowitz is a distinguished economist and a prominent figure in the field of sports analytics, known for his innovative approach to understanding sports through the lens of economic principles and statistical analysis. Holding a Ph.D. in finance from the University of Chicago, Moskowitz has contributed significantly to the intersection of economics and sports, co-authoring influential works such as "Scorecasting" alongside writer L. Jon Wertheim. His research encompasses a variety of topics, ranging from the economics of sports betting to the impact of decision-making in professional sports, earning him recognition as a leading voice in transforming how fans, players, and organizations perceive the intricacies of competitive play. As a professor at the University of Chicago's Booth School of Business, Moskowitz continues to influence both academic and popular discourse, applying rigorous analytical frameworks to unpack the often counterintuitive dynamics of the sports world.

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# Summary Content List

Chapter 1 : Whistle Swallowing: Why fans and leagues want officials to miss calls

Chapter 2 : Go for It: Why coaches make decisions that reduce their team's chances of winning

Chapter 3 : How Competitive are Competitive Sports?: Why are the Pittsburgh Steelers so successful and the Pittsburgh Pirates so unsuccessful?

Chapter 4 : Tiger Woods Is Human (and Not for the Reason You Think): How Tiger Woods is just like the rest of us, even when it comes to playing golf

Chapter 5 : Offense Wins Championships, Too: Is defense really more important than offense?

Chapter 6 : The Value of a Blocked Shot: Why Dwight Howard's 232 blocked shots are worth less than Tim Duncan's 149

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Chapter 7 : Rounding First: Why .299 hitters are so much more rare (and maybe more valuable) than .300 hitters

Chapter 8 : Thanks, Mr. Rooney: Why black NFL coaches are doing worse than ever—and why this is a good thing

Chapter 9 : Comforts of Home: How do conventional explanations for the home field advantage stack up?

Chapter 10 : So, What is Driving the Home Field Advantage?: Hint: Vocal fans matter, but not in the way you might think

Chapter 11 : There's No I in Team: But there is an m and an e

Chapter 12 : Off the Chart: How Mike McCoy came to dominate the NFL draft

Chapter 13 : How a Coin Toss Trumps All: Why American Idol is a fairer contest than an NFL overtime

Chapter 14 : What Isn't in the Mitchell Report?: Why Dominican baseball players are more likely to use

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Chapter 15 : Do Athletes Really Melt When Iced?: Does calling a time-out before a play actually work?

Chapter 16 : The Myth of the Hot Hand: Do players and teams ride the wave of momentum? Or are we (and they) fooled into thinking they do?

Chapter 17 : Damned Statistics: Why “four out of his last five” almost surely means four of six

Chapter 18 : Are the Chicago Cubs Cursed?: If not, then why are the Cubs so futile?

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# Chapter 1 Summary : Whistle Swallowing: Why fans and leagues want officials to miss calls



Section	Summary
Introduction	Sports officials face significant criticism despite their training; fans overestimate their ability to officiate.
Profile of a Referee: Mike Carey	Mike Carey, a respected referee, has a strong background in academia and officiated notable games, including Super Bowl XLII.
The Tyree Catch	Eli Manning's play leading to the "Tyree Catch" raised questions on officiating decisions, highlighting the complexity of referee judgment.
Omission Bias	Psychological concept where failing to make a call is perceived less negatively than making an incorrect call, seen in various fields.
Officiating Statistics in Baseball	MLB data shows umpires are accurate but demonstrate bias in critical situations, affecting game outcomes and extending at-bats.
Implications of Star Players	Star players may benefit from lenient officiating, where refs avoid making calls that could significantly impact the game.
Make-Up Calls	Officials often issue make-up calls to balance perceived earlier mistakes, demonstrating a pattern of officiating through omission.
Referees Near Game End	Officials are less likely to call subjective violations in tight game situations, aiming to avoid altering the outcome.
Serena Williams' Foot Fault Incident	A controversial foot fault call during the 2009 U.S. Open illustrates the backlash officials face when strictly enforcing rules.
Conclusion	Officiating decisions reflect broader psychological tendencies to avoid responsibility, sparking debates on accuracy versus game flow.

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# WHISTLE SWALLOWING: Why Fans and Leagues Want Officials to Miss Calls

## Introduction

- Sports officials experience significant scrutiny and criticism despite their skill and training.
- Fans often believe they can officiate as well as trained referees, ignoring the complexity and accuracy of official calls.

## Profile of a Referee: Mike Carey

- Mike Carey, a notable referee, showcases the caliber of officials: a successful background in academia and business, coupled with dedication to officiating.
- Carey officiated Super Bowl XLII, where a crucial moment, known as the "Tyree Catch," highlighted the dynamics of officiating decisions.

## The Tyree Catch

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- Eli Manning's escape and David Tyree's extraordinary catch epitomized the drama of the game, yet officiating in that moment sparked debate over the referee's judgment.
- Carey chose not to call a potential "in the grasp" foul, a decision deemed commendable by many despite controversies.

## Omission Bias

- Discussion of psychological concepts surrounding officials' decisions, where omitting a call can be perceived less critically than making an incorrect call.
- Examples from medical ethics and business illustrate the tendency to favor inaction over action.

## Officiating Statistics in Baseball

- Data from Major League Baseball indicates that umpires make accurate calls but exhibit bias during critical situations (two-strike and three-ball counts).
- Umpires' reluctance to make certain calls can prolong at-bats, impacting game outcomes in favor of players.

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## Implications of Star Players

- Star players often benefit from a lenient officiating style, which may not be purely favoritism but a reluctance to influence the game outcomes.
- This duality suggests an intention by officials to avoid game-altering calls for star athletes.

## Make-Up Calls

- The phenomenon of make-up calls occurs as officials seek to balance perceived errors made earlier in the game.
- Statistical evidence reveals that wrong calls prompt subsequent calls that aim to even the score, validating the concept of officiating through omission.

## Referees Near Game End

- Officials tend to call fewer subjective violations as games conclude and scores tighten, reflecting a desire to avoid influencing the outcome.
- Both objective calls and those requiring discretion are evaluated differently depending on the game's context.

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## Serena Williams' Foot Fault Incident

- A controversial moment during a 2009 U.S. Open match exemplified the backlash officials face when enforcing rules at crucial moments.
- The backlash faced by the lineswoman, who enforced a foot fault call correctly, illustrates the conflict between strict adherence to rules and audience expectations for omission bias.

## Conclusion

- The influence of officiating decisions in sports illustrates broader psychological tendencies in humans to avoid taking responsibility through action.
- The struggle between officiating with accuracy versus the desire to keep the game flowing leads to significant debates in the world of sports.

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## Example

**Key Point:** Officiating decisions in sports often reflect a psychological aversion to making controversial calls.

**Example:** Imagine you are in the final minutes of a close basketball game. As a referee, you see a questionable foul but hesitate to blow your whistle, fearing the backlash from passionate fans and players alike. Instead, you remember how previous close calls sparked outrage and protests, and you decide to let the game unfold naturally. This scenario underscores the tendency to avoid making calls that could disrupt the game's flow and evoke criticism, mirroring the overarching theme of omission bias in officiating.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** The complex ethics of officiating reveal deeper truths about human psychology.

**Critical Interpretation:** Moskowitz's exploration of officiating decisions emphasizes how officials often face conflicting pressures: to maintain the integrity of the game and to avoid backlash from fans and players alike. This tension is crucial as it highlights the tendency of officials to favor inaction over action—a phenomenon known as omission bias. While this viewpoint sheds light on officiating behavior, it is essential for readers to critically evaluate whether this psychological interpretation universally applies, or if it merely simplifies the nuanced ethical dilemmas that officials navigate. Furthermore, studies in fields such as behavioral economics (e.g., Tversky & Kahneman's work on decision-making) can provide additional layers of understanding about how biases influence choices in high-pressure situations. Readers should not take Moskowitz's conclusions at face value, as the intricacies of human behavior often resist straightforward categorization.

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# Chapter 2 Summary : Go for It: Why coaches make decisions that reduce their team's chances of winning



## GO FOR IT

### Overview

This chapter examines unconventional coaching strategies in football, particularly focusing on Kevin Kelley, head coach of Pulaski Academy, who has pioneered a radically different approach that challenges conventional football wisdom through statistical analysis and risk-taking.

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## Game Description

In a September 2009 game, Pulaski Academy's team displayed erratic yet effective play-calling: going for it on fourth downs instead of kicking field goals, using onside kicks even when ahead, and often executing trick plays. This unorthodox approach was well accepted by players, fans, and reflected Kelley's innovative mindset.

## Kevin Kelley's Philosophy

Kelley's methods stem from his gameplay experiences where traditional strategies felt limiting. He believes maintaining possession and taking calculated risks (e.g., going for it on fourth down) enhances a team's probability of winning. His teams have largely benefitted from this approach, focusing on accumulating statistics that support retaining possession over punting.

## Statistical Analysis

Kelley uses data to inform decisions, demonstrating that teams gain substantially by adopting his strategies. Historical performance data underlines that the benefit of going for it

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on fourth down outweighs the risks of punting in many situations, particularly highlighting the context of risk aversion and loss aversion in football coaching.

## Psychology of Coaching Decisions

Coaches often make conservative choices driven by fear of loss—both in terms of game outcomes and personal job security—limiting their willingness to adopt innovative strategies. Psychological concepts such as loss aversion state that the potential pain of losing is more significant than the pleasure of winning, affecting decision-making under pressure.

## Cross-Sport Comparisons

The chapter draws parallels to other sports, illustrating how loss aversion leads to suboptimal decisions, such as benching star players in basketball when they could perform effectively despite foul trouble, or baseball manager decisions influenced by conventional roles for pitchers.

## Innovations and Challenges

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The chapter discusses further examples of pioneering strategies by coaches like Tony La Russa, showing how advanced strategies can fall flat if players do not buy in. While Kelley's methods have led to considerable success, he also has job security that allows for risk-taking that other coaches might avoid due to pressure.

## Conclusions

Kelley's unorthodox approach advocates for a fundamental reevaluation of risk in sports coaching. Coaches should consider empirical evidence to guide their strategies rather than conforming to tradition. The insights drawn from Kelley's practices highlight the importance of data, common sense in gameplay, and understanding psychological factors that inhibit innovative decision-making in sports. The chapter emphasizes the need for coaches to embrace calculated risks to optimize their team's chances of winning games in the face of outdated conventions.

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## Example

**Key Point:** Embrace calculated risks to optimize team performance.

**Example:** Imagine you're a coach in a tight game. Instead of punting on fourth down, you decide to go for it, trusting your players and the analytics that suggest this risk could shift momentum in your favor. As the crowd holds its breath, your quarterback executes a perfect play, converting the fourth down and continuing a drive towards the end zone. This choice, although unconventional, reflects a significant shift in mindset: valuing aggressive strategy backed by data over the fear of losing. Such decisive actions not only enhance your team's chances of winning but also instill a culture of confidence and audacity, ultimately changing how your players perceive risk and competition.

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# Chapter 3 Summary : How Competitive are Competitive Sports?: Why are the Pittsburgh Steelers so successful and the Pittsburgh Pirates so unsuccessful?

Section	Summary
Introduction to Competition in Sports	The chapter examines the differences in team success levels across professional sports leagues.
Case Study: New York Yankees vs. Pittsburgh Pirates	The Yankees, who won their 27th World Series in 2009, showcase stark success compared to the Pirates, who haven't had a winning season since 1992.
The Influence of Money and Market Share	Financial resources significantly affect competitiveness; the Yankees' high spending allows them to dominate, indicated by their payroll surpassing \$200 million.
Structural Factors in Baseball Competition	The lengthy 162-game season helps reflect true team talent, but the playoff structure limits chances for lower-ranked teams.
Comparison with the NFL's Parity	The NFL fosters parity through a short season, single-elimination playoffs, and a salary cap, leading to a more competitive environment.
Conclusion: Competitiveness Across Sports	Unlike the NFL, which shows wider competition, MLB tends to have monopolistic tendencies, resulting in predictable champions.

## COMPETITION IN SPORTS

### INTRODUCTION TO COMPETITION IN SPORTS

The chapter explores the varying levels of competition within professional sports, highlighting the stark differences in team

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success across leagues.

## CASE STUDY: NEW YORK YANKEES VS. PITTSBURGH PIRATES

The success of the New York Yankees, who won their 27th World Series in 2009, contrasts sharply with the Pittsburgh Pirates, who have failed to post a winning season since 1992. The Yankees' 2009 victory was celebrated with a massive parade, attracting over 3 million fans, while the Pirates struggle in a small-market setting.

## THE INFLUENCE OF MONEY AND MARKET SHARE

The chapter delves into how financial resources impact competitiveness in Major League Baseball (MLB). The Yankees' ability to spend significantly more on player

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# Chapter 4 Summary : Tiger Woods Is Human (and Not for the Reason You Think): How Tiger Woods is just like the rest of us, even when it comes to playing golf

Section	Summary
Introduction to Tiger's Legacy	Earl Woods predicted Tiger would surpass golf and humanity, which seemed validated by his achievements, including 14 Major titles.
The Illusion of Superhuman Performance	Public perception of Tiger as superhuman is dispelled by demonstrating his human flaws, particularly loss aversion affecting golfers' performance.
Research Findings on Putting Behavior	Studies found that PGA Tour golfers perform better on par puts than birdie puts due to irrational overvaluation of individual holes.
Tiger's Performance Under Pressure	At the 2009 PGA Championship, Tiger's caution under pressure contrasted with Y. E. Yang's aggressive play, exemplifying loss aversion affecting decisions.
Loss Aversion in Other Sports	Loss aversion principles apply across sports; athletes adjust strategies based on perceived gains or losses during competition.
Fan Behavior and Loss Aversion	Fans' emotional investments in games vary by context, showing that the experience of winning or losing can be deeply affected by the situation.
Conclusion	Both professional athletes and everyday people share psychological biases, like loss aversion, that govern decision-making in sports and life.

## TIGER WOODS IS HUMAN (AND NOT FOR THE REASON YOU THINK)

### Introduction to Tiger's Legacy

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Earl Woods prophesied that his son, Tiger, would transcend golf and humanity itself. While many viewed this as megalomania, Tiger's rise to prominence in golf seemed to validate his father's words. By his mid-twenties, Tiger had revolutionized professional golf, winning 14 Major titles and showcasing an extraordinary combination of skill, mental strength, and physical ability.

## **The Illusion of Superhuman Performance**

Despite public perception of Tiger Woods as an almost divine figure, flaws in his game reveal that he is human after all. His performance reflects the same psychological biases that affect everyday individuals, most notably loss aversion — the tendency to prefer avoiding losses over acquiring equivalent gains. This phenomenon causes golfers, including Tiger Woods, to approach birdie putts with caution while putting for par appears less stressful.

## **Research Findings on Putting Behavior**

Studies conducted by Devin Pope and Maurice Schweitzer analyzed over 2.5 million putts from 421 PGA Tour golfers,

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concluding that players are more successful at putting for par than for birdie, despite the identical physical conditions. This leads to the irrational behavior of overvaluing individual holes at the expense of overall performance.

## **Tiger's Performance Under Pressure**

In a significant example at the 2009 PGA Championship, Tiger Woods, often seen as the invincible champion, faltered under pressure while Y. E. Yang played with abandon, illustrating how loss aversion influenced their respective performances. Tiger's cautious playing style, focused on preserving his lead, contrasted with Yang's aggressive approach in facing unexpected opportunities.

## **Loss Aversion in Other Sports**

The principles of loss aversion extend beyond golf to various sports. Pitchers in baseball change their pitching strategies based on whether they started with an advantage or disadvantage in a count. Similarly, football teams exhibit a propensity to go for it on fourth down based on their prior success in the drive. The analysis of NFL teams reveals that those who perceive a potential loss react more aggressively

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than those who view their situation as a mere gain.

## **Fan Behavior and Loss Aversion**

Loss aversion also influences how fans emotionally invest in their teams. A team's performance can evoke different feelings based on how a game unfolds, revealing that context greatly affects emotional responses regardless of the final outcome. High-stakes moments, such as a comeback or narrowly secured victory, amplify emotional states, making victories and losses feel very different based on the nature of the experience.

## **Conclusion: A Reflection on Human Nature in Sports**

Ultimately, the exploration of loss aversion reveals that both professional athletes like Tiger Woods and everyday individuals share common psychological biases that shape their behaviors and decisions. Momentary pressures, perceived risks, and strategies informed by the desire to avoid loss highlight the intricacies of performance not only in sports but across various life contexts.

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## Example

**Key Point:** Understanding loss aversion can redefine your approach to challenges and setbacks.

**Example:** Imagine standing over a crucial putt in a high-stakes game, with your heart racing and thoughts racing faster. You can either risk going for that birdie, where the potential gain is thrilling, or you can play it safe for par, where the safety net of avoiding a loss looms large. Just like a golfer, you might notice that your inclination to protect your current standing, whether in a project or a competition, often overshadows your willingness to take bold steps forward. Recognizing this cognitive bias, you can strategically recalibrate your mindset, embracing the courage to pursue opportunities even amidst fear of failure, just as you'd counsel a friend against solely playing it safe in their career.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Loss aversion can skew performances in sports, revealing shared vulnerabilities in athletes and non-athletes alike.

**Critical Interpretation:** While Moskowitz argues that psychological biases like loss aversion play a crucial role in athletes' performances, such as that of Tiger Woods, one must consider that this perspective may simplify the myriad of factors influencing an athlete's performance under pressure. For instance, the context of competition, personal circumstances, and external pressures can all influence outcomes and might not solely be attributed to psychological responses. Critics could refer to studies like those from Baumeister et al. (2007), which discuss the complexity of self-control and performance, suggesting that this analysis may overlook other critical elements that contribute to performance in high-stakes situations.

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# Chapter 5 Summary : Offense Wins Championships, Too: Is defense really more important than offense?

## OFFENSE WINS CHAMPIONSHIPS, TOO

### Introduction to the Debate

The long-standing adage "defense wins championships," popularized by Michael Jordan, has been widely accepted in sports culture. Jordan attributed the Chicago Bulls' successes in the 1990s to defense, reinforcing the narrative that defense is crucial for winning titles.

### Analysis of Offense vs. Defense

Research shows that when it comes to winning championships, offense and defense have remarkably similar significance. In the NFL, the better defensive team won 29 out of 44 Super Bowls, while the better offensive team won 24 times. Looking at playoff games overall, better offensive

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teams won 62% of the time compared to 58% for better defensive teams, suggesting a slight advantage for offense, but results are nearly equal.

## Win Rates and Team Rankings

Among the last 100 World Series winners, the better offensive teams have triumphed 54 times while the better defensive teams won 44 times. This pattern continues across various sports—NBA, NHL, and even baseball—indicating no clear dominance for defense over offense or vice versa.

## Championship Winning Patterns

Historically, teams with either a strong offense or defense have been successful. However, the data reveals that Super Bowl champions ranked low in defense more frequently than in offense. Teams potentially need only one outstanding aspect—either stellar offense or defense—to secure a championship.

## Impact of Team Strategy and Statistics

Games featuring a high-ranking offense versus a

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high-ranking defense have resulted in a near even split in victories. The perception that defensive prowess leads to upset victories by underdog teams is unfounded based on statistics across seasons and championships.

## **The Misplaced Emphasis on Defense**

The reverence for defense over offense could stem from a societal inclination toward loss aversion—players prioritize preventing loss more than gaining ground. This narrative is perpetuated partly due to the marketing and glamorization of offensive players in the sports industry.

## **Conclusion**

Ultimately, both defense and offense are essential for championship success, and neither can be deemed more important. A more nuanced understanding would frame the discussion around the balance and effectiveness of both aspects in crafting successful teams, rather than perpetuating the myth that "defense wins championships."

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** The equality of offense and defense in championship victories suggests a need for a paradigm shift in sports culture.

**Critical Interpretation:** The chapter's assertion that both offense and defense carry similar weight in championship success challenges the entrenched belief that defense is superior. While the author's perspective is supported by statistical data drawing from multiple sports, it's crucial to consider alternative viewpoints and anecdotal evidence that emphasize defense's role in pivotal moments. Critics may argue that the physicality and strategic depth of a strong defense can overshadow offensive accomplishments, particularly in high-stakes scenarios.

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# **Chapter 6 Summary : The Value of a Blocked Shot: Why Dwight Howard's 232 blocked shots are worth less than Tim Duncan's 149**

## **THE VALUE OF A BLOCKED SHOT**

### **Introduction**

This chapter explores the relative value of blocked shots in basketball, showcasing the difference in impact between quantified statistics (total blocks) and contextual value (impact of each block).

### **Background of John Huizinga**

- John Huizinga, a former basketball player and professor at the University of Chicago, became an agent for Yao Ming, gaining extensive exposure to the NBA.
- Huizinga's experience led him to notice varying values in blocked shots depending on the context.

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## Importance of Context in Blocked Shots

- Not all blocked shots hold the same worth. For instance:
  - A block on a breakaway layup is highly valuable, while a block of a difficult, off-balance shot is less impactful.
- Huizinga, along with sports statistician Sandy Weil, studied NBA play-by-play data to evaluate block effectiveness based on shot types and outcomes.

## Research Findings

- Their analysis indicated that:
  - A block on layups or non-jump shots is valued at approximately 1.5 points.
  - Blocks of jump shots are valued at about 1 point.
  - The outcome of a block also affects its value, with blocks leading to teammate recoveries valued highest.

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# Chapter 7 Summary : Rounding First: Why .299 hitters are so much more rare (and maybe more valuable) than .300 hitters

## ROUNDING FIRST

### Why .299 hitters are so much more rare (and maybe more valuable) than .300 hitters

The chapter explores the psychological and market dynamics influenced by round numbers, particularly in the context of sports statistics. Prices often end in nine, and similar behaviors are evident in various areas of consumer behavior, including automotive and jewelry markets.

Research by Devin Pope and Uri Simonsohn reveals that consumers, including students taking standardized tests like the SAT, are influenced by round numbers; those scoring just below a round number are more likely to attempt to improve their scores. Baseball is rich with these round number targets, notably the .300 batting average, which holds significant

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financial and symbolic value.

## Financial Implications of Batting Averages

The difference between a hitter with a .299 average and one with a .300 average can equate to substantial salary differences, driving players to desperate measures on the last day of the season. Players hitting .299 tend to swing for hits instead of taking walks in their final at-bats, leading to a higher hit success rate compared to their .300 counterparts. Statistics show that after the last game of the season, the proportion of .300 hitters increases significantly while .299 hitters drop drastically, showcasing the impact of this round number on player behavior.

## Pitcher Behavior and No Collusion

Contrary to speculations of pitcher complicity in aiding .299 hitters, data show that pitchers maintain consistent performance against both .299 and .300 batters. The difference lies in batter behavior; .299 hitters swing more freely, while .300 hitters are more cautious, affecting their final statistics.

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## Other Round Number Pursuits in Baseball

Beyond batting averages, players aim for other round numbers like 100 RBIs, 20 home runs, and 20 wins among pitchers, showing a similar pattern where last at-bat performances drive these statistics. Historical data indicates a diminished focus on these round numbers prior to free agency, suggesting financial drivers affect current player behavior.

## The Value Paradox of Round Numbers

The chapter argues that the overvaluation of players achieving round number milestones, like a .300 average, often does not reflect their actual performance. This presents an opportunity for general managers to benefit by trading overvalued players for those who miss these thresholds slightly.

## Case Study: Bobby Abreu

Bobby Abreu serves as a case study, entering critical final games with .299 averages, successfully achieving milestones that impact his value significantly in the contracting process.

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## Broad Applicability of Round Numbers

Finally, the text connects the obsession with round numbers to broader contexts such as corporate earnings, where meeting or slightly exceeding targets can significantly influence stock prices, mirroring the sports dynamic of hitting those pivotal numbers.

Through quantitative and behavioral analysis, the chapter illustrates how societal fixation on round numbers can shape actions and economic outcomes in both sports and corporate settings.

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# Chapter 8 Summary : Thanks, Mr. Rooney: Why black NFL coaches are doing worse than ever—and why this is a good thing

## THANKS, MR. ROONEY: Overview of Black NFL Coaches' Challenges

### Tony Dungy's Legacy

- Tony Dungy exemplified the qualities desired in an NFL head coach: dignity, commitment, and respect from players and media.
- Hired as head coach by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in 1996, Dungy had a respectable record but struggled in the playoffs.
- His firing in 2001 left only two African-American head coaches in the league, a stark contrast to the player demographics.

### Statistical Evidence and Bias

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- Johnnie Cochran Jr. and Cyrus Mehri partnered with sociologist Janice Madden to analyze hiring practices in the NFL.
- Madden's research revealed that between 1990 and 2002, African-American coaches outperformed their white counterparts in win-loss records and playoff appearances.
- The findings suggested that black coaches faced higher expectations for hiring and success, raising questions about bias.

## **The Rooney Rule**

- The Rooney Rule, implemented in 2003, required teams to interview at least one minority candidate for head-coaching positions.
- The aim was to diversify coaching staff, highlighted by the 2003 fine against the Detroit Lions for failing to interview candidates.

## **Current Outcomes for African-American Coaches**

- Despite the intention behind the Rooney Rule, from 2003 onwards, the performance of African-American coaches declined compared to previous years.

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- African-American coaches averaged the same number of wins as white coaches and showed lower playoff success rates.
- Early career struggles were prevalent, with coaches like Marvin Lewis, Romeo Crennel, and Herman Edwards facing challenges in their first seasons.

## Validation of Standards

- Madden and supporters contend that the decline in performance validates the Rooney Rule; it indicates that African-American coaches now face the same standards and challenges as their white peers.
- Successful moments included Dungy's Super Bowl victory and the presence of African-American coaches like Mike Tomlin.

## Conclusion

- The chapter encapsulates the complexity of race, performance, and expectations in NFL coaching, highlighting an ongoing struggle for equality and opportunity within the league.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Evaluating the effectiveness of the Rooney Rule and its implications for African-American coaches.

**Critical Interpretation:** While the Rooney Rule was intended to create equity and improve coaching diversity, the chapter points out a paradoxical outcome where performance metrics for African-American coaches, instead of improving, have plateaued or even regressed. This raises critical questions about the fairness of expectations placed upon Black coaches versus their white counterparts, suggesting a deeply entrenched bias that remains unresolved despite policy efforts. It invites scrutiny of Moskowitz's interpretation, as the statistical reliance on performance might overlook unique external factors impacting these coaches' situations. Readers should consider alternative analyses of coaching dynamics and deeper systemic issues (see 'Black Coaches in College Football' by D. T. Mason) before accepting the claim that the decline in performance validates the Rooney Rule.

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# **Chapter 9 Summary : Comforts of Home: How do conventional explanations for the home field advantage stack up?**

## **COMFORTS OF HOME**

### **Home Field Advantage Overview**

The phenomenon of home field advantage in sports is well-documented, consistently showing that teams performing at home tend to win more frequently than when they are on the road. Despite various theories about why this advantage exists, extensive research has shown that it transcends individual sports and geographical differences. Across numerous sports leagues in multiple countries, data consistently indicates that home teams win more than 50% of their games.

### **The Statistics Behind Home Advantage**

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- Major sports reveal profound home team success rates:
  - MLB: 54%
  - NBA: 63%
  - NFL: 58%
  - NHL: 59%
  - College Basketball: 69%
  - International Soccer: 62.4%
- The home team advantage has remained stable over decades, never dropping significantly even as gameplay rules and athlete conditions have evolved.

## **Conventional Explanations Analyzed**

1.

### **Crowd Support**

: This theory runs contrary to empirical data that shows virtually no significant impact of crowd noise or support on free throw shooting and other isolated performance metrics

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# Chapter 10 Summary : So, What is Driving the Home Field Advantage?: Hint: Vocal fans matter, but not in the way you might think

Section	Summary
Introduction	Home field advantage is significantly influenced by referee bias, particularly in critical situations.
Key Factors Contributing to Home Field Advantage	Referee Bias: Refs tend to favor home teams during key moments. Psychological Influences: Social pressure causes referees to conform to crowd expectations and rely on crowd feedback in ambiguous situations.
Evidence Across Sports	Soccer: Extra time granted to trailing home teams. Baseball: Fewer strike calls against home teams equate to more runs. Football: Home teams face fewer penalties; replay reduces bias effects. Basketball: Home teams get more favorable foul calls and free throw attempts.
Impact of Crowd Size and Engagement	Attendance: Larger crowds enhance referee bias; smaller crowds diminish home field advantage. Crowd Noise: Higher noise levels lead to more fouls called against the visiting team.
Conclusion	Referee bias, influenced by psychological factors and crowd dynamics, significantly affects home field advantage in sports.

## Home Field Advantage: The Role of Referee Bias

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# Introduction

Home field advantage in sports is often attributed to various factors. However, research reveals that referee bias plays a critical role, with officials more likely to favor home teams, particularly in high-stakes situations.

## Key Factors Contributing to Home Field Advantage

1.

### Referee Bias

: Studies show that referees exhibit bias favoring home teams during crucial moments. This includes:

- Increased injury time in soccer when the home team is behind.
- More favorable calls for home teams in baseball regarding strike and ball counts.
- Fewer penalties called against home teams in football and basketball.

2.

### Psychological Influences

: Referees are humans subject to social pressure, leading to:

-

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## Conformity

: Officials may unconsciously align their calls with crowd expectations.

-

## Ambiguity

: In unclear situations, referees may rely more on crowd feedback, further amplifying bias.

## Evidence Across Sports

-

### Soccer

: Referees grant extra time in favor of trailing home teams, demonstrating bias in critical moments.

-

### Baseball

: Umpires award home teams significantly fewer called strikes—especially in high-leverage situations—leading to an estimated additional 7.3 runs per season for home teams.

### Football

: Home teams receive fewer penalties, and instant replay has shown to reduce home field advantage where biases were minimized.

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## **Basketball**

: Home teams benefit from fewer calls for ambiguous fouls and receive more free throw attempts.

## **Impact of Crowd Size and Engagement**

### **Attendance**

: Research indicates that larger crowds amplify referee bias, leading to more favorable calls for home teams. In lower-attended games, the home field advantage decreases significantly.

### **Crowd Noise**

: Experiments show that referees called more fouls when crowd noise was present, emphasizing the influence of fan engagement.

## **Conclusion**

Referee bias emerges as a significant contributor to home field advantage across various sports, driven by psychological factors and crowd dynamics. Understanding

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these influences may offer deeper insights into the nature of competition in sports.

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# Chapter 11 Summary : There's No I in Team: But there is an m and an e

**THERE'S NO I IN TEAM BUT THERE IS AN M AND AN E**

## Introduction to Teamwork and Superstars

The popular saying, "There's no I in team," emphasizes teamwork and selflessness in sports, often quoted in basketball. This idea suggests that a cohesive team can outshine individual star players. However, a review of NBA history reveals a contrary reality, where top performers have often been essential to success.

## The Importance of Superstars in Winning

A study highlights that since 1991, every NBA championship-winning team has had at least one superstar, such as Michael Jordan or LeBron James. The absence of a superstar drastically diminishes a team's chances, with a mere

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0.9 percent probability of winning a championship for teams without any all-stars.

## Statistical Breakdown of Championship Probabilities

### 0 Superstars:

0.9% chance to win a championship.

### 1 Superstar:

7.1% chance to win; 16% to reach finals.

### 2 Superstars:

25% chance to win; 37% to reach finals.

### 3 Superstars:

39% chance to win; 77% to reach finals.

Furthermore, teams with top-five MVP candidates show even higher winning probabilities.

## Playoff Performance of Superstars

While regular-season success is important, the impact of

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superstars becomes more significant during the playoffs. A top-five MVP candidate increases the probability of winning a championship by 12% and reaching the finals by 23%.

## **Talent Distribution and Team Success**

Contrary to the belief that evenly distributed talent is advantageous, teams with varied salaries among their players are more likely to win championships. This finding applies to basketball, hockey, and soccer.

### **Caveats in Baseball**

Baseball exhibits a weaker correlation between individual stars and team success due to the sport's larger teams and lower frequency of individual impact during the game.

### **Conclusion**

Despite emphasizing team unity, coaches may highlight individual contributions since superstars play a crucial role in winning. Iconic players like Michael Jordan recognize this, as illustrated in his Hall of Fame speech, emphasizing the coexistence of individual talent and teamwork.

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## Example

**Key Point:** The pivotal role of superstars in determining team success across various sports.

**Example:** Imagine you're a passionate basketball fan, watching your favorite team struggle in the playoffs. The coach always emphasizes teamwork, and players chant 'There's no I in team!' Yet, you've noticed that when superstar players like LeBron James take the court, everything changes. Your team's chances to win increase dramatically because the stats reveal that without a star, they only have a 0.9% chance of winning a championship. You realize that while teamwork is essential, the undeniable truth is that true champions often rise from having extraordinary talents that can elevate the entire team.

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# Chapter 12 Summary : Off the Chart: How Mike McCoy came to dominate the NFL draft

## OFF THE CHART: The Dominance of Mike McCoy in the NFL Draft

### Introduction to the Cowboys' New Era

In 1991, the Dallas Cowboys faced uncertainty under the new ownership of Jerry Jones, who had shaken up the franchise by firing legendary coach Tom Landry and hiring Jimmy Johnson. Despite a lackluster start, the Cowboys aimed to turn their fortunes around via the draft, holding ten picks across the first four rounds.

### The Value of Draft Picks

With multiple top picks, the Cowboys sought to maximize their opportunities but faced challenges in evaluating trade offers effectively. Mike McCoy, a Cowboys executive,

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devised a strategy to quantify draft picks' value objectively. He created a chart based on historical trades that provided a numerical representation of each pick's worth, transforming how the Cowboys approached trade discussions.

## **The Impact of McCoy's Chart**

McCoy's chart served as a "price list" for draft picks, enabling the Cowboys to confidently evaluate trade offers. This led to an exceptional draft day in 1991, where the team made 17 selections, including future stars, and rejuvenated the Cowboys' brand, earning three Super Bowl titles in the following years.

## **Widespread Adoption of The Chart**

Although McCoy's valuation method was innovative, it quickly became widely copied throughout the league. Most

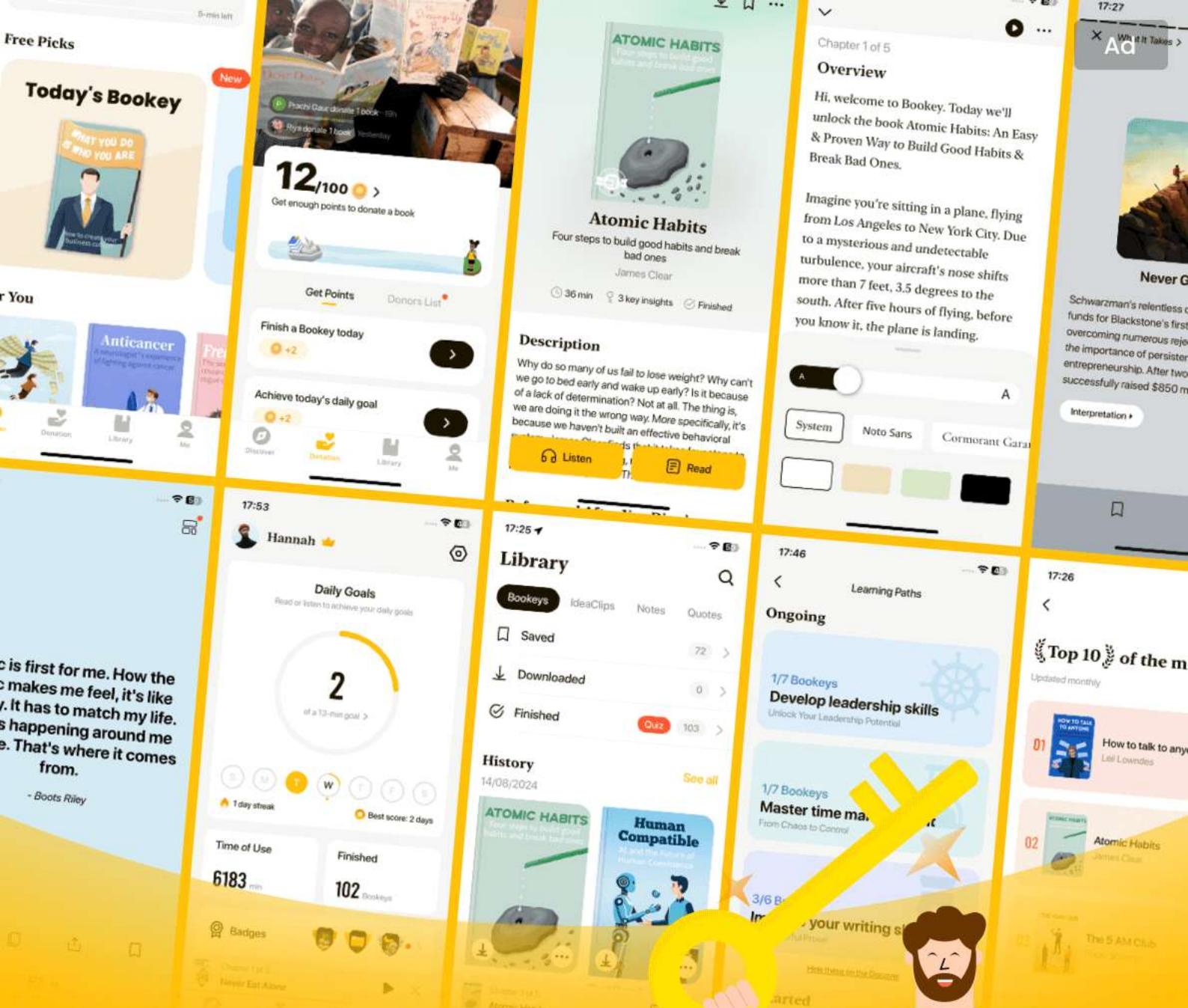
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A stylized illustration of a man with a beard and short hair, wearing a white dress shirt and a black tie. He is standing with his arms outstretched to the sides. The background is a yellow surface with a subtle grid pattern. In the upper left corner, there is some faint, overlapping text that appears to be from a presentation slide, including words like '3/6 B', 'Improve your writing', 'The 5 AM Club', and 'The 5 AM Club'. The overall style is clean and modern.

# Chapter 13 Summary : How a Coin Toss Trumps All: Why American Idol is a fairer contest than an NFL overtime

## HOW A COIN TOSS TRUMPS ALL

### Introduction to NFL Overtime Dynamics

In the NFL, intense physical play culminates in a tied score, leading to overtime, which can ultimately be decided by a coin toss. This highlights the dichotomy between the sport's brutal physicality and the randomness of the coin flip determining the game's outcome.

### Coin Toss Statistics

Research by Brian Burke shows that from 2000 to 2009, 158 NFL games went into overtime. The winning team of the coin toss won 96 out of those 155 games, translating to a 61% success rate. Notably, in 37% of overtime games, the team winning the toss succeeded on their first possession

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without the opposing team having the chance to respond.

## **Fairness in Overtime: Proposed Solutions**

Several proposals aim to make overtime more equitable:

### **Kickoff Position Change**

: Economist David Romer suggests moving the kickoff from the 30-yard line to the 35, increasing the likelihood of touchbacks and balancing field position.

### **Auctioning First Possession**

: Chris Quanbeck proposes allowing teams to bid for the first possession of overtime, introducing a strategic element based on field position.

### **Eliminating Field Goals**

: Some advocate for only touchdowns to count in overtime, encouraging riskier plays like onside kicks.

### **Kansas Plan Adaptation**

: Emulating college football's system, allowing each team a chance to possess the ball at the opponent's 25-yard line could provide fairness to the team that loses the coin flip.

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## Comparison with Other Sports

In sports like tennis, winning the coin toss offers various strategic options, and servers have a significant advantage. The NFL has begun to recognize the unpredictability of the coin toss, with changes to overtime rules in playoff games, allowing the team that loses the toss a chance to score if the opposing team kicks a field goal.

## Conclusion: The Need for Reform

While changes have been made to NFL overtime rules for playoffs, the randomness of deciding critical games by a coin toss remains a contentious issue. Traditionalists in the league recognize the need for change based on statistical evidence, but the current system still stands for regular-season games.

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# **Chapter 14 Summary : What Isn't in the Mitchell Report?: Why Dominican baseball players are more likely to use steroids—and American players are more likely to smoke weed**

## **WHAT ISN'T IN THE MITCHELL REPORT?**

### **Dominican Baseball Players and PED Use**

The chapter discusses the stark differences in performance-enhancing drug (PED) use between Dominican baseball players and their American counterparts, particularly focusing on the case of Mark McGwire's confession about his steroid use in 2010. While McGwire's admission represented a significant moment in Major League Baseball, it is highlighted that the majority of PED usage involves less-publicized minor league players, with the majority of positive tests occurring among them.

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## Economic and Cultural Factors

The narrative explains how economic circumstances in the Dominican Republic drive young players to take risks with performance-enhancing drugs. Many Dominican players, like Wellington Dotel, grow up in poverty and see baseball as a rare opportunity for personal and familial advancement. The signing bonuses these players receive can be life-changing, creating intense pressure to succeed, often leading to decisions to use PEDs.

## Disparity in Drug Suspensions

Statistical evidence shows that while American players represent a large portion of Major League rosters, they are underrepresented among those suspended for drug violations. Conversely, Dominican players, despite making up a smaller percentage of MLB players, disproportionately face PED-related suspensions. This trend is even more pronounced in minor leagues, suggesting a significant disparity influenced by economic conditions.

## The Role of Opportunity and Incentives

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The chapter posits that players from poorer economic backgrounds are more likely to use PEDs due to a stronger perceived need to succeed. The discussion emphasizes that the economic model behind PED use aligns with the principles of risk and reward, where players weigh the consequences of getting caught against the life-altering benefits of achieving baseball success.

## **Cultural Implications of Drug Use**

Moreover, cultural perceptions around drug use differ significantly between Dominican and American players. While American players tend to engage more in recreational drug use, Dominican players primarily face suspensions for performance enhancement, reflecting different societal attitudes toward drugs.

## **Conclusion: A Call for Contextual Understanding**

The chapter concludes by asserting that while players ultimately make the choice to use steroids, it is essential to consider the economic and systemic factors at play. The choices players make regarding PED use reflect a broader set of circumstances, including socioeconomic backgrounds and

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the structure of baseball's organizational practices. The system, as designed by Major League Baseball, creates an environment where many players feel compelled to make choices that may be seen as morally questionable.

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# Chapter 15 Summary : Do Athletes Really Melt When Iced?: Does calling a time-out before a play actually work?

## DO ATHLETES REALLY MELT WHEN ICED?

### Overview of Icing Strategies in Sports

The concept of "icing" athletes, particularly field goal kickers in the NFL and free throw shooters in the NBA, is a long-standing practice where the opposing team calls a time-out before a critical attempt in an effort to disrupt the athlete's focus.

### Case Study: Jay Feely

In the NFL, Jay Feely's experience showcases the unpredictability of iced kickers. After a rough patch with the Giants, he encountered a time-out situation while kicking for the Jets, leading to a successful reattempt after a missed kick. His experience suggests that icing may create an opportunity

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for kickers to refocus rather than doubt their abilities.

## Statistical Analysis of Icing the Kicker

- Statistical studies have examined the efficacy of icing kickers, with two significant studies:
  - Scott Berry and Craig Wood's research indicated a 10% decrease in success for iced kickers on longer field goals, but this was deemed statistically weak.
  - Nick Stamm's study contradicted Berry and Wood's findings, showing nearly identical success rates for iced (72%) and non-iced (71.7%) kicks. Our own analysis of NFL data (2001-2009) confirmed that icing has no impact on kickers' success rates regardless of distance.

## Pressure-Free Throws in the NBA

Similar to NFL kickers, NBA free throw shooters were also

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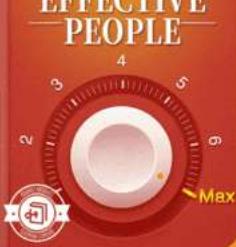
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# Chapter 16 Summary : The Myth of the Hot Hand: Do players and teams ride the wave of momentum? Or are we (and they) fooled into thinking they do?

## THE MYTH OF THE HOT HAND

### Introduction to Momentum in Sports

The chapter explores whether momentum truly exists in sports, focusing on the experiences of New York Mets player David Wright during a difficult batting slump. His struggles reflect a common belief among players and fans that players can "ride the wave" of momentum—implying that past performances influence future outcomes.

### The Illusion of Streaks in Sports

While players can experience streaks of success or failure, these do not necessarily predict future performance. Research shows that past performance is largely independent of future

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performance, disputing the myth of momentum. The chapter contrasts examples of both winning and losing streaks across various sports, indicating that they often result from random chance rather than sustained momentum.

## Studies on the Hot Hand Phenomenon

Historical studies, notably by psychologists Thomas Gilovich, Robert Vallone, and Amos Tversky, reveal that players' beliefs in the hot hand are not supported by statistical evidence. Their research in basketball indicated no significant correlation between a player's recent performance and success in subsequent shots, challenging the widespread perception that players become "hot" or "cold."

## Reversals Instead of Momentum

Analysis of NBA data from 2005 to 2009 revealed that teams scoring runs of six or more unanswered points were often outscored shortly after, indicating that momentum does not exist at a team level either. The chapter discusses how teams tend to regress after scoring sprees, again contradicting the belief in a positive momentum.

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## A Deeper Look at Contexts

The narrative extends to comebacks in games, where teams that rally to tie the score do not exhibit any increased likelihood of winning in overtime. Moreover, a consistent absence of momentum is observed across different sports, including baseball, where hitting streaks do not predict future success.

## Psychological Biases and Understanding Randomness

The failure to recognize the randomness in sports performance evokes psychological biases among fans and players. The chapter discusses how humans misinterpret randomness, with examples such as gamblers believing they're "due" for wins after losing streaks. This misunderstanding feeds into the myth of momentum.

## Implications for Predicting Performance

The chapter concludes that larger sample sizes of performance data are more reliable than short-term statistics. For instance, a player's historical performance over a season

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is a better predictor of future outcomes than their recent games, reinforcing the notion that randomness governs player and team performance.

## Conclusion

The acceptance of randomness over the concept of momentum holds significant implications for players, coaches, and fans alike. Understanding this can lead to more accurate predictions and potentially better decisions in sports strategy and betting. The chapter calls for a reevaluation of intuitive beliefs surrounding performance fluctuations, emphasizing the random nature of sports outcomes.

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# Chapter 17 Summary : Damned Statistics: Why “four out of his last five” almost surely means four of six

## DAMNED STATISTICS: Why “four out of his last five” almost surely means four of six

### Introduction

- The chapter explores the use and manipulation of statistics in sports commentary, particularly through the example of Ray Allen during the 2010 NBA Finals.

### The Case of Ray Allen

- In Game 2, Ray Allen made an impressive seven three-pointers in the first half, scoring 27 points.
- The media highlighted his successful streak, omitting his two-point shooting struggles.
- In the subsequent game, Allen missed all 13 of his shots, leading to commentary that emphasized his failures without

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context.

## The Role of Selective Statistics

- Statistics can mislead audiences when presented selectively.
- When a player is said to have hit “four of his last five,” it often means it’s actually “four out of six,” a fact left unsaid.
- Misleading narratives can arise from focusing on small sample sizes or extreme scenarios to generate interest.

### Example: Yankees vs. Blue Jays

- The disparity in how statistics were presented by the Yankees and Blue Jays broadcasters serves as an illustration.
- Each set of commentators used selective statistics to craft opposing narratives about Alex Rodriguez and Roy Halladay, both of which were true yet vastly different.

### Team Complicity in Statistical Presentation

- Teams also present statistics in a way designed to provoke excitement, often highlighting impressive short-term performance.
- A statistic like Carlos Quentin hitting .371 over nine games

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lacks context and meaning when not viewed in a larger dataset.

## Conclusion: The Importance of Context

- The chapter concludes that reliance on small sample statistics can lead to erroneous conclusions about player performance.
- For a more accurate assessment, it would be beneficial to present larger data sets, which would reflect players' true abilities over time, as seen in Ray Allen's career shooting average.

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# Chapter 18 Summary : Are the Chicago Cubs Cursed?: If not, then why are the Cubs so futile?

## ARE THE CHICAGO CUBS CURSED?

The Chicago Cubs, known for their long championship drought since 1908, face scrutiny regarding their repeated failures, particularly highlighted by the infamous incident involving fan Steve Bartman during the 2003 National League Championship Series. This chapter contemplates whether the Cubs' misfortunes stem from a curse or rather from mismanagement and a lack of competitive incentive.

## THE INFAMOUS BARTMAN INCIDENT

During a critical game against the Florida Marlins, Bartman's attempt to snag a foul ball disrupted a potential out, leading to a catastrophic eight-run inning for the Marlins. Despite being an excited fan hoping for a fair catch, Bartman was vilified and became a scapegoat for the Cubs' loss, enduring public outrage that escalated to threats and ridicule.

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## LUCK VS. FAILURE IN TEAM PERFORMANCE

The narrative around the Cubs often invokes the idea of a "curse," but the chapter challenges this notion by examining their consistent underperformance. Statistically, the Cubs' record cannot solely be attributed to bad luck; their failures parallel poor management decisions, including significant trades that weakened their roster. Additionally, the Cubs have often finished lower in the standings than statistically expected, indicating deeper systemic issues rather than mere untimely luck.

## INFERRED INCENTIVES AND FRANCHISE VALUATION

A key point raised is the Cubs' unique market position, which has allowed the franchise to maintain high attendance

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## Chapter 1 | Quotes From Pages 21-58

1. People view acts of omission—the absence of an act—as far less intrusive or harmful than acts of commission—the committing of an act—even if the outcomes are the same or worse.
2. As much as possible, you gotta let the players determine who wins and loses; the fans didn't come to see you. They came to see the athletes.
3. Omission bias suggests that umpires will be more reluctant to call the fourth ball, which would give the batter first base.
4. If you've made a bad call that influenced the game, you may be inclined to make a bad call in the other direction to balance it out.
5. You can't call that there! Not at that point in the match.

## Chapter 2 | Quotes From Pages 59-109

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1. It was like someone said, 'Hey, it's fourth down, you have to punt now.' So everyone started doing it without asking why. To me, it was like, 'You can have an extra down if you want it. No, I'll be nice and just use three.'
2. Honestly, I don't believe in punting and really can't ever see doing it again.
3. The built-in emotion involved in football is unbelievable, and that's where the benefits really pay off.
4. You can't imagine how fun it is," gushed Greyson Skokos, a thickly proportioned running back and one of four Bruins players who would go on to catch at least 50 passes in the 2009 season.
5. But Kelley is hardly successful on every fourth-down attempt, he succeeds roughly half the time, enough to convince Kelley that statistically, his team is better off going for it every time.
6. I'll take that every time!

## Chapter 3 | Quotes From Pages 110-117

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1. In contrast, unlike in baseball, more than half the teams make the postseason.
2. In the heavily regulated airline industry, the largest carriers in the domestic market, American and Southwest, each have less than 14 percent of the market share.
3. However, the reason for the Yankees' extraordinary success is more complex than that.
4. Just as in the previous year, the Phillies (\$98 million) beat the Tampa Bay Rays (\$44 million), and the year before that the Boston Red Sox (\$143 million) beat the Colorado Rockies (\$54 million).
5. Teams play a best-of-five-game series followed by a best-of-seven League Championship Series followed by a best-of-seven World Series.
6. The result? As you'd expect, the concentration of champions is lowest in football, the 'market share' remarkably balanced.
7. Three months after the World Series parade in New York there was a similar processional for the Super Bowl champs

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in small-market New Orleans.

8. But as an industry, some are more competitive than others.

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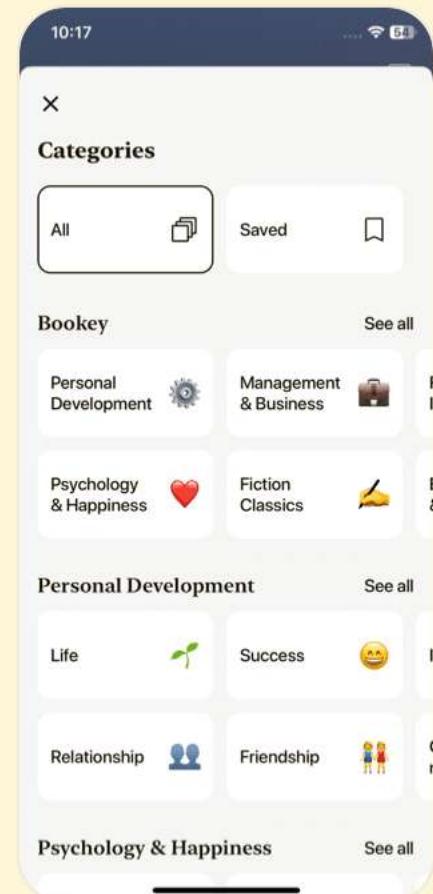
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## Chapter 4 | Quotes From Pages 118-148

1. He is the bridge between the East and the West.

There is no limit because he has the guidance.

2. I'm human and I'm not perfect.

3. If Tiger Woods is biased when he plays golf, what hope do the rest of us have?

4. The psychological difference between dropping a shot and making a birdie, I just think it's bigger to make a par putt.

5. It's somehow reassuring that Tiger is, at least in this respect, decidedly human.

## Chapter 5 | Quotes From Pages 149-158

1. Defense wins championships.

2. It's been shown that defense wins championships.

3. Defense wins championships, especially in the NHL.

4. In the NFL, it seems, teams need either exceptional defense or exceptional offense to win a championship.

5. Offense is fun. Offense is glamorous. Defense? It's less glamorous, less glorified.

6. Defense is less sexy and no more essential than offense.

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## Chapter 6 | Quotes From Pages 159-168

1. It's the value of an act, not the act itself, that ultimately matters.
2. Counting is easy; measuring value is hard.
3. The value of an empty-net goal in hockey... isn't nearly as important as a decisive overtime goal.
4. Savvy general managers can recognize (and exploit) this kind of information, acquiring and unloading talent accordingly.

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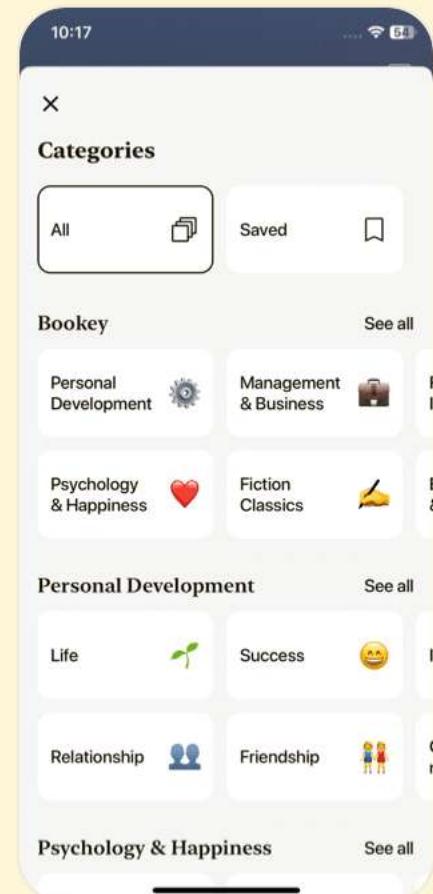
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## Chapter 7 | Quotes From Pages 169-188

1. The difference between a .300 and a .299 hitter is negligible—one misdirected ground ball, one bloop into short center field, one random bounce, one generous judgment by an official scorer over the course of a season.
2. By our calculations, the difference between two otherwise comparable players, one hitting .299 and the other .300, can be as high as 2 percent of salary, or, given the average Major League salary, \$130,000.
3. In other words, more than a third of the time, a player hitting .300—an earmark of greatness—will relinquish his last at-bat to a pinch hitter.
4. A savvy GM might consider doing the same thing: trading the .300 hitter for a player who hit just under .300, saving many thousands without affecting the hitting performance of his lineup.
5. Players, owners, and general managers (GMs) clearly value the higher round numbers.

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## Chapter 8 | Quotes From Pages 189-197

1. Tony was born to be a head coach in the NFL.
2. Madden found that between 1990 and 2002, the African-American coaches in the NFL were statistically far more successful than the white coaches, averaging nine-plus wins a season versus eight for their white counterparts.
3. If African-American coaches don't fail, it means that those with equal talents to the failing white coaches are not even getting the chance to be a coach.
4. The league achieved its aim. By 2005, there were six African-American coaches in the NFL, including Dungy, who had been hired by the Indianapolis Colts.
5. Seeing African-American coaches fail means that they, like white coaches, no longer have to be superstars to get coaching jobs.

## Chapter 9 | Quotes From Pages 198-243

1. For all the conventional sports wisdom that can be disproved, deconstructed, or, at the very least,

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called into question, home team advantage is no myth. Indisputably, it exists. And it exists with remarkable consistency.

2. When teams are down by a small margin in the final seconds of a game, there is even an adage, 'Play for the tie at home and the win on the road.'
3. The fact that the home field advantage exists is undeniable. But why does it exist? It's not for the reasons you might think.
4. In more than 100 baseball seasons, not once have the road teams collectively won more games than the home teams.
5. If the crowd is ineffectual in these isolated situations, it is at least questionable how much of an effect it could have in other situations.
6. For nearly every rugby match in more than 125 countries dating back to as early as 1871, the home field advantage is 58 percent.
7. At the time of the Blazers-Spurs game, Portland was 23–5 at home and 12–16 on the road, an 82 percent winning

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percentage at home versus 43 percent on the road.

8.(T)he better the home team plays, the more likely fans are to buy tickets and hats and T-shirts, renew their luxury suite leases, and drink beer, overpriced and watered down as it might be.

9. When looking at 40 other soccer leagues in 24 different countries, the home field advantage hovers around 63 percent.

10. Scheduling plays a huge role in the home team advantage.

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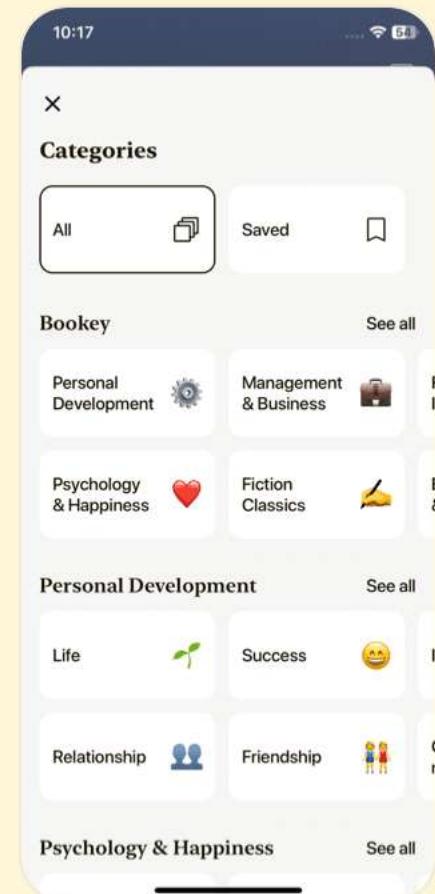
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## Chapter 10 | Quotes From Pages 244-298

1. Home cooking, as it's called, is very much on the menu at sporting events.
2. What sports fan doesn't harbor a belief that the officials are making bad calls against his or her team?
3. Knowing the statistics, you would have bet the house that the pitch wouldn't have been called a strike. And it wasn't.
4. When faced with enormous pressure—say, making a crucial call with a rabid crowd yelling... it is natural to want to alleviate that pressure.
5. The referee's discretion over the addition of extra time... is not recorded or monitored anywhere else in the stadium.
6. We think the payoff is worth it. Let's start by determining how to measure ref bias.
7. Psychology finds that social influence is a powerful force that can affect human behavior and decisions without the subjects even being aware of it.
8. Referees are not necessarily consciously favoring the home team but are doing what they believe is right.

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## Chapter 11 | Quotes From Pages 299-306

1.I looked back at Tex, and said, ‘There’s an I in win. So which way do you want it?’

## Chapter 12 | Quotes From Pages 307-339

1.How hard could this really be?

2.We’ll be good; big-time good. There’s no doubt in anybody’s mind here.

3.I guess it leveled the playing field and made trading easier.

4.It’ll be different here.

5.But after a while, you couldn’t [fleece] other teams the way we used to.

6.You never get the Porsche at the clunker price in the early rounds.

7.In the end, it’s very hard to tell who is going to be great, mediocre, or awful.

8.A team that discovered the chart was flawed—that it overvalued top draft picks—could trade its high picks for many more lower picks.

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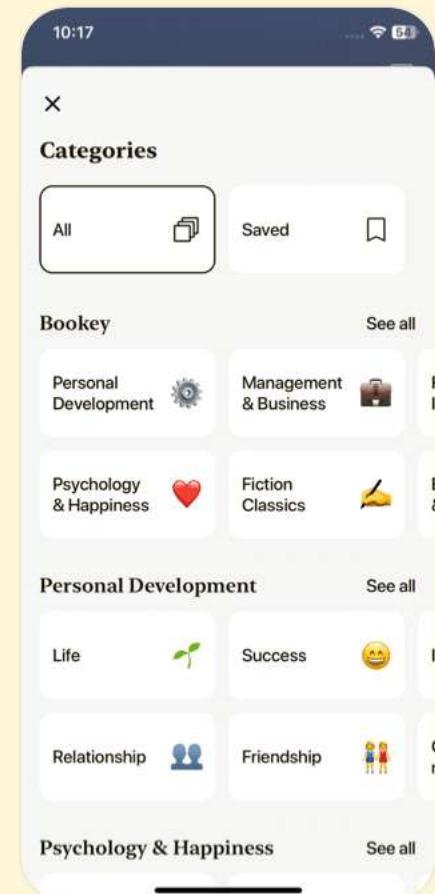
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## Chapter 13 | Quotes From Pages 340-346

1. ‘At this distance, it’s difficult to kick the ball into the end zone for a touchback, so the receiving team often gets the chance for a strong return.’
2. ‘Don’t be tricked by people that say ‘only 61 percent.’ If we agree 50 percent would be the fairest rate, you might think 61 isn’t very far from 50.’
3. ‘One game, the Detroit Lions won the coin flip and chose neither to kick nor to receive but rather what side of the field they preferred to defend.’
4. ‘Imagine the possibilities for stagecraft.... The two head coaches could come to midfield with sealed bids, with the envelopes to be opened by a cheerleader representing each team—a gridiron version of Deal or No Deal.’
5. ‘But once you saw the statistics, it became obvious we had to do something.’

## Chapter 14 | Quotes From Pages 347-371

1. You hate to even admit this,” says one former National League scout. “But when you see how

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some of these kids grew up, part of you thinks they'd be nuts not to do everything they possibly could to make it, even if that means steroids.

2. It's somebody behind the scene making money off those kids and telling them to take something they're not supposed to.

3. The risk of getting caught and failing a drug test was low. The punishment was low, as well.

4. Players from countries with lower standards of living and more limited opportunities are much more likely to use performance-enhancing drugs.

5. If your class is being graded on a curve and you know many peers plan to cheat on the upcoming test, you're probably more tempted to cheat, too, just to keep up.

6. To make this point another way, imagine a set of high school seniors of the same age, quality of education, and grade-point-average. Group A cheated on the SAT, and Group B didn't.

## Chapter 15 | Quotes From Pages 372-378

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1. If you're going to do that, do that before he kicks," he said. "I can kick it down the middle, see what the wind does, and adjust. It helps the kicker tremendously.
2. I think when you're at this level, nothing like that should matter. If it does, you probably don't belong here.
3. Icing doesn't freeze a player or heat him up. You might call it a lukewarm strategy.

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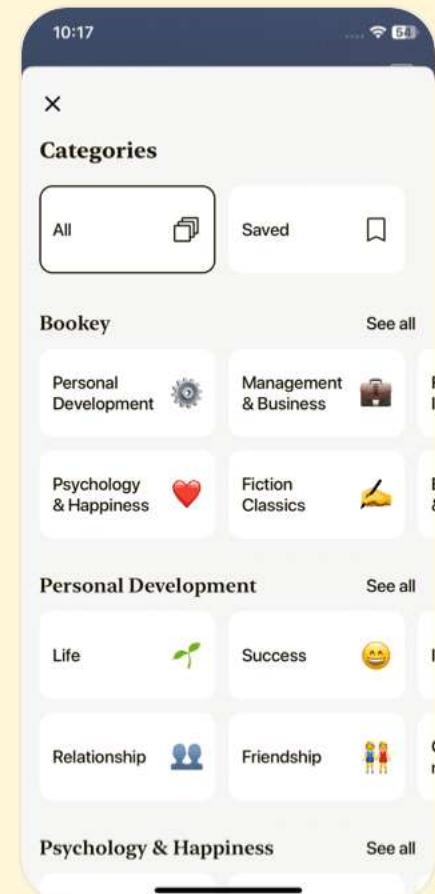
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## Chapter 16 | Quotes From Pages 379-404

1. A player who has hit several shots in a row may be guarded more vigilantly, which might make his success rate on the next attempt lower. Likewise, a player who has missed his recent shots might face a more lax defense, which could mean a greater likelihood of success on his next attempt.
2. We found the opposite. If a team scores six or more unanswered points in the previous minute, it will on average be outscored by its opponent (by 0.31 points) over the next minute.
3. The larger a sample, the more accurately it represents reality.
4. Nor is the absence of momentum unique to the NBA. In baseball, hitting streaks seem to be no more predictive of future success than slumps are.
5. But in isolated cases it happens, and it's perfectly consistent with random chance.
6. Psychology offers an explanation. People tend to ascribe

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patterns to events. We don't like mystery. We want to be able to explain what we're seeing.

7. But to pick (a) is to be fooled by randomness, tricked into thinking there's momentum.

## **Chapter 17 | Quotes From Pages 405-411**

1. There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics.” —Mark Twain

2. Inasmuch as sports fans are tricked by randomness, the media share in the blame.

3. Statistics and data are the forensic evidence of sports, but like all pieces of evidence, they can be mishandled and tampered with.

4. Those two games of extremes during the 2010 NBA finals?  
Unsexy as it might have been to use the largest available data set and note Allen's career average, it would have helped the viewers.

## **Chapter 18 | Quotes From Pages 412-443**

1. A curse once ascribed to a vengeful billy goat now had a human face, one wrapped in a terminally

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uncool set of headphones.

2. The Cubs are simply doomed, a star-crossed franchise that has done something to anger the fates.
3. Luck implies that you are equally likely to finish second as you are to do anything else.
4. Are the Cubs consistently unlucky not winning their division?
5. When attributing failure to luck, you need search no further for an answer.
6. Cubs attendance is the least sensitive to performance in all of baseball.
7. The Cubs' franchise value actually rose slightly the more it lost!
8. Obtaining beer prices from 1984 to 2009 and adjusting them for general price levels and inflation over this period, attendance was more than four times more sensitive to beer prices than to winning or losing.

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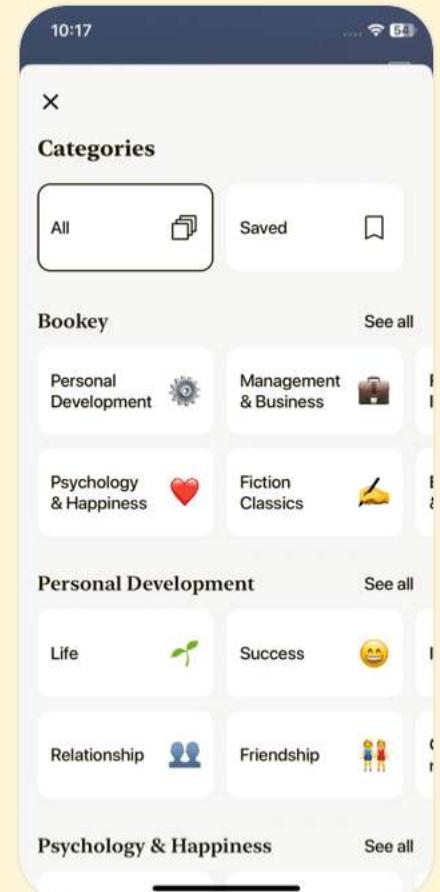
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# Scorecasting Questions

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## Chapter 1 | Whistle Swallowing: Why fans and leagues want officials to miss calls| Q&A

### 1. Question

#### What common misconception do fans have about sports officials?

Answer: Fans often believe they could officiate games as well as professional referees, disregarding the years of training and skill required to make accurate calls. This perspective fails to recognize that officials are highly trained individuals who are just as dedicated to their craft as the athletes are.

### 2. Question

#### How did Mike Carey, a notable NFL referee, rise through the ranks in his career?

Answer: Mike Carey started officiating local Pop Warner games and, through dedication and skill, advanced to high school, Division I college games, and eventually the NFL. His journey highlights the hard work and perseverance

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necessary to reach such a high level in officiating.

### 3.Question

**What is the 'omission bias' as explained in the chapter?**

Answer: Omission bias is a psychological tendency where people are more forgiving of inaction than of actions leading to negative outcomes. For example, fans are more comfortable with referees not making calls (even if it impacts the game) than with refs making incorrect calls.

### 4.Question

**What was the significance of 'the Tyree catch' in Super Bowl XLII?**

Answer: The Tyree catch represents one of the greatest plays in Super Bowl history and highlights how officiating decisions, like Mike Carey's choice not to call a sack in a crucial moment, can dramatically impact the game's outcome. Carey's decision to 'swallow the whistle' was praised despite controversy.

### 5.Question

**How do referees in basketball manage calls under pressure according to the chapter?**

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Answer: Refs often refrain from making calls during crucial moments to avoid influencing the outcome of the game. This is often reflected in fewer fouls and turnovers called in tight situations, leading to a form of omission bias that tends to favor allowing players to determine the game.

## 6. Question

**Can you give an example of omission bias from sports?**

Answer: An example of omission bias is seen when umpires in baseball tend to call strikes less often on two-strike counts. This shows a reluctance to end a player's at-bat abruptly, illustrating how officials want to minimize their impact on the outcome.

## 7. Question

**What did the incident involving Serena Williams at the U.S. Open illustrate about officials making calls in critical moments?**

Answer: The incident demonstrated the backlash officials can face for making timely, yet unpopular calls. Fans and commentators expect officials to refrain from making

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subjective calls in high-stakes moments, even if it means overlooking clear violations.

## 8.Question

**What lessons can be learned about handling high-pressure decisions from the example of officials in sports?**

Answer: Officials need to strike a balance between following rules and recognizing the dynamics of the game at critical moments. Both sports critics and fans expect officials to be adept at assessing the context, illustrating the complex nature of their decision-making responsibilities.

## 9.Question

**Why do umpires sometimes appear biased toward star players during games?**

Answer: Umpires may give star players more leniency due to the high stakes involved and to maintain the game's flow. This tendency stems from a desire not to influence a game that heavily features key players, showcasing another facet of omission bias.

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## **Chapter 2 | Go for It: Why coaches make decisions that reduce their team's chances of winning| Q&A**

### **1.Question**

#### **What inspired Kevin Kelley to adopt an unconventional approach to football coaching?**

Answer: Kevin Kelley was inspired by his frustration with conservative traditional coaching methods while playing high school football. He realized that the common practice of punting on fourth down without questioning its necessity didn't make sense. Kelley saw the potential to use all four downs, employing statistics and modern analytical thinking to improve his team's chances of winning.

### **2.Question**

#### **How did Kelley's decisions impact the players and their enjoyment of the game?**

Answer: Kelley's decisions created a more exciting and dynamic playing environment, allowing players to engage more actively in passing plays and innovative strategies.

Players like Greyson Skokos expressed that the fun factor

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was significantly higher due to the creative freedom they had on the field, leading to a culture of enjoyment and camaraderie among team members.

### **3.Question**

**What does Kelley's approach tell us about risk and decision-making in football?**

Answer: Kelley's approach highlights that taking calculated risks often leads to better outcomes than adhering strictly to traditional strategies. His use of statistics showed that it was often more advantageous to go for it on fourth down than to punt, challenging the conventional fear of loss in decision-making.

### **4.Question**

**What role does loss aversion play in coaching decisions according to the text?**

Answer: Loss aversion affects coaching decisions by making coaches more fearful of losing what they already have, such as their job security, rather than focusing on potential gains. This often leads them to make conservative choices, like

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punting when they shouldn't, because failing to follow conventional wisdom offers a shield against criticism.

## 5. Question

**How does Kelley's philosophy differ from that of traditional football coaches?**

Answer: Kelley's philosophy diverges from traditional coaches by emphasizing the use of full statistics to guide decisions and embracing aggressive tactics like going for two-point conversions and onside kicks, regardless of game circumstance. Most traditional coaches are still rooted in conservative play-calling, primarily relying on past practices rather than analytical evidence.

## 6. Question

**Can you give an example of how Kelley's strategies worked during a game?**

Answer: During a critical playoff game against Greenwood, Kelley opted to go for it on every fourth down, leading to a commanding offense that scored 54 points. This highlighted his confidence in his system and the players, proving that

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unconventional strategies could lead to overwhelming success against a traditionally stronger opponent.

## 7. Question

**Why might other coaches be hesitant to adopt Kelley's no-punt strategy?**

Answer: Other coaches may be hesitant to adopt Kelley's strategy due to fear of backlash from fans, players, and media if the unconventional choices do not lead to immediate success. There's also a prevailing desire to conform to traditional norms in coaching, which can stifle creativity and risk-taking.

## 8. Question

**What evidence does Kelley provide to support his 'no-punting' philosophy?**

Answer: Kelley provides statistical evidence demonstrating that teams that go for it on fourth downs often convert successfully, highlighting that punting usually results in less favorable field positions for their defense. His analytics showed that opponents score more frequently when starting

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from closer distances due to punts, making the strategic choice to forgo punting appealing.

## **9.Question**

**How does Kelley view conventional football wisdom, and what impact does he believe it has?**

Answer: Kelley regards conventional football wisdom as outdated and often detrimental. He believes that adhering to convention limits teams' potential and overlooks the advantages of innovative strategies. By disregarding traditional play-calling, he opens the door to greater offensive possibilities and challenges opponents' preparations.

## **10.Question**

**What can we learn from Kelley's coaching experience that applies to broader decision-making scenarios outside of sports?**

Answer: Kelley's experience teaches us that questioning established norms and embracing risk can lead to innovative solutions in any field. It emphasizes the importance of grounding decisions in data and analytics while also being

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willing to face potential criticism for the sake of greater rewards or success.

## **Chapter 3 | How Competitive are Competitive Sports?: Why are the Pittsburgh Steelers so successful and the Pittsburgh Pirates so unsuccessful?| Q&A**

### **1. Question**

#### **What factors contribute to the dominance of the New York Yankees in Major League Baseball compared to teams like the Pittsburgh Pirates?**

Answer: The Yankees' dominance can primarily be attributed to their financial resources, allowing them to invest heavily in top talent, with a payroll exceeding \$200 million in 2009. Additionally, baseball's structure, including a long 162-game season that favors better teams and a playoff system that limits opportunities for weaker teams, inherently supports their success. The contrast in competitive balance is stark when compared to teams like the Pirates, whose payroll was just \$39.1

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million in 2010 and have not experienced a winning season since 1992.

## **2.Question**

**How does the competitive structure of the NFL differ from Major League Baseball?**

Answer: The NFL's competitive structure is designed to promote parity, with a limited 16-game regular season that allows for more randomness and unpredictability in outcomes. The single-elimination playoff format enables lower-seeded teams to upset higher-ranked teams. In contrast, MLB's long season and series-based playoffs tend to favor the better teams, leading to a concentration of championships among a few franchises like the Yankees.

## **3.Question**

**Why do fans have a different emotional response to the Yankees' success compared to smaller market teams like the New Orleans Saints?**

Answer: Fans often view the Yankees as a symbol of arrogance and excess due to their wealth and dominance, leading to resentment among fans of other teams. On the

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other hand, the New Orleans Saints' victory in the Super Bowl, which marked their first title in history, was celebrated with immense joy and unity, highlighting the emotional investment in underdog stories and the excitement of achieving a long-awaited triumph.

#### **4.Question**

**What insights can we gain about competition in sports based on this chapter?**

Answer: The chapter reveals that while competition is a fundamental aspect of sports, the degree of competitiveness varies greatly across leagues. Factors such as financial disparities, league structures, and playoff formats all influence how competitive a sport can be. Understanding these dynamics can help fans appreciate the complexities behind sporting successes and failures.

#### **5.Question**

**Can you explain the concept of competitive balance and its significance in sports?**

Answer: Competitive balance refers to the degree to which

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teams in a league have an equal opportunity to succeed. It is significant because a higher competitive balance can lead to greater fan interest and engagement, as unpredictable outcomes enhance the excitement of the sport. In leagues where the competitive balance is low, such as MLB, dominant teams can diminish the overall appeal of the sport, as fans may feel their teams have little chance of success.

## **6. Question**

**How does the concept of market size relate to the success of sports franchises in different leagues?**

Answer: Market size can play a role in the revenue generation capabilities of a franchise, but its impact varies by league. In the NFL, where a strong revenue-sharing model exists, teams from small markets like Green Bay have had significant success, while in MLB, larger market teams like the Yankees can dominate due to higher financial resources, creating an imbalance in competition. This underscores the importance of league structures in shaping competitive dynamics.

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# Chapter 4 | Tiger Woods Is Human (and Not for the Reason You Think): How Tiger Woods is just like the rest of us, even when it comes to playing golf| Q&A

## 1. Question

**What does Tiger Woods' story reveal about human nature and the pressures of success?**

Answer: Tiger Woods' rise to fame and subsequent fall illustrate how immense pressure can distort behavior and change how individuals approach their goals. Despite being a top athlete, Woods' experience shows that even the most successful people are vulnerable to emotions and irrational decision-making rooted in human psychology, such as loss aversion.

## 2. Question

**How does the concept of loss aversion manifest in Tiger Woods' putting performance?**

Answer: The study found that Woods puts better for par than for birdies due to loss aversion. When attempting a birdie,

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the potential gain causes excessive caution, while the threat of losing a stroke puts him in a more aggressive mindset, leading to better performance on par putts. This parallels behaviors in other professions and sports where perceived loss drives more assertive actions.

### **3.Question**

**What lesson can we learn about behavior from the contrasting reactions of Tiger Woods and Y. E. Yang during the 2009 PGA Championship?**

Answer:Tiger Woods' conservative play, rooted in the fear of losing, contrasted sharply with Yang's boldness driven by the prospects of success. This illustrates how loss aversion can lead individuals to be more defensive as gains seem probable, while those at a disadvantage—like Yang—can release pressure and play freely, capitalizing on the opportunity.

### **4.Question**

**How does loss aversion affect strategy in sports like football and basketball?**

Answer:Loss aversion influences decision-making in sports.

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For instance, teams facing potential loss are more likely to take risks, such as going for it on fourth down when they've previously been ahead. Similarly, basketball teams that were once leading but are now trailing become more aggressive, reflecting how the perception of loss drives strategic choices contrary to conventional expectations.

## 5. Question

### Why do we feel different emotional responses to wins and losses in sports games?

Answer: Emotional responses are influenced by the context of the game. In a blowout win, the emotional connection diminishes as the victory feels guaranteed. Conversely, a close game with a dramatic finish evokes heightened emotions, as fans have not become accustomed to victory. This disparity highlights the psychological importance we place on perceived gains and losses throughout the experience.

## 6. Question

### What impact does loss aversion have on our tendencies in financial decisions?

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Answer: Loss aversion affects individuals by leading them to hold onto losing investments longer than they should, fearing the realization of loss. This reluctance to let go of underperforming assets reflects a fundamental aspect of human psychology where the pain of losing outweighs the pleasure of potential gains, often leading to poorer decision-making in financial contexts.

## 7. Question

**How can understanding loss aversion help us improve in our daily lives?**

Answer: Recognizing loss aversion can guide us to make more rational decisions by focusing on long-term outcomes rather than short-term fears of loss. By understanding that our emotional responses can be counterproductive, we can try to adopt a more objective viewpoint on our choices, whether in sports, finance, or personal development.

## 8. Question

**What significance does the study of putting tendencies among PGA Tour golfers have for understanding behavior in high-pressure situations?**

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Answer: The study highlights how elite golfers, including Woods, react under pressure and the detrimental effects of loss aversion. It demonstrates that even the best athletes experience biases that can hinder performance, underscoring the importance of mental strategies to manage emotions in high-pressure scenarios.

## 9. Question

**How does the 'endowment effect' relate to loss aversion and its implications for decision-making?**

Answer: The endowment effect shows that people value items they own more highly than identical items they do not, highlighting the influence of loss aversion. This tends to result in irrational decision-making, where individuals may struggle to sell assets or relinquish opportunities at fair market value due to an exaggerated sense of loss.

## 10. Question

**Why does the manner of achieving victories or losses matter psychologically to fans?**

Answer: The way outcomes unfold in sporting events

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significantly shapes emotional responses. Fans confronted with a hard-fought victory experience joy from relief and triumph, while those witnessing a comfortable lead evaporate into loss feel disappointment. This reflects deeper psychological processes where expectations and perceived stakes heavily dictate emotional satisfaction.

## **Chapter 5 | Offense Wins Championships, Too: Is defense really more important than offense?| Q&A**

### **1.Question**

**What does Michael Jordan's quote about defense winning championships really emphasize, according to the text?**

Answer:Jordan's frequent assertion that 'Defense

wins championships' reinforces not just the

importance of defense in winning, but also

encourages team commitment to hard work and

grit, essential for success in sports.

### **2.Question**

**How do statistics from various sports challenge the idea that defense is more important than offense?**

Answer:Statistics show that in NFL Super Bowls, the better

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defensive teams have won 29 times while better offensive teams have won 24 times, showing only a slight edge for defense. Similarly, analysis across the NBA, NHL, and MLB indicates that offense and defense hold nearly equal weight in playoff success.

### **3. Question**

**Why might fans and commentators prefer to highlight defense over offense in sports discussions?**

Answer: Defense is perceived as less glamorous compared to the excitement of scoring, leading to a narrative that favors the idea of defense being crucial. Additionally, athletes are often incentivized based on scoring rather than defensive achievements, contributing to this focus.

### **4. Question**

**What does the comparison between offense and defense reveal about coaching attitudes in sports?**

Answer: Coaches may extol the virtues of defense as a way to motivate teams to commit to less glamorous but equally important aspects of the game, indicating a deeper

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understanding that success relies on both strong scoring and defensive capabilities.

## 5.Question

**How does the notion of loss aversion relate to how athletes approach defense and offense?**

Answer:Loss aversion suggests that athletes are more driven by the desire to prevent losses (defense) than by the pursuit of gains (offense), indicating a psychological bias that may impact their performance and strategic focus during games.

## 6.Question

**What conclusion does the text reach about the importance of offense versus defense in sports?**

Answer:The bottom line is that neither offense nor defense is inherently more important than the other; both are crucial for success in sports, and outstanding performance in either area is necessary to win championships.

**Chapter 6 | The Value of a Blocked Shot: Why Dwight Howard's 232 blocked shots are worth less than Tim Duncan's 149| Q&A**

## 1.Question

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## **What is the main argument presented about the value of blocked shots in basketball?**

Answer: The main argument is that not all blocked shots in basketball have the same value. Context matters; for example, blocking a shot during a breakaway layup is far more valuable than blocking a poorly taken shot that wouldn't go in anyway. Hence, it's important to account for the type and outcome of the block rather than just tallying the number of blocks.

### **2. Question**

#### **How does the analysis of blocked shots challenge traditional views in basketball statistics?**

Answer: Traditional views focus on the sheer number of blocked shots, which can be misleading. The analysis suggests that measuring the value of blocked shots, considering factors such as type of shot and their outcomes, provides a more accurate assessment of a player's defensive contributions.

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### 3.Question

**Why might Dwight Howard have been regarded as a better shot blocker than Tim Duncan despite having more blocked shots?**

Answer:Dwight Howard was recognized for blocking a significant number of shots, but many of these were less valuable because they were swatted out of bounds, resulting in the opposing team retaining possession. In contrast, Tim Duncan's blocks often led to positive outcomes such as transitions to offense, increasing their value in the context of the game.

### 4.Question

**What implications does the study of blocked shots have for how we evaluate players in sports?**

Answer:The study implies that we should be cautious in evaluating players based solely on quantity statistics. It highlights the importance of qualitative analysis in sports performance, reminding us that raw statistics can sometimes obscure a player's true impact and value on the game.

### 5.Question

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## **How does the concept of valuing actions over counting them apply beyond basketball, according to the chapter?**

Answer: This concept extends to various fields and decisions in life, such as education, business, and finance, where easy-to-count metrics (like attendance or billable hours) may overshadow more important indicators of success. Evaluating the value rather than counting merely provides a clearer picture of effectiveness and contribution.

### **6.Question**

#### **What lesson can we learn from how the NBA counts blocked shots?**

Answer: We can learn that counting measures, while simple and straightforward, can lead us to overlook significant insights. It's crucial to develop metrics that better reflect the importance of actions rather than their quantity, allowing a more informed evaluation of performance.

### **7.Question**

#### **Why is it suggested that savvy general managers can exploit the difference between counting and valuing blocks?**

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Answer:Savvy general managers are likely to recognize the disparity between mere statistics and real value. By understanding which players contribute significantly despite not having high counts, they can identify undervalued talent in the market, optimizing their team's performance and success.

## **8.Question**

**What does John Huizinga's turn from basketball fan to agent signify about passion and opportunity?**

Answer:Huizinga's journey highlights how passion can lead to unexpected opportunities. His deep interest in basketball led him to a unique role, demonstrating that taking initiative and seizing chances can transform a personal passion into a successful career.

## **9.Question**

**How did insights from John Huizinga's research change the perception of Tim Duncan's and Dwight Howard's defensive capabilities?**

Answer:Huizinga's research shifted perceptions by illustrating that Duncan's blocks, due to their higher average

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value, were more impactful than Howard's quantity of blocks. This reevaluation underscores how a player's true defensive prowess can be underestimated based on simplistic numerical rankings.

## **10. Question**

**In what ways does the chapter highlight the potential pitfalls of relying on simplistic metrics in evaluating performance?**

Answer: The chapter underscores that simplistic metrics, like counting blocks, can mislead evaluations by failing to capture the true value and context of actions. It warns against making decisions based solely on such numbers, which can lead to overlooking more significant contributions and misjudging player impacts.

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# Chapter 7 | Rounding First: Why .299 hitters are so much more rare (and maybe more valuable) than .300 hitters| Q&A

## 1. Question

**Why are round numbers, like a .300 batting average, so significant in sports and how do they affect player behavior?**

Answer: Round numbers, such as a .300 batting average, hold immense psychological and economic significance in sports. Players often exhibit remarkable behaviors to achieve or maintain these benchmarks. For example, MLB players hitting .299 will swing aggressively for hits in their final at-bat of the season, avoiding walks which could preserve their average without improving it. This behavior stems from the belief that achieving these round numbers can significantly impact their salaries and perceptions of value. The disparity in batting averages shows that players are willing to risk their overall performance in a single at-bat to achieve this

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milestone.

## 2.Question

**How does the behavior of .299 hitters differ from .300 hitters on the last day of the season?**

Answer: During the last game of the season, players hitting .299 swing freely and aggressively to secure that elusive .300 mark. In contrast, players already at .300 often take strategic decisions, such as sitting out or being substituted, to protect their average. This difference leads to a higher success rate for .299 hitters in their final at-bat, where they hit almost .430, compared to a mere .230 for .300 hitters.

## 3.Question

**What broader implications do the findings about round numbers in sports suggest for other fields, such as corporate performance?**

Answer: The emphasis on hitting round numbers extends beyond sports into the corporate world, where companies strive to meet or exceed earnings targets, often managing their accounting to avoid missing by small margins. Just like players manipulate their performance data to reach .300,

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firms engineer their earnings reports to hit target projections. This suggests a cultural fixation on milestones that may distort genuine performance evaluations, leading to overvaluation of those who meet these benchmarks while undervaluing those who miss them slightly.

#### **4. Question**

**In what ways did free agency affect the importance placed on achieving round numbers in professional sports?**

Answer: The introduction of free agency amplified the stakes surrounding round numbers, as players could negotiate better contracts based on these benchmarks. Before free agency, the pressure was less pronounced since players were bound to their teams. Now, achieving certain milestones not only enhances their marketability but can directly influence salary negotiations, prompting players to manipulate their performance metrics aggressively to reach those targets.

#### **5. Question**

**How do minor distinctions in performance metrics, like a batting average of .299 versus .300, impact player salaries**

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**and valuations?**

Answer: Minor distinctions in performance metrics, like hitting .299 versus .300, can result in substantial salary differences, potentially up to 2% of a player's income. This economic ramifications highlight how the sports industry overvalues round numbers, rewarding marginal achievements more greatly due to the psychological weight they carry for teams and executives, thereby creating a system that can undervalue equally skilled players who remain just below these thresholds.

**Chapter 8 | Thanks, Mr. Rooney: Why black NFL coaches are doing worse than ever—and why this is a good thing| Q&A**

### **1. Question**

**What does the journey of Tony Dungy illustrate about the challenges faced by African-American coaches in the NFL?**

Answer: Tony Dungy's journey illustrates that despite possessing exceptional qualities and a strong track record, African-American coaches face

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significant barriers in the NFL, often being held to higher standards than their white counterparts. His experience shows how systemic biases can impact hiring and retention in professional sports.

## **2.Question**

**How did the statistical analysis conducted by Janice Madden contribute to understanding NFL hiring practices?**

Answer:Janice Madden's statistical analysis revealed that between 1990 and 2002, African-American coaches had a higher average number of wins and playoff appearances compared to white coaches. Her findings suggested an inherent bias in hiring, as the stronger performance of black coaches indicated that they faced stricter expectations than their white colleagues.

## **3.Question**

**What is the significance of the Rooney Rule in the context of NFL coaching diversity?**

Answer:The Rooney Rule was significant as it mandated NFL teams to interview at least one minority candidate for

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head coaching positions. It aimed to increase representation and reduce bias in hiring practices, ultimately leading to more opportunities for African-American coaches that would otherwise be overlooked.

#### **4.Question**

**Why do some argue that the poor performance of African-American coaches post-Rooney Rule indicates progress?**

Answer: Some argue that the struggles of African-American coaches post-Rooney Rule indicate progress because it shows that they are no longer held to a higher, unrealistic standard. Failing at the same rate as white coaches suggests that they are being offered opportunities based on merit rather than as tokens, aligning with the expectations set for all coaches.

#### **5.Question**

**What might the NFL's future look like if the trends in coaching diversity continue?**

Answer: If trends in coaching diversity continue, the NFL could see a more equitable coaching landscape where African-American coaches have equal opportunities and

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expectations as their white counterparts. This might lead to a richer diversity of leadership styles and strategies, ultimately benefiting the teams and the league as a whole.

## **6.Question**

**In what ways does the chapter suggest that bias persists in sports at a structural level?**

Answer: The chapter suggests that bias persists at a structural level through hiring practices that favor certain demographics, the higher standards set for minority coaches, and the gradual changes that still result in disparities. Despite improvements like the Rooney Rule, underlying biases remain evident in the treatment and evaluation of minority coaches.

## **7.Question**

**What role did public advocacy play in the changes within the NFL regarding coaching diversity?**

Answer: Public advocacy, especially from figures like Johnnie Cochran and Cyrus Mehri, played a crucial role in initiating discussions about bias in the NFL. Their efforts

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culminated in the statistical studies that highlighted disparities and ultimately pressured the league to adopt the Rooney Rule in an effort to create a more equitable hiring process.

## **Chapter 9 | Comforts of Home: How do conventional explanations for the home field advantage stack up?| Q&A**

### **1. Question**

**What factors have historically been associated with home field advantage in sports?**

Answer: Home field advantage is broadly attributed to various factors including: crowd support, familiarity with the playing surface, reduced travel fatigue for the home team, and a kinder, gentler schedule that often favors home teams by providing them with an easier set of opponents. However, the research indicates that crowd support and travel fatigue do not significantly impact the actual performance of players on the court or field.

### **2. Question**

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## **How significant is the role of crowd influence on a team's performance at home?**

Answer: Despite the common belief that fan support drives home team performance, studies show that the effect of the crowd is minimal. For example, free throw shooting percentages are the same for home and visiting players, regardless of crowd noise. Fans might feel they are crucial to their team's success, but evidence suggests their impact is limited at best.

### **3. Question**

## **What evidence contradicts the idea that travel fatigue affects a team's performance on the road?**

Answer: Matchups between teams from the same city reveal that home teams retain their advantage regardless of travel considerations, suggesting that the rigors of travel are not the main contributor to home field advantage. Even when teams play in close proximity, the home team consistently wins at the same historical rates as they do against teams that travel from far away.

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## 4.Question

**What role does scheduling bias play in the home field advantage, particularly in the NBA?**

Answer: Scheduling bias significantly contributes to home field advantage, particularly for NBA teams, which frequently face back-to-back games on the road. Home teams statistically win two additional games per season simply due to how the schedule is structured, providing them an easier path compared to road teams who bear the brunt of these taxing schedules.

## 5.Question

**How do unique stadium characteristics affect home field advantage, especially in sports like baseball?**

Answer: While it's thought that familiarity with the nuanced features of a stadium could confer an advantage (like the Green Monster in Fenway Park), analyses show that overall, teams don't significantly outperform at home based solely on ballpark idiosyncrasies. Pitchers' and batters' performance metrics do not improve significantly when analyzed across

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different stadiums, suggesting that unique characteristics do not account for substantial variation in win rates.

## 6. Question

**In what ways do economic incentives for home teams affect the understanding of home field advantage?**

Answer: Home teams benefit directly from winning due to increased attendance, spending on merchandise, and enhanced corporate sponsorships, encouraging leagues to subtly favor home teams. If the home team frequently wins, it boosts local business engagement and sports revenue, providing an implicit incentive for league officials to support conditions that favor home teams without explicitly rigging outcomes.

## 7. Question

**What conclusion can be drawn about the existence of home field advantage based on the research presented?**

Answer: Home field advantage is a resilient phenomenon across sports that remains consistent over time. However, the traditional explanations, such as crowd influence, travel

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fatigue, or scheduling bias, do not capture its entirety. The advantage exists fundamentally, possibly due to psychological elements and the fact that teams are better at home due to a variety of less understood factors.

## **8.Question**

**How do back-to-back games particularly influence the home and away performance of NBA teams?**

Answer: Teams playing back-to-back road games are at a statistical disadvantage, winning only 36% of such matchups. This inherent disadvantage skews the home field advantage, making it more challenging for visiting teams to compete effectively, especially when the scheduling favors home teams who avoid playing consecutive games regularly.

## **9.Question**

**What are the implications of the data suggesting teams perform similarly at home and away when stripped of environmental biases?**

Answer: The data imply that performance metrics for players tend to normalize when match conditions are made equal, suggesting that the presumed advantages granted by home

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environments (like crowd support or travel comforts) may be less critical than believed, shifting focus towards psychological and performance facets that aren't easily quantified.

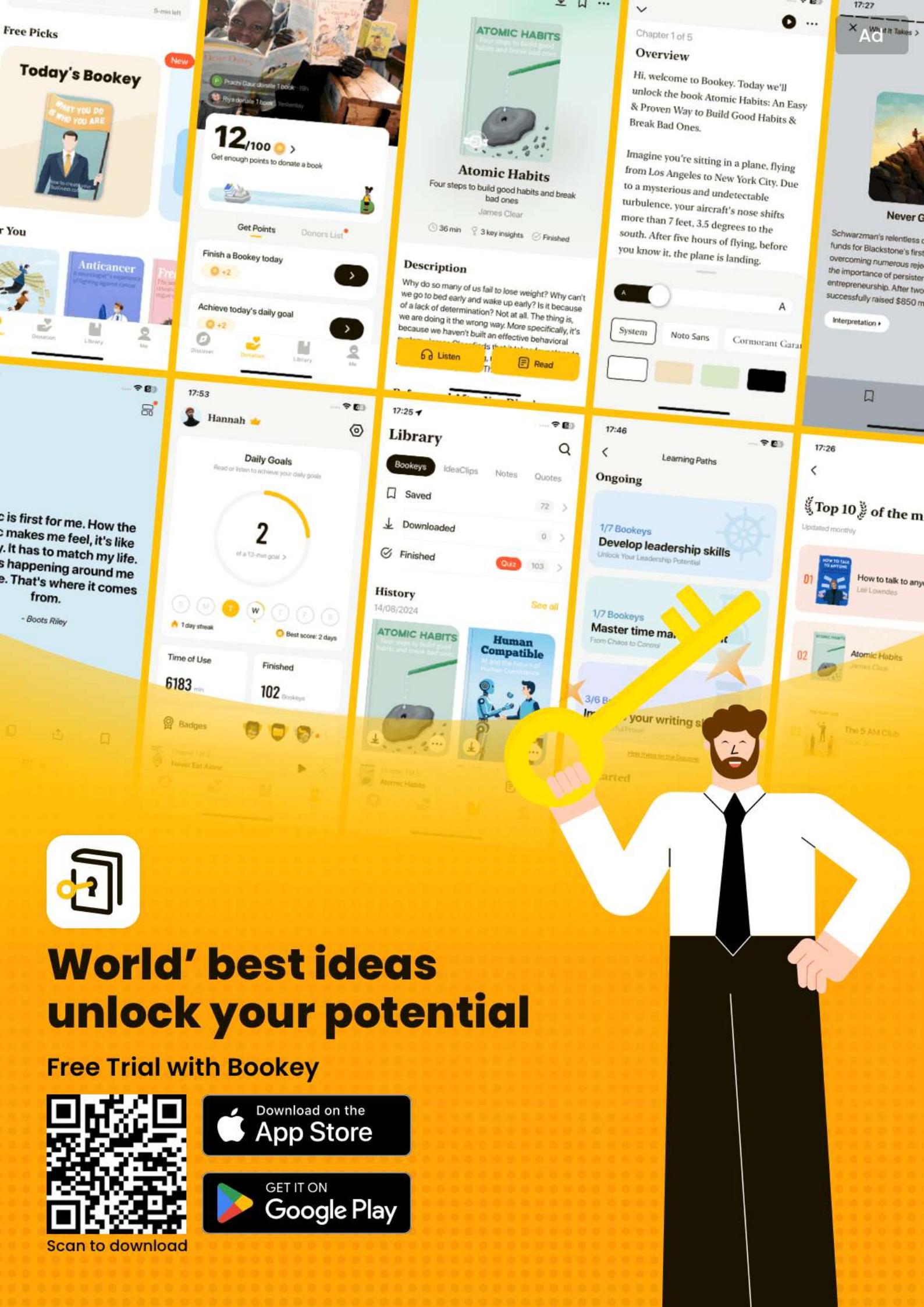
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# **Chapter 10 | So, What is Driving the Home Field Advantage?: Hint: Vocal fans matter, but not in the way you might think| Q&A**

## **1.Question**

**What is the primary factor contributing to home field advantage in sports?**

Answer: The most significant factor is referee bias, which favors the home team during games. Umpires and referees are influenced by crowd dynamics and may make calls that help the home team, especially in high-pressure situations.

## **2.Question**

**How does crowd size impact referee decisions?**

Answer: Referee bias becomes more pronounced in larger crowds. Studies have shown that the home team benefits more from favorable calls as attendance increases, indicating that crowd noise and presence can sway officiating.

## **3.Question**

**Can you explain how biases manifest differently in various sports?**

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Answer: In soccer, referees influence game outcomes significantly due to their control over penalties and fouls, while in baseball, umpire actions impact fewer plays, leading to a smaller home field advantage.

#### **4. Question**

**Why do referees favor home teams, even if they are not consciously aware of it?**

Answer: Referees are influenced by social pressure and conformity to the crowd's reactions during high-stress situations. This psychological aspect leads them to make calls that align with what the home crowd signals.

#### **5. Question**

**What evidence supports the existence of referee bias across different sports?**

Answer: Research shows similar patterns in soccer, baseball, football, basketball, and hockey where home teams receive more favorable calls, penalties, and opportunities. This is consistent across various studies and league investigations.

#### **6. Question**

**How does the use of technology like QuesTec affect**

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## **referee behavior?**

Answer: When umpires are monitored by technology such as QuesTec, bias towards the home team diminishes, often reversing to favor away teams, indicating that knowledge of surveillance alters decision-making.

## **7.Question**

### **What are the implications of home field advantage on the outcome of games?**

Answer: Home teams in various sports win at a higher rate, often attributing up to two-thirds of this advantage to referee bias instead of player performance differences, which are statistically less impactful at home.

## **8.Question**

### **Why might home teams experience less penalty calls?**

Answer: Home teams generally receive fewer penalty calls due to perceived bias from officials who may feel pressured by the home crowd, leading to a more lenient approach towards the home team.

## **9.Question**

### **How does referee bias correlate with the performance of**

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## visiting teams?

Answer: Visiting teams, facing bias and potentially unfair calls, may perform worse, as they are more likely to be penalized or miss out on favorable calls that would help their chances of winning.

## 10. Question

### How has the introduction of instant replay affected home field advantage?

Answer: The introduction of instant replay has decreased the home field advantage in major sports, as it allows for the correction of bad calls that would otherwise favor the home team. This has led to a more balanced outcome.

## Chapter 11 | There's No I in Team: But there is an m and an e| Q&A

## 1. Question

### What does the phrase 'there's no I in team' suggest about teamwork?

Answer: It suggests that teamwork is essential, emphasizing the importance of unity and collective effort over individual ambition.

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## 2.Question

**How have historical NBA players exemplified the significance of individual talent in teams?**

Answer: Top players like Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant, and LeBron James demonstrate that individual superstars play a critical role in achieving success, as their teams' chances of winning championships significantly increase with their presence.

## 3.Question

**What statistical evidence supports the idea that teams with superstars are more successful?**

Answer: Statistics show that a team without a superstar has only a 0.9% chance of winning a championship, while having one or more superstars dramatically increases those odds, with two superstars giving a 25% chance and three superstars a 39% chance.

## 4.Question

**What does the analysis reflect about the role of teamwork versus individual talent in playoff scenarios?**

Answer: The analysis reveals that even under the framework

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of teamwork, superstars enhance their team's playoff performance, improving championship odds by 12% and finals chances by 23%, highlighting the star's critical impact during high-stakes moments.

## **5.Question**

**Describe the impact of salary distribution among players on team success.**

Answer: Teams with a wider disparity in player salaries tend to perform better, suggesting that having a superstar amidst average players can lead to greater success compared to a uniformly talented team of average players.

## **6.Question**

**Why might coaches and commentators emphasize the concept of teamwork despite the evidence supporting the value of superstars?**

Answer: They may fear that highlighting the importance of stars could diminish the motivation of other players, who also contribute significantly, albeit in less recognized ways, thus maintaining a balance between individual and collective effort.

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## 7.Question

**What did Michael Jordan imply about the relationship between individual achievement and team success in his Hall of Fame speech?**

Answer: Jordan emphasized that while teamwork is important, individual excellence is crucial for winning, asserting that he valued the concept of winning above the abstract notion of collaboration.

## 8.Question

**How does the discussion of the 'no-I-in-team' philosophy challenge traditional sports wisdom?**

Answer: It challenges the idea that teamwork alone is sufficient for success by illustrating that individual brilliance and star power are critical components for winning in competitive sports.

## 9.Question

**What might be a contradiction found in the prevailing views of sports commentators versus the data provided about player performance?**

Answer: While commentators advocate for the team-centric

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approach, the data consistently shows that superstars have outsized impacts on championship outcomes, contradicting the notion that teamwork alone determines success.

## **10. Question**

**What lesson can young athletes draw from the findings regarding superstars and teamwork?**

Answer: Young athletes can learn that while teamwork is vital, recognizing and cultivating individual skills is equally important in achieving success in sports.

**Chapter 12 | Off the Chart: How Mike McCoy came to dominate the NFL draft| Q&A**

## **1. Question**

**What critical lesson can be learned from Mike McCoy's draft pick valuation chart that impacted the Dallas Cowboys' success?**

Answer: The critical lesson is that teams tend to overvalue high draft picks based solely on conventional belief rather than actual performance data. McCoy's chart illustrated that the first pick is not worth as much as teams assign to it, showing

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that having multiple lower picks is strategically better than relying on one high pick.

## 2. Question

**How did Jerry Jones and Mike McCoy's backgrounds influence their approach to team building in the NFL?**

Answer: Both Jones and McCoy had backgrounds in risk-taking and evaluating business ventures in volatile markets. Jones's experience in the oil business led him to embrace calculated risks, while McCoy's engineering skills helped him create a numerical value system that transformed draft pick trading into a more data-driven approach, shifting the team's strategy from intuition to empirical decision-making.

## 3. Question

**In what ways did the overvaluation of the top draft picks lead to systemic issues in NFL team management?**

Answer: The overvaluation led to several systemic issues: teams continued to invest heavily into underperforming players due to sunk costs, which hampered morale; it created

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a win-now culture, where GMs were more focused on immediate results rather than long-term strategies; and it impeded a team's ability to leverage their resources effectively for better overall talent acquisition.

#### **4.Question**

**What are the implications of the 'winner's curse' in the context of the NFL draft as illustrated in the chapter?**

Answer: The implications of the 'winner's curse' suggest that teams often overpay for draft picks, especially in competitive situations where the perceived value is uncertain. This leads to franchises making irrational decisions, like trading excessive resources for a perceived star player, neglecting the fact that high investments do not guarantee success.

#### **5.Question**

**How do behavioral biases play a role in the draft decisions made by NFL executives?**

Answer: Behavioral biases, such as overconfidence and decision-making based on gut feeling rather than data analysis, significantly cloud the judgment of NFL executives.

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They often believe in their ability to assess talent accurately, leading them to ignore evidence and follow flawed valuation models that do not reflect the actual performance potential of players.

## **6.Question**

**What did the case of Ryan Leaf illustrate about the unpredictability of talent evaluation in the NFL?**

Answer: The case of Ryan Leaf illustrates that despite being a highly-touted prospect, unpredictability in player performance can lead to disastrous outcomes. This showcases the inherent risks involved in talent evaluation and the potential for high draft picks to become monumental failures, emphasizing that even the best scouts can be fooled by appearances and hype.

## **7.Question**

**How did the findings of economists Richard Thaler and Cade Massey challenge traditional perceptions of the NFL draft?**

Answer: Thaler and Massey's findings challenged traditional perceptions by demonstrating that the value assigned to draft

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picks, especially high picks, was disproportionately high compared to actual player performance outcomes. They revealed that being a top pick does not always translate to better success, debunking the myth that higher investment guarantees superior talent.

## **8.Question**

**What strategic advantages did teams like the New England Patriots and Philadelphia Eagles gain by deviating from the conventional valuation of draft picks?**

Answer: Teams like the Patriots and Eagles gained strategic advantages by focusing on accumulating multiple lower picks rather than overinvesting in single high selections. This approach allowed them to diversify their talent pool, mitigate risks associated with bust potential, and ultimately improve their win percentages by maximizing the opportunities to find successful players.

## **9.Question**

**Why is there often a disparity between the perceived value of high draft picks and their actual contribution to team success?**

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Answer: The disparity arises from teams often assigning values based on historical trade data and prestige rather than actual player success rates and contributions. High picks are typically associated with immediate fanfare and expectations, yet the data suggests that their performance is not significantly superior to that of lower picks, which leads to skewed decision-making based on outdated valuation models.

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# **Chapter 13 | How a Coin Toss Trumps All: Why American Idol is a fairer contest than an NFL overtime| Q&A**

## **1.Question**

**What ironic situation does the coin toss in NFL overtime highlight about competition?**

Answer: The irony lies in the fact that after a grueling 60 minutes of intense physical competition, the outcome of the game is often determined by a simple coin flip, emphasizing how luck can overshadow skill and effort in determining a winner.

## **2.Question**

**How does the coin toss impact the fairness of NFL overtime games?**

Answer: The coin flip Skews the outcomes significantly, as winning teams typically have a 61% chance of winning after the toss, and many times, a team can lose without ever having the opportunity to play offense, undermining the competitive integrity of the game.

## **3.Question**

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## **What alternative suggestions were made for making NFL overtimes fairer?**

Answer: Suggestions included changing the kickoff position to increase touchbacks, auctioning off the first possession of overtime, eliminating field goals in overtime in favor of touchdowns, or adopting a system similar to college football, where both teams get a chance on offense.

### **4. Question**

#### **How does the new NFL overtime rule for playoffs alter the previous overtime dynamics?**

Answer: The new rule allows the team that loses the coin toss a chance to score if the opposing team only gets a field goal, thus reducing the dominance of the coin toss and ensuring both teams at least get the opportunity to combat for the win.

### **5. Question**

#### **What does the discussion of fan voting for winners reflect about fairness in sports?**

Answer: The suggestion for fan voting was made humorously, yet it underscores a real concern about fairness,

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as it poses the question of whether deciding a game on a coin flip is any less ridiculous than allowing spectators to choose the winner.

## **6.Question**

**How do other sports like tennis approach the concept of advantage in matches?**

Answer: In tennis, the coin toss grants players multiple options, such as serving or choosing court sides, reflecting a decision-making process that empowers skilled athletes more than the stark randomness of a coin toss in NFL overtime.

## **7.Question**

**What motivated the change to overtime rules in the NFL, particularly for playoff games?**

Answer: The overwhelming statistics showing the impact of the coin toss on game outcomes motivated a majority of team owners to change the overtime rules to ensure fairness and at least give the losing team a chance to score.

## **8.Question**

**What role does field position play in David Romer's suggestion for NFL overtime?**

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Answer: Field position is crucial, as Romer suggests relocating the kickoff to increase the chance of touchbacks, thereby allowing teams to start from a more equitable location, which could balance the offensive and defensive opportunities.

## **Chapter 14 | What Isn't in the Mitchell Report?: Why Dominican baseball players are more likely to use steroids—and American players are more likely to smoke weed| Q&A**

### **1. Question**

**What factors contribute to the higher rates of steroid use among Dominican and Venezuelan baseball players compared to American players?**

Answer: The higher rates of steroid use among Dominican and Venezuelan baseball players can be attributed to economic factors, educational disparities, and the structure of their path to professional baseball. Players from poorer backgrounds see steroids as a means to escape poverty and secure lucrative contracts, while

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American players have alternative opportunities, like college scholarships, reducing their economic incentive to use steroids.

## **2.Question**

**How does the economic background of players influence their decisions regarding performance-enhancing drugs?**

Answer: Players from impoverished countries face a strong financial incentive to succeed in baseball, making them more likely to consider the risks of steroid use worth it. For instance, a signing bonus that equals decades of income for their families can drive them to take significant risks in pursuit of a better life.

## **3.Question**

**What are some reasons why American players are less likely to test positive for performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) than their Dominican and Venezuelan counterparts?**

Answer: American players might be less likely to test positive due to better access to education about the health and ethical implications of drug use, more sophisticated methods of

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concealing their use, and a cultural environment that discourages such behavior, as well as higher scrutiny and stricter consequences for drug use.

#### **4.Question**

**What role does the age of players at the time of testing positive for PEDs play in understanding the issue?**

Answer: Younger players from the Dominican Republic and Venezuela tend to test positive for PEDs at ages 20 to 21, often as they are desperate to make it into the Major Leagues. In comparison, American players typically test positive at an older age (around 27), suggesting a difference in when the economic pressures push players to cheat.

#### **5.Question**

**Is there a connection between poverty and the use of PEDs in professional baseball?**

Answer: Yes, there is a strong correlation between poverty and steroid use among baseball players. Economic desperation leads players from low-income countries to use PEDs to enhance their chances of success, as their potential

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earnings can drastically change their family's financial situation.

## 6. Question

### **How does the environment surrounding young Dominican players create a culture of PED use?**

Answer: In the Dominican Republic, young players often face immense pressure to succeed, with a culture that can normalize cheating. With fewer regulations, less scrutiny, and the strong desire to uplift their families financially, many young athletes feel compelled to turn to performance-enhancing drugs.

## 7. Question

### **How do the patterns of drug use differ between American players and those from Latin American countries?**

Answer: American players primarily face suspensions for recreational drugs (like marijuana), while Latin American players have been suspended exclusively for performance-enhancing drugs. This indicates differing cultural attitudes towards drug use and the implications for

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players' careers.

## 8.Question

**What impact do steroids have on a player's chances of advancing in professional baseball?**

Answer: Players who use performance-enhancing drugs are statistically more likely to achieve higher levels in the baseball league system—about 60% more likely compared to non-users. This demonstrates that steroid use significantly increases the likelihood of career advancement.

## 9.Question

**In what ways can the systemic issues in baseball contribute to the prevalence of PED use?**

Answer: The lack of robust regulations and the exploitative nature of recruitment systems, especially for Dominican and Venezuelan players, create an environment where cheating is seen as a feasible option. The minimal consequences for drug use and the testimonies of established athletes normalize steroid use, encouraging rising players to see it as a necessary step to compete.

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## 10.Question

**What broader societal lessons can be drawn from the patterns of PED use among baseball players from different countries?**

Answer: The disparity in PED use patterns illustrates how economic conditions can influence ethical decisions and behaviors. It highlights the role of systemic inequalities in pushing individuals toward risky choices when traditional paths to success are obstructed, emphasizing the importance of creating equitable opportunities for all.

**Chapter 15 | Do Athletes Really Melt When Iced?: Does calling a time-out before a play actually work?| Q&A**

## 1.Question

**What evidence challenges the effectiveness of icing the kicker in NFL games?**

Answer: Statistical studies, including those by Scott Berry and Craig Wood, suggest that icing the kicker actually shows a negligible impact on success rates for field goals, with the success of iced kickers being

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nearly equal to that of non-iced kickers. One study found an insignificant difference in success rates between iced (72%) and non-iced (71.7%) kicks.

## **2.Question**

**How did Jay Feely's experience demonstrate the potential benefits of being iced?**

Answer: After the Oakland Raiders called a time-out just before Feely's initial kick attempt, he was able to use the time to assess conditions, adjust his approach, and eventually make a successful kick. Feely himself acknowledged the time-out helped him by allowing him to practice the kick mentally before taking the actual shot.

## **3.Question**

**What alternative reasons may teams have for calling a time-out before a field goal or free throw?**

Answer: Teams might call a time-out to devise a strategy for blocking the kick or to set up a play in case of a miss. Other reasons include creating the appearance of activity on the field, stalling for more commercial airtime, or out of

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psychological strategy, even though evidence suggests it doesn't significantly impact the kicker or shooter.

#### **4.Question**

**What lesson can athletes take away from the findings about icing the kicker?**

Answer: Athletes can recognize that success in high-pressure situations relies more on their skill and preparation rather than external psychological tactics like icing. Confidence and mechanical proficiency should be prioritized over potential distractions from opposing teams.

#### **5.Question**

**Summarize how icing impacts free throw shooters in the NBA, based on the analysis provided.**

Answer: Similar to field goal kickers, NBA free throw shooters were shown to have no significant difference in success rates when iced. Players maintained a steady success rate of 76%, regardless of whether a time-out was called before their free throw attempt.

#### **6.Question**

**What does former NFL kicker Matt Bryant's quote**

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## **suggest about professional athletes and mental distractions?**

Answer: Bryant implies that at the professional level, players are expected to be resilient and unfazed by psychological tactics. If an athlete is affected by such distractions, they may not be suited for competitive sports.

### **7.Question**

**What term is used to describe the strategy of calling time-out before a pressure kick or free throw, and what should be its expected outcome?**

Answer: The strategy is termed 'icing,' and its expected outcome of impacting the player's performance is statistically unsupported, suggesting that it should have little to no effect on a player's chances of success.

### **8.Question**

**Reflect on the general mindset that athletes should have regarding external pressures during high-stakes games.**

Answer: Athletes should focus on their training, muscle memory, and mechanical execution rather than worrying about psychological games played by opponents. Building

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mental strength and focusing on performance rather than distractions will aid in maintaining composure during critical moments.

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# **Chapter 16 | The Myth of the Hot Hand: Do players and teams ride the wave of momentum? Or are we (and they) fooled into thinking they do?| Q&A**

## **1.Question**

**What did David Wright struggle with early in the 2010 season, and how did his teammates respond?**

Answer:David Wright struggled significantly at the plate, with a batting average of .229, well below his career average of .307. His teammates, like Jeff Francoeur, expressed optimism that he would return to form, acknowledging the need for the team to pick up the slack until he did.

## **2.Question**

**What is the 'hot hand' in sports, and how does it relate to momentum?**

Answer:The 'hot hand' refers to the belief that players can experience streaks of success in their performance, riding a wave of momentum. It suggests that making consecutive successful shots or plays increases the likelihood of continued success, a concept deeply rooted in sports culture.

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### **3.Question**

**What research was conducted to examine the concept of momentum and the hot hand in basketball?**

Answer: Researchers, including psychologists Thomas Gilovich, Robert Vallone, and Amos Tversky, studied basketball players during the 1980s. They found no evidence supporting the existence of the hot hand, showing that a player's recent success did not predict future performance in free throws or field goals.

### **4.Question**

**What were the findings regarding team momentum in the NBA?**

Answer: Analysis of approximately 3,500 NBA games revealed that teams scoring six unanswered points in a minute were statistically likely to be outscored in the following minute, indicating that perceived momentum might actually lead to performance reversals rather than continued success.

### **5.Question**

**According to the findings, what is the best predictor of a**

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## **player's future hitting success?**

Answer: The best predictor of a player's hitting success is their batting average over a larger sample size, such as their performance over the season so far or the previous two seasons, rather than their performance over the last few games or at-bats.

## **6.Question**

### **How do misconceptions about momentum affect sports gambling?**

Answer: Betting patterns show that gamblers are influenced by recent winning and losing streaks, often overvaluing teams on winning streaks while undervaluing those on losing streaks. This misperception can create profitable opportunities for astute bettors who recognize the randomness in performance.

## **7.Question**

### **Why do people struggle to accept the lack of evidence for momentum in sports?**

Answer: People have a tendency to seek patterns and

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explanations for events, and randomness is often unsettling. Many lack understanding of probability, leading them to believe in momentum and the hot hand despite statistical evidence to the contrary.

## **8.Question**

**What did Bob Knight and Red Auerbach think of the studies on the hot hand?**

Answer: Both Bob Knight and Red Auerbach dismissed the studies, indicating a skepticism toward research findings they believed were too simplistic to capture the complexities of athletic performance.

## **9.Question**

**What overarching lesson can be drawn from the analysis of momentum in sports?**

Answer: The overarching lesson is that success in sports is often misattributed to momentum or psychological factors when, in reality, performance is influenced by randomness and chance, emphasizing the importance of analyzing larger data sets for reliable predictions.

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# Chapter 17 | Damned Statistics: Why “four out of his last five” almost surely means four of six| Q&A

## 1. Question

**What is the main lesson we can learn from Ray Allen's shooting performances during the 2010 NBA finals as described in the chapter?**

Answer: The main lesson is that statistics should be interpreted in context and with a more comprehensive perspective. A single game or a short streak can be misleading and doesn't represent a player's overall ability. It's important to consider larger data sets to understand true performance.

## 2. Question

**How does the chapter illustrate the idea that statistics can be misleading?**

Answer: The chapter highlights that commentators and media select statistics that fit a particular narrative. For instance, they emphasized Ray Allen's amazing shooting in one game without mentioning his poor performance in the next. This selective presentation can create misleading impressions.

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about a player's skills.

### **3.Question**

**What does the phrase 'damned lies' imply about the way statistics are used in sports?**

Answer:It implies that statistics can be misused or manipulated to serve desired narratives, leading to misinterpretations or exaggerated claims about performance.

### **4.Question**

**Why is it important to look beyond short-term statistics according to the chapter?**

Answer:It is crucial to look beyond short-term statistics because they can be influenced by random fluctuations; reviewing long-term performance provides a more accurate assessment of a player's abilities.

### **5.Question**

**Can you explain how the statistics surrounding A-Rod and Halladay differ based on who is interpreting the data?**

Answer:Yes, Yankees broadcasters focused on A-Rod's recent successes against Halladay, while Blue Jays

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broadcasters highlighted Halladay's recent strong performances. Despite both presentations being accurate, they paint radically different pictures of what might happen in the game.

## **6.Question**

**What reminder does the chapter provide about sports commentary and data presentation?**

Answer: The chapter reminds readers to approach sports commentary critically, recognizing that data can be selectively presented to create dramatic narratives that may not reflect reality.

## **7.Question**

**In what way does the chapter suggest that teams participate in the potential misuse of statistics?**

Answer: Teams selectively highlight player statistics that showcase positive trends or 'hot streaks' while downplaying negative or less flattering overall performance trends, thereby contributing to a skewed perception.

## **8.Question**

**How should fans approach statistics that seem**

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**exaggerated or dramatic?**

Answer: Fans should approach such statistics with skepticism, seeking to understand the broader context and the full data set that includes season averages and historical performance rather than just recent game results.

## **Chapter 18 | Are the Chicago Cubs Cursed?: If not, then why are the Cubs so futile?| Q&A**

### **1. Question**

**What common explanations exist for the Chicago Cubs' longstanding inability to win a World Series?**

Answer: People often attribute the Cubs' struggles to a 'curse,' believing that some malevolent force is at work against the team. This idea is popular among fans who see events like Steve Bartman's fateful interaction during the 2003 playoffs as indicative of an enduring misfortune. Additionally, many believe in the concept of 'bad luck' impacting the team, especially when it has not won a championship since 1908.

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## 2.Question

**What significant event in 2003 added to the narrative of the Cubs being 'cursed'?**

Answer: The infamous incident involving fan Steve Bartman, who interfered with an easy catch that was crucial to the Cubs' 2003 playoff game against the Florida Marlins, is often cited as a turning point that exemplifies the 'curse.' His attempt to catch a foul ball halted a pivotal moment, contributing to an eight-run rally by the Marlins and ultimately causing the Cubs to lose the series.

## 3.Question

**How can the Cubs' historical performance be analyzed statistically in relation to luck?**

Answer: Statistical analysis suggests that while the Cubs have indeed been unsuccessful, their patterns of performance are not entirely due to luck. Their position in the standings shows a consistent pattern of finishing at or near the bottom of their division far more often than random chance would predict, casting doubt on the luck hypothesis.

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## 4.Question

### **What contributing factors, beyond luck, have led to the Cubs' struggles on the field?**

Answer: The Cubs have often failed to assemble competitive teams, making poor management decisions in trades and acquisitions. Their historical approach to team building, which lacked a strong focus on consistent talent development and a commitment to winning, has perpetuated their on-field failures. Additionally, economic incentives within the franchise may have inadvertently encouraged complacency.

## 5.Question

### **Why might Cubs fans be more loyal despite repeated failures?**

Answer: The culture surrounding the Cubs fosters deep community bonds among fans, who often take pride in their shared struggles and resilience. This unique camaraderie and the Wrigley Field experience, combined with the team's nostalgic charm as a 'lovable loser,' help explain why fans continue to flock to games, even when the team

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underperforms.

## 6.Question

**What did the Cubs' management learn about their fans' behavior relating to attendance and performance?**

Answer: Management discovered that fan attendance was less sensitive to winning percentages than to factors like beer prices, which created little financial motivation to improve performance on the field. Despite repeated losing seasons, the team's attendance remained high, suggesting that fans were invested in the experience of attending games rather than simply rooting for a winning team.

## 7.Question

**How does the attendance responsiveness between Cubs fans and White Sox fans illustrate different fan dynamics?**

Answer: Cubs fans show very low sensitivity to team performance regarding attendance, while White Sox fans respond strongly to their team's success. This difference indicates that Cubs fans are more likely to support the team regardless of performance, while White Sox fans exhibit a

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more traditional fan behavior where attendance directly correlates with the team's wins.

## 8. Question

**What does the Cubs' financial valuation suggest about their on-field success and operational incentives?**

Answer: The Chicago Cubs are highly valued financially, ranking among the richest teams in MLB without recent championships, indicating that their brand strength and loyal fanbase have allowed them to thrive economically despite poor on-field results. This detachment suggests less pressure on the ownership to prioritize winning as a means of profitability.

## 9. Question

**What unorthodox reasons might explain why Cubs fans remain devoted despite decades of disappointment?**

Answer: The Cubs' historical failures have cultivated a sense of community and identity among fans, creating a strong emotional attachment to the team. Events celebrating losing seasons, the charming atmosphere of Wrigley Field, and a

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pub-like experience during games contribute to a culture that values camaraderie over competitiveness in baseball.

## 10. Question

**What critical question does the analysis of the Cubs' performance raised in the chapter pose about the narratives of luck vs. competence?**

Answer: The chapter prompts readers to question whether attributing the Cubs' sustained failures to luck or a curse is merely a convenient excuse that allows fans to avoid confronting underlying issues such as poor management, inadequate talent development, and lack of effective competitiveness strategies.

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## Chapter 1 | Whistle Swallowing: Why fans and leagues want officials to miss calls| Quiz and Test

1. Fans believe they can officiate a game as well as trained referees.
2. Officiating decisions are often influenced by a desire to avoid making calls that could alter the game's outcome.
3. Major League Baseball umpires are statistically shown to be completely unbiased and accurate in all situations.

## Chapter 2 | Go for It: Why coaches make decisions that reduce their team's chances of winning| Quiz and Test

1. Kevin Kelley, head coach of Pulaski Academy, advocates for conventional strategies in football.
2. Kelley believes that maintaining possession and taking calculated risks can enhance a team's probability of winning.
3. Psychological factors such as loss aversion do not influence coaches' decision-making in football.

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## **Chapter 3 | How Competitive are Competitive Sports?: Why are the Pittsburgh Steelers so successful and the Pittsburgh Pirates so unsuccessful?| Quiz and Test**

1. The New York Yankees have won 27 World Series championships up until 2009, while the Pittsburgh Pirates have not posted a winning season since 1992.
2. The financial disparity between teams in MLB does not significantly affect their competitiveness.
3. The NFL's structure promotes greater competition compared to MLB due to its salary cap and playoff format.

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Habit building requires four steps: cue, craving, response, and reward are the pillars of every habit.

**False** **True**

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The Two-Minute Rule is a quick way to end procrastination, but it only works for two minutes and does little to build long-term habits.

**False**

Correct Answer

Once you've learned to care for the seed of every habit, the first two minutes are just the initiation of formal matters. Over time, you'll forget the two-minute time limit and get better at building the habit.

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## **Chapter 4 | Tiger Woods Is Human (and Not for the Reason You Think): How Tiger Woods is just like the rest of us, even when it comes to playing golf| Quiz and Test**

1. Tiger Woods has won 14 Major titles in professional golf by his mid-twenties.
2. According to research, golfers perform better on birdie putts than on par putts under identical conditions.
3. Loss aversion affects both athletes and fans, influencing their emotional responses based on the context of game events.

## **Chapter 5 | Offense Wins Championships, Too: Is defense really more important than offense?| Quiz and Test**

1. The saying 'defense wins championships' is universally accepted as true in all sports disciplines.
2. Statistical evidence suggests that teams with a strong offensive ranking have historically been more successful than teams with a strong defensive ranking.
3. The emphasis on defensive skills in sports is primarily

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based on statistics and objective outcomes.

## **Chapter 6 | The Value of a Blocked Shot: Why Dwight Howard's 232 blocked shots are worth less than Tim Duncan's 149| Quiz and Test**

1. Blocked shots in basketball have the same value regardless of the context in which they occur.
2. According to the research findings, a blocked shot on a layup is valued at 1.5 points.
3. Dwight Howard's blocks were found to be more impactful than Tim Duncan's blocks due to his high quantity of blocks.

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## **Chapter 7 | Rounding First: Why .299 hitters are so much more rare (and maybe more valuable) than .300 hitters| Quiz and Test**

1. A .299 hitter is considered to be just as valuable as a .300 hitter in terms of performance.
2. Players hitting .299 are likely to take walks during their final at-bats to improve their averages.
3. The obsession with round numbers is only present in baseball and does not apply to other markets or contexts.

## **Chapter 8 | Thanks, Mr. Rooney: Why black NFL coaches are doing worse than ever—and why this is a good thing| Quiz and Test**

1. Tony Dungy had a successful playoff record during his coaching career with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.
2. The Rooney Rule was implemented in 2003 to ensure that NFL teams interview at least one minority candidate for head-coaching positions.
3. After the implementation of the Rooney Rule, the performance of African-American coaches improved

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significantly compared to previous years.

## **Chapter 9 | Comforts of Home: How do conventional explanations for the home field advantage stack up?| Quiz and Test**

1. Home teams consistently win more than 50% of their games due to a significant crowd support advantage.
2. The home team advantage has remained stable over decades, regardless of changes in gameplay rules and athlete conditions.
3. Travel fatigue has a major impact on home field advantage, making teams less successful when playing away.

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## **Chapter 10 | So, What is Driving the Home Field Advantage?: Hint: Vocal fans matter, but not in the way you might think| Quiz and Test**

1. Referee bias has no impact on home field advantage in sports.
2. Larger crowd sizes amplify referee bias, resulting in more favorable calls for home teams.
3. In soccer, referees grant less injury time to trailing home teams compared to visiting teams.

## **Chapter 11 | There's No I in Team: But there is an m and an e| Quiz and Test**

1. Since 1991, every NBA championship-winning team has had at least one superstar.
2. Teams with evenly distributed talent are more likely to win championships compared to teams with varied salaries among players.
3. Superstars have little impact on playoff performance compared to regular-season success.

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1. Mike McCoy created a draft pick valuation chart that helped the Cowboys evaluate trade offers effectively.
2. The winner's curse suggests that teams frequently underpay during the draft due to psychological factors.
3. Teams with high draft picks should always keep their picks instead of trading down for multiple lower ones.

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## **Chapter 13 | How a Coin Toss Trumps All: Why American Idol is a fairer contest than an NFL overtime| Quiz and Test**

1. In the NFL, the winning team of the coin toss has a success rate of 61% in overtime games from 2000 to 2009.
2. The proposed Kansas Plan adaptation suggests that teams should get a chance to possess the ball at their own 25-yard line in overtime.
3. The NFL has completely eliminated the use of a coin toss in deciding overtime outcomes.

## **Chapter 14 | What Isn't in the Mitchell Report?: Why Dominican baseball players are more likely to use steroids—and American players are more likely to smoke weed| Quiz and Test**

1. Dominican baseball players are more likely to be suspended for PED use compared to American players.
2. Mark McGwire was the only player in Major League Baseball to have admitted to PED use in 2010.
3. Cultural perceptions of drug use are the same between

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Dominican and American baseball players.

## **Chapter 15 | Do Athletes Really Melt When Iced?: Does calling a time-out before a play actually work?| Quiz and Test**

1. Icing athletes statistically decreases their success rate in high-pressure situations.
2. Icing has been shown to help kickers and shooters refocus their performance rather than create doubt.
3. Statistical studies confirm that there is a significant difference in success rates for iced and non-iced free throws in the NBA.

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## **Chapter 16 | The Myth of the Hot Hand: Do players and teams ride the wave of momentum? Or are we (and they) fooled into thinking they do?| Quiz and Test**

1. The belief in momentum in sports is supported by statistical evidence.
2. The studies on the hot hand phenomenon indicate that players' beliefs about becoming 'hot' after making several shots are accurate.
3. Larger sample sizes of performance data are more reliable predictors of success than short-term statistics.

## **Chapter 17 | Damned Statistics: Why “four out of his last five” almost surely means four of six| Quiz and Test**

1. Statistics can mislead audiences when presented selectively.
2. Ray Allen scored 27 points in the NBA Finals by only making three-point shots without any two-point attempts.
3. Small sample statistics can provide a true representation of a player's overall performance.

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## Chapter 18 | Are the Chicago Cubs Cursed?: If not, then why are the Cubs so futile?| Quiz and Test

1. The Chicago Cubs' long championship drought since 1908 can be attributed to a curse rather than management failures.
2. Steve Bartman was simply an excited fan trying to catch a foul ball during the 2003 National League Championship Series.
3. Attendance at Cubs games is heavily influenced by the team's on-field performance.

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