
Introduction

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Besides being one of the single most important factors in raising passions across the globe, the area of professional sports is a huge industry. It is a multi-billion dollar worldwide industry, with clubs enjoying revenues greater than many large corporations. For instance, in 2005, the New York Yankees valued at close to a billion dollars had \$264 million in revenues, while across the Atlantic, Manchester United valued at close to \$1,380 had revenues of almost \$300 million in the same year. Yet, despite the passions and revenues they generate and the global following they enjoy, professional sports has so far received relatively less attention from academics. This special issue is devoted to the subject of the economics and business in professional sports. This issue brings together a rich mix of six high quality papers, each looking at the sports industry from a unique perspective.

The special issue kicks off with an article on soccer. This article focuses on the determinants of women's international soccer performance by Benno Torgler of the Yale Center for International and Area Studies and the Center for Research in Economics, Management and the Arts (CREMA) in Basel. Seeking to address the gender imbalance of research on soccer, the authors investigate the impact of soccer tradition on women's team performances, analysing whether there is a correlation between women's and men's team performances. Their study finds that countries with a strong soccer tradition have a positive impact, which is reflected on having strong men's and women's teams.

Next, the issue moves from soccer to baseball. In their paper entitled 'Striking out: estimating the economic impact of baseball's World Series', authors Victor A. Matheson of the College of the Holy Cross and Robert A. Baade of Lake Forest College suggest that any economic benefits from post-season appearances are small or non-existent. An examination of 129 playoff series finds that any increase in economic growth as a result of the playoffs are not statistically and significantly different than zero. The conclusions of the paper point towards the use of caution in public subsidisation of a baseball team's attempt to reach the World Series given the small post-season economic benefits.

In an intriguing paper, authors Brad R. Humphreys of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and Daniel Munich of the CERGE-EI in the Czech Republic study sports participation and migration. The article presents an economic model of human capital investment to sports participation (training, conditioning and physical development) and explores the implications of this form of human capital investment. Their paper suggest a role of government subsidies given the model prediction that the level of sport-specific training undertaken will fall short, under certain conditions, of the socially optimum level. Introducing migration into their model, by the potential for individuals who have invested in sports-specific training to migrate from developing to developed economies, their paper further suggests a motivation similar in effect to subsidies.

S. Roger Park of Saint Leo University and Soonhwan Lee of Minnesota State University examine if the Participation Motivation Questionnaire (PMQ) is still valid for participants in action sports. Their study tests the motivational factors of action sports participation among male and female college students. They conclude that motivational factors of action sports participation do fit both male and female college students.

Alan Kaplan and Norman J. O'Reilly from the School of Business Management at the Ryerson University in Canada study the role of variable compensation in professional study. The authors analyse salary databases of athletes and senior management salaries. Although both groups have similar pay levels, CEOs and senior management are paid principally with stock options and other forms of variable compensation, whereas star professional athletes receive almost exclusively a fixed salary. The paper concludes that the current compensation mechanism in professional sports may not be allocatively efficient.

Just as we opened with soccer, this issue ends with soccer, this time with a proposal for an alternative ranking of soccer-playing nations. Soumodip Sarkar of the University of Évora performs comparative analyses of domestic football leagues. These analyses were done to see the extent to which there is 'market share domination' to the extent that a few football clubs have the greatest market share. Measures of industrial concentration are used to measure the extent to which there is a 'club' concentration in these countries. Analysing data from 2000–2001 to 2004–2005 First division domestic league competitions of the top 20 UEFA ranked countries, the paper uses industrial concentration techniques to come up with an alternative measure of ranking football leagues using a competitiveness index.