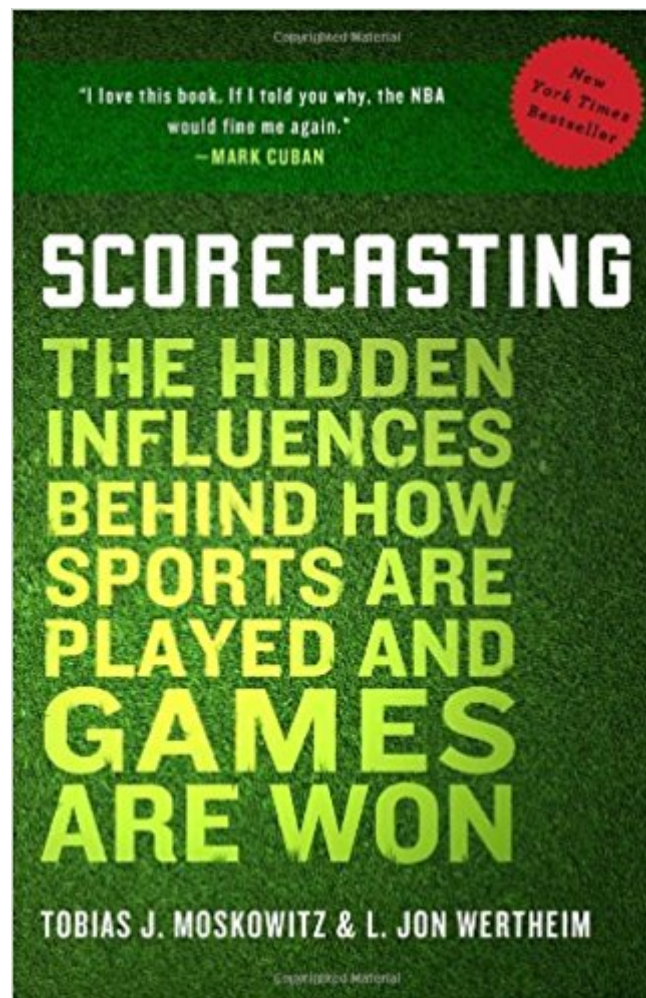




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# Scorecasting: The Hidden Influences Behind How Sports Are Played And Games Are Won



## Synopsis

In *Scorecasting*, University of Chicago behavioral economist Tobias Moskowitz teams up with veteran *Sports Illustrated* writer L. Jon Wertheim to overturn some of the most cherished truisms of sports, and reveal the hidden forces that shape how basketball, baseball, football, and hockey games are played, won and lost. Drawing from Moskowitz's original research, as well as studies from fellow economists such as bestselling author Richard Thaler, the authors look at: the influence home-field advantage has on the outcomes of games in all sports and why it exists; the surprising truth about the universally accepted axiom that defense wins championships; the subtle biases that umpires exhibit in calling balls and strikes in key situations; the unintended consequences of referees' tendencies in every sport to "swallow the whistle," and more. Among the insights that *Scorecasting* reveals: Why Tiger Woods is prone to the same mistake in high-pressure putting situations that you and I are; Why professional teams routinely overvalue draft picks; The myth of momentum or the "hot hand" in sports, and why so many fans, coaches, and broadcasters fervently subscribe to it; Why NFL coaches rarely go for a first down on fourth-down situations--even when their reluctance to do so reduces their chances of winning. In an engaging narrative that takes us from the putting greens of Augusta to the grid iron of a small parochial high school in Arkansas, *Scorecasting* will forever change how you view the game, whatever your favorite sport might be. From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Defense wins championships!” So declared a triumphant Michael Jordan in 1991, invoking a hallowed sports mantra. But Jordan’s assertion melts into cliché when Moskowitz and Wertheim expose it to statistical calculations revealing that, regardless of the sport, offense proves just as decisive as defense. Indeed, in their wide-ranging iconoclasm, the authors repeatedly poke arithmetic holes in what everyone in sports supposedly knows. Typical is their number-crunching assault on the popular explanation of home-field advantage as a consequence of visiting teams’ road fatigue. Home teams win, the authors demonstrate, chiefly because referees tend to see plays their way—especially when the crowd of spectators grows large. Parsing of data illuminates off-field behavior, too, explaining which athletes use steroids and which ones use marijuana. Even the curse hanging over the Chicago Cubs comes into focus then the analysts ignore the billy-goat myth and statistically assess a management style fostered by fans perversely loyal to “lovable losers!” Sports buffs eager to win their next barroom argument will be lining up for this book. --Bryce Christensen --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"The closest thing to Freakonomics I've seen since the original. A rare combination of terrific storytelling and unconventional thinking." I love this book...  
•Steven D. Levitt, Alvin H. Baum Professor of Economics, University of Chicago, and co-author of Freakonomics and SuperFreakonomics  
"I love this book. If I told you why, the NBA would fine me again."  
•Mark Cuban, owner of the Dallas Mavericks  
"Scorecasting is both scholarly and entertaining, a rare double. It gets beyond the cliched narratives and tried-but-not-necessarily-true assumptions to reveal significant and fascinating truths about sports."  
•Bob Costas  
"A counterintuitive, innovative, unexpected handbook for sports fans interested in the truths that underpin our favorite games. With their lively minds and prose, Moskowitz and Wertheim will change the way you think about and watch sports. Not just for stats nerds, Scorecasting enlightens and entertains. I wish I had thought of it!"  
•Jeremy Schaap, ESPN reporter, Author of Cinderella Man  
"(Sports + numbers) x great writing = winning formula. A must read for all couch analysts."  
•Richard Thaler, Professor of Behavioral Science and Economics, best-selling author of Nudge  
"Scorecasting will change the way you watch sports, but don't start reading it during a game; you're liable to get lost in it and miss the action. I'm not giving anything away because you'll want to read exactly how they arrived at their conclusions."  
•Allen Barra, NJ Star Ledger  
"Like Moneyball and

Soccernomics before it, Scorecasting crunches the numbers to challenge notions that have been codified into conventional sports wisdom. •Wired Magazine •Freakonomics meets Moneyball •The Wall Street Journal From the Hardcover edition.

Moskowitz and Wertheim presented, *Scorecasting: The Hidden Influences Behind How Sports Are Played and Games Are Won*, in a way that was very intriguing and eye opening to the reader. Despite the non-sequential manner of chapters, the statistics given were not too overwhelming. It wasn't necessary to try and remember all of the statistical numbers and percentages because they provided a deep analysis and multiple examples that explained each scenario or rebutted a "rule". Perhaps another reason for this is due to the fact that this book was published within the last five years and the examples used were up-to-date and still relevant in the world of sports. For example, it was shown that home team advantage certainly does exist, as most sports fans would conclude as well. Different reasons as to why this is probable were analyzed. These included whether it was due to the home crowd, the rigor of travel for away teams, the gentler schedule for home teams, or the unique home characteristics including referees. At least one hundred diverse percentages were given to prove which factor prevailed. Many psychological phenomena were also pin pointed, as they were in a number of illustrations. One of the remarkable aspects of this book included the way the authors answered a collective amount of underlying sports questions or myths. Just some of the topics include loss aversion in coaches and players, the competitiveness of sports, the importance of rounding numbers, the statement of, "There's no I in team" or "Having a hot hand," and the luckiness behind being unlucky. The authors did a fantastic job at providing multiple statistical analyses with each myth and often multiple sports. While some chapters did seem rather lengthy and the main points were constantly being drilled in, the next advanced to introduce a brand new topic to consider. The charts and tables also provided good breaking points to stop and look at the data in a simpler way. However, some of the graphical depictions could have been organized in a better or clear way. It took some time to analyze what exactly the graph or table was trying to portray. In the end, I can certainly say this book changed the way I think about sports. Particularly, the way referees and industries are viewed. It doesn't only pertain to the sports talked about such as football, basketball, baseball, golf, hockey, and soccer, but really any sport you can think of. I would recommend this book to any sports fan out there. It would be a tough read if you are not familiar with the rules of

football, baseball, or basketball, but no statistical background is necessary. It would also be a good read for anyone interested in how to think critically and analyze deeper into statistical data. Overall, the authors provided a great and entertaining read for the way overarching sports illusions were unfolded!

Scorecasting is a tour of the world of sports as seen through the eyes of a critical thinker wielding quantitative analysis. Anyone who thinks stats and sports don't mix, be prepared to see surprisingly simple answers to seemingly unanswerable questions. The nuances of player behavior, risk aversion, and even the nearly invisible bias of referees are all revealed once the curtain is pulled back on the most popular sports. An awesome book about sports, statistics, and how the bias of the human mind intervenes in subtle but powerful ways - even in sports.

Questions about sports that always come up: Why is the home team so often successful? Is there no I in team? Why are there more .300 hitters than .299 hitters? Why do golfers suck it up to avoid bogies but play it safe when looking for a birdie? In football, why is it so normal to punt on 4th down, no matter the situation? These and other issues are the focus of this quirky--but fun--volume. Sports fans will enjoy this; so, too, will students of the human condition. I don't want to give away too much here, but let's provide one simple example. Why home teams do so well in many sports. The authors examine several standard explanations: Home crowd support drives home field success; Travel saps visiting teams and, thus, they tend not to do so well on the road; home fields have some unique characteristics that the home team takes advantage of (e.g., stadiums in cold weather cities in pro football). However, the data do not support the series of suppositions raised by the authors. What seems to make a difference? The officials! They tend to cut home teams slack. Psychology provides an explanation for some of the phenomena observed. For instance, humans are risk averse. They overvalue negative events, so over respond to them. The threat of a bogey is more motivating than the desire for a birdie. So golfers "go for it" when faced with a bogie and "play it safe" when tempted to gain a birdie. Data suggest that Tiger Woods as well as many other golfers fit this pattern. Risk averse behavior is, the authors contend, the explanation. And on the book goes. Again, for the sports fan or those interested in the quirks of human psychology, this will be an enjoyable and enlightening work. After all, many of the lessons here can be generalized to other parts of life rather than just sports. . . .

I bought this book for a business statistics class book report. I chose this book because I am a huge

sports enthusiast. I found the book to be very informative and interesting. I learned a lot about the truth behind how sports are played today. I am not really a big fan of reading books, but this book kept me intrigued with all the different sport topics all in one book. I would highly recommend this book to anyone who is into sports or wanting to know some secrets from the world of sports.

Bet you will love it.

This book is a great combination of thorough research, great trivia, and thoughtful well written discussion. I have recommended it to all my friends with any interest in sports, and gifted it to quite a few as well. EVERY sports fan should put this on their required reading list. It covers so many different topics, but each with a statistician's eye for the truth. The saying that there are lies, damned lies, and statistics only applies if you look at the wrong statistics. Toby and Jon mix their love for all things sport, with an analytical approach to commonly accepted truths or venerable dictums, disproving some, and proving others, while shedding new light on why we see what we see in sport, from golf to soccer, to football, and finally to why my beloved Cubs suck (the best explanation I have seen yet!).

Great book that will change the way you think about sports. Includes mostly football soccer hockey baseball and basketball. Makes a good argument that what we perceive may be different than what actually happens and has happened.

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