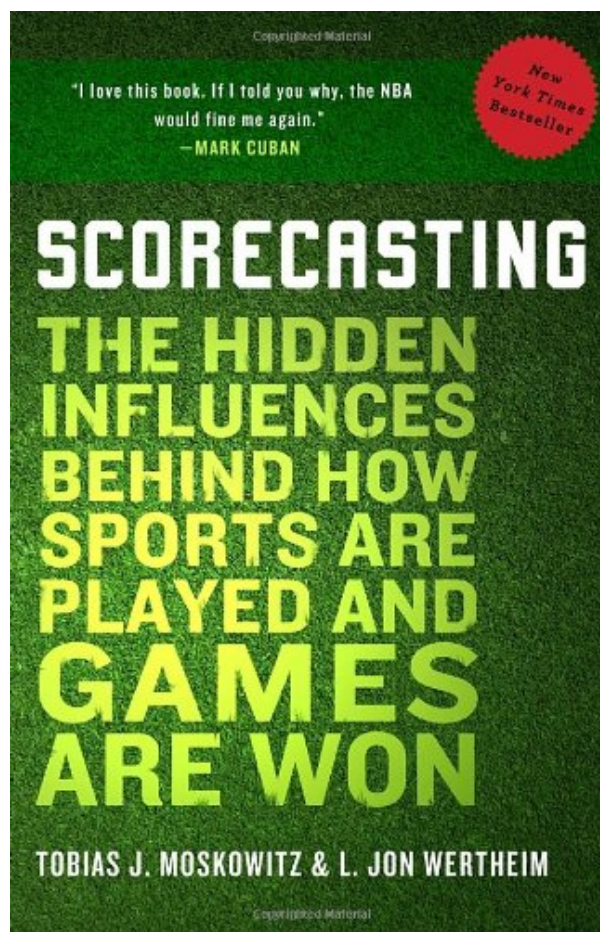


**SCORECASTING: THE HIDDEN  
INFLUENCES BEHIND HOW SPORTS ARE  
PLAYED AND GAMES ARE WON BY TOBIAS  
MOSKOWITZ, L. JON WERTHEIM**



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New  
York Times  
Bestseller

# SCORECASTING

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From Booklist

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Review

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From the Hardcover edition. Most helpful customer reviews48 of 52 people found the following review helpful.

Two Parts Freakonomics, One Part Moneyball

By David McCune

I greatly enjoyed Moskowitz and Wertheim's Scorecasting. Much like the highly successful Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything (P.S.), the authors examine some of the preconceptions surrounding sport, using statistics and other empirical evidence to reach some interesting conclusions. As the authors stated in their forward, they hope this book will be used to start conversations, settle bar bets, and generally entertain the thinking sportsman. I think they have succeeded.

By and large, Scorecasting is highly readable. My one critique would be that the chapters are highly variable in length, and in particular some of the shorter chapters seemed to be just tossed in. (Did we really need 4 pages to show that, indeed, the Yankees win because they have the biggest payroll in baseball? Three pages to show that the coin toss at the start of NFL overtime is important?) I would also point out that, again like Freakonomics, the chapters are unconnected by any underlying theme, unless that theme is to examine preconceptions and use evidence. I don't consider that a flaw, more a notation of what type of book this is.

In addition, I was reminded of my favorite sports book, Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game. Just as a large part of Moneyball was devoted to showing how a systematic statistical approach to building a team could lead to better results than traditional scouting, Scorecasting can give a reader an appreciation of some recurring trends in sport. It is not just descriptive, but predictive. (The one thing that sets Moneyball apart is that it also has the very compelling story of Oakland A's manager Billy Beane woven in. That human element is absent in Scorecasting.)

Some quick examples from chapters I enjoyed:

Why you should (almost) never punt in football, including an example of a coach who followed the philosophy to a state title. Also, why most coaches still punt, in spite of the evidence.

Why Tim Duncan's 149 blocked shots are more valuable than Dwight Howard's 232 (Answer: Duncan tends

to block the ball to his teammates, Howard tends toward the spectacular swat that goes into the 4th row...then back to the other team.)

The incredible differences in strike zones when comparing a 3-0 count to a 0-2 count. (Hint: umps expand the zone in the former, shrink the zone in the latter, allowing the hitter to determine the outcome)

So, if you are a sports fan, a bit of a stats geek, and enjoy a well thought out contrarian argument, this is a 5 star book. If you generally enjoyed the other two books I mentioned, I think this would be a good choice.

4.5 stars overall 27 of 29 people found the following review helpful.

freakonomics + sports = awesome

By N

This latest addition in the Freakonomics-driven behavioral economics genre is probably the best. It is Scorecasting and to a sports fan it is a can't-put-down type of book. The book is written extremely well with a mixture of famous sporting anecdotes and hard statistics that include research of the authors and others.

Some of the eye-opening subjects include:

1. very solid evidence that umpires bias games - however what is interesting is the bias is not random. The bias tells a story.
2. the subject of home-field advantage was mesmerizing. Turns out not at all what sports pundits tell us are true or at least not in the way you might think so.
3. incentives lie at the heart of the Chicago Cubs' dismal century.
4. great use of numbers to show how desperate baseball players are to have a batting average of at least 0.300.
5. a look into why some stats are not telling us all we need to know (i.e. blocked shot stats in basketball).
6. why don't football coaches go for it on 4th down when it is a statistically correct move?

Turns out that psychology (namely loss aversion) and incentives dictate a lot of sports decision making.

There are several shorter chapters that seem to be 'unfinished' which is a shame. For instance a chapter just mentions the Yankees 'buying' of championships. It would have been great to see a more in depth statistical analysis of how spending money predicts success in baseball.

As I hear constantly on the sport talk radio, the Seattle Seahawks benefit from their 12th man - the crowd. It would have been interesting to see if this claim stacks up and is in fact a larger effect on winning than at other venues.

Great, fast read. Highly recommended. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Good overview, lots of unanswered questions

By John J. Franco

Commonly called "Freakonomics for sports" but I think it's more comparable to "Sway" or "The Tipping Point" - it's the same idea though.

Like Sway, scorecasting provides an overview of numerous studies that were done and research that was conducted. Also like Sway, it's merely an overview that leaves a lot of questions unanswered.

Since I know a bit more about sports than sociology, it's easier for me to see the holes and wonder if the authors left the information out of their summary, or if it isn't there.



For example, the authors talk about how traveling is called less at the end of basketball games, but don't mention if they controlled for the fact that there are better players on the court at the end of the game. maybe they did, or maybe it doesn't matter, but I'm left wondering, and the chapter on parity and length of season started off on an interesting note but fizzled out without a conclusion.

The chapters are not anywhere near equal in length, which isn't necessarily bad. The chapters on the Rooney Rule is only a few pages and doesn't really offer any conclusions. The chapters (yes, chapters) on Home Field Advantage are much longer and could have possibly been their own book. It is by far the best researched and most convincing topic covered, and researchers far smarter than me have already weighed in, so I'll just point you to their work:

[...] (I'd say this is the definitive commentary)

[...]

[...]

Scorecasting is a good book for someone with almost no background in the subject of sports and statistical research, but more knowledgeable readers may find more questions than answers. See all 159 customer reviews...

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