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## A First Step

Benjamin Alamar Ph.D.\*

\*University of California, San Francisco, [quantsports@gmail.com](mailto:quantsports@gmail.com)

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# A First Step

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## **Abstract**

A letter from the editor regarding the inaugural issue of the Journal of Quantitative Analysis in Sports.

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*Sport [goes] hand in hand with science.*

-Lord Alfred Tennyson

I would first like to thank all of the authors, reviewers and Editorial Board members who have contributed to the inaugural and future issues of the *Journal of Quantitative Analysis in Sports*. *JQAS* would not have been possible without all of the time and efforts put in by all of you. You all supplied *JQAS* with the needed scholarly work, critical review and general guidance with an obvious eagerness.

It is the interest and work of our contributors, reviewers and board that demonstrated the need for *JQAS* as the first academic journal dedicated to statistical analysis in sports. For too long academics have had to either compete for space in general journals or simply relegate their work to the back of the drawer or a working paper archive. Practitioners with an understanding of the importance of sports statistics have had few places to turn to ask questions regarding the issues that they face in sports management. Now *JQAS* not only provides an outlet for rigorous statistical sports analysis, but provides practitioners with a resource to ask questions and find the most thoughtful researchers on the subjects in which they are interested.

The articles in this inaugural issue come from a wide variety of sports and perspectives and deal with such subjects as tournament structure, frequency of the occurrence of records and the optimal focus of training for decathlons. The issue also includes a review of *Scientific Football 2005* by KC Joyner of ESPN reviewed by Paraag Marathe of the San Francisco 49ers. These are just a sampling of the topics that can and will be addressed in *JQAS* in the future.

While *JQAS* is new, quantitative sports analysis is not. Many academics have won the competition for space in general journals and many other researchers have published books, websites and blogs with significant research in sports. Baseball is the most researched sport with the Baseball Prospectus (Kahrl, et al. 2005) publishing new work daily that builds on the work of Lindsey, James and others, with sports such as football (Carroll, et al. 1988, Krasker 2005, Schatz 2004, Schatz, et al. 2005) and basketball (Beech 2005, Oliver 2003) continually finding new outlets. While much of this research is of high quality, very little of it is subject to peer review and rigorous testing. These sources are not traditionally discussed seriously in academic settings. In the case of sports

analysis it is important that the thoughts and innovations of these pioneers are recognized and scrutinized.

Because of the need to recognize this prior but informal work, *JQAS* would like to see new submissions that survey the traditionally non-academic work with a critical eye. Recognizing and analyzing previous work will provide a strong foundation on which to identify what is currently known in sports and where the biggest areas of improvement in statistical work is needed.

The other mechanism that *JQAS* has of identifying the biggest areas of need in sports is the “Practitioner’s Comment” section of the journal. Here authors from outside of academia will pose the questions that they have and describe the problems that they have encountered in attempting to do sports analysis. Aaron Schatz has provided the initial comment, describing “Football’s Hilbert Problems” which identifies many of the holes in football research that need to be filled. Any future submissions that directly address the issues that are raised in this or other Practitioner’s Comments receive priority for review and publication.

Finally, *JQAS* has come about because, as researchers, practitioners and fans, we all have come to the belief that many aspects of sports are still a mystery. Strategy, player evaluation and the structure of sports events themselves are just a few of the areas by which quantitative analysis can increase our knowledge and decision making ability.

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