THREE STANDARDS OF ATHLETIC SUPERIORITY

The aim of this paper is to deepen our understanding of the inherent purpose of sports competitions. In 'On Winning and Athletic Superiority', Nicholas Dixon states that the central comparative purpose of an athletic contest is to determine which team or player is superior, or, synonymously, to provide an accurate measure of athletic superiority. Dixon identifies athletic skill as the standard of athletic superiority in competitive sport. However, I argue there are three separate standards of athletic superiority: the demonstration of athletic skill, the achievement of prelusory goal using lusory means, and achievement of superior formal result. This stance responds to Dixon's argument that failed athletic contests are contests that have not fulfilled the central purpose of competitive sport, because they have been undermined by refereeing errors, cheating, gamesmanship or bad luck. I argue that a failed athletic contest occurs when any of the three standards of athletic superiority conflict.

KEYWORDS: athletic superiority; athletic skills; competition; contest; Nicholas Dixon; winning

Introduction

What is the purpose of sports competitions? Some would suggest it is financial gain. For instance, the National Hockey League (NHL) postponed its 2012–2013 season because players and owners could not agree on income distribution. Instead of highlighting the economic goals of sports, however, this paper will focus on the inherent purpose of sports competitions: determining which athlete or team is the best. This purpose is a key focus of Nicholas Dixon's 'On Winning and Athletic Superiority', an article published in a previous issue of this journal. Dixon (1999, 10) argues, '[a] central purpose of competitive sport is precisely to provide a comparison – in Kretchmar's terms […], a contest – that determines which team or player is superior' (see also Kretchmar 1975). Dixon's article aims to evaluate how sports competitions fulfil this comparative

purpose and argues that an athletic contest may fail in this central purpose because of refereeing errors, cheating, gamesmanship or bad luck (Dixon 1999, 10, 24).

Since its publication, Dixon's article has generated much discussion. Some studies have considered whether the undermining factors Dixon considers, especially bad luck, really affect whether an athletic contest fulfils its inherent purpose (see Simon 2007). Others (see Finn 2009) have challenged Dixon's recommendation of a regular season system over a playoff system (Dixon 1999, 22–23). However, critics have not responded to Dixon's stance on the purpose of athletic contests, perhaps because it has intuitive appeal. Dixon himself writes, 'The account developed in this paper is based on *uncontroversial views on the purpose of competitive sport*' (Dixon 1999, 26: endnote 12, emphasis mine).

The goal of my paper is to broaden our understanding of the purpose of athletic contest by challenging this aspect of Dixon's view. Dixon (1999, 10, 14, 16) argues that determining which team or athlete is superior is synonymous with providing an accurate measure of athletic superiority, and athletic skill is the standard of athletic superiority. I will argue that there are three separate standards of athletic superiority: the superior display of athletic skill, the ability to meet prelusory goal using lusory means and the achievement of a better formal result than one's opponent. I will then reformulate Dixon's assertions regarding failed athletic contests to argue that an athletic contest has failed in its inherent purpose when any of these three standards of athletic superiority conflict. However, this argument does not imply that the contest has failed in other ways. I conclude that the three-standard model of athletic superiority explains more convincingly the nuances of failed athletic contests than Dixon's one-standard model.

A Single Standard of Athletic Superiority

Dixon identifies athletic skill as the only standard of athletic superiority. As he states, 'one of competitive sport's least controversial goals [is] to determine which team has most athletic skill' (1999, 14, see also 16). Determination of athletic skills in Dixon's view refers to the relationship

between athletic skill and formal victory: the team that has most athletic skill is determined if the team that has the most athletic skills is the formal winner.

Dixon defines athletic skill as consisting of physical prowess and mental attributes adding that'relevant mental attributes include not only cognitive skills like astute strategy but also affective qualities like poise and toughness.' (Dixon 1999, 24). Using this account of athletic skill, Dixon (1999, 10) uses the terms 'the better team' and 'the team that deserves to win' interchangeably, suggesting that an undeserved victory occurs when the better team loses. Thus, 'the one who deserves to win, is the one who displays most skill' (1999, 11, 13). Dixon uses Robert L. Simon's theory of sport to support his view of competitive sport as tests of skills. According to Dixon (1999, 11), Simon's outlook implies that a victory is unjust if the winning team does not win through skill and excellence.[1] **This stance establishes a logical path from athletic superiority via better team and desert to athletic skill that concludes with Dixon's conception that the standard of athletic superiority is athletic skill.**

Three Standards of Athletic Superiority

The three-standard model of athletic superiority consists of the following standards: the demonstration of superior athletic skill, the superior ability to meet prelusory goals using lusory means and the achievement of a better formal result than one's opponent. This account offers a broader and more accurate account of athletic superiority. By athletic superiority, I simply refer to the relative ranking of two athletes or teams. Unlike Dixon, I think that we can establish this order in three different ways. We could come up with further standards, but these three standards seem to matter most in sport.

The first standard, the superior display of athletic skills, is the same as in Dixon's view. Sigmund Loland's description of Wayne Gretzky reflects Dixon's position well: 'the Canadian Wayne Gretzky is a legend in his sport. Gretzky's fast skating and skilled handling of the puck

demonstrated advanced technical coordination'. In concert with Dixon, Loland emphasizes Gretzky's tactical understanding and tolerance of pressure (Loland 2002, 67).

The second standard, defined by the superior completion of prelusory goals using lusory means, refers to a kind of ideal or objective evaluation of and adherence to rules and procedures. My terminology for this standard references Bernard Suits (2010, 28), who wrote, 'To play a game is to attempt to achieve a specific state of affairs [prelusory goal], using only means permitted by the rules [lusory means]'. Every sport has a goal – a specific state of affairs – that competitors try to achieve. In a long-distance running race, for instance, the prelusory goal is to cross the finish line first. Runners can only pursue this state of affairs by lusory means. For instance, one is not allowed to intentionally trip a rival. Lusory means are thus rules that define how one is allowed to pursue a given prelusory goal (Suits 2010, 25–26).

The second standard is, in principle, independent of referee's decisions. Thus, obtaining a prelusory goal by violating lusory means nullifies the resulting achievement despite referee's decision. If a player intentionally uses a hand to score in a football match, his team has not achieved a prelusory goal using lusory means even if the referee does not see or penalize the infraction. Also there is the implication that when the accomplishment of prelusory goals is obstructed by means that are not lusory, it is as if the prelusory goals in fact been accomplished regardless of the referee's judgement. For example, England and Ukraine met in European Football Championships in 2012. At one point of the match, English player John Terry attempted to clear the ball from the goal mouth. It appeared that he had succeeded, and the referee did not award a goal to Ukraine. However, the slow-motion replay demonstrated that the ball had actually crossed England's goal line. Thus, according to ideal rule evaluation – which is the core of the second standard – Ukraine achieved prelusory goal using lusory means. I agree that there was an obvious imperfection in the match, since England eventually won with 1–0. Nevertheless, an essential feature of the second standard is that it overcomes or overlooks these kinds of imperfections and seeks the ideal game.

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The third standard, the team that achieves a better formal result, ranks the teams according to their formal result. When England was awarded one goal and team Ukraine no goals, England was superior according to the third standard. Dixon notes that this kind of stance is common: "As a long-serving baseball commentator in Detroit was apt to point out, when people challenged an umpire's calls, tomorrow morning's box scores will always prove that the umpire was right after all" (Dixon 1999, 11). As expected, Dixon does not share this view.

The three-standard model attempts to capture common intuitions about how different ways in which an athletic contest can fail. However, this does not imply that the standards carry equal weight within the failed contest. It only entails that each of them is a requirement to prevent such a failure. An athletic contest can thus be a failure to different degrees depending on how much value each standard has: some failed contests can be said to have been more of a failure than others. This grading of failed contests is based on the notion that the standards are qualitatively different. Display of athletic skills is the most intrinsic and complex standard and therefore is most open to interpretation, whereas formal result is the most universal, straightforward and rigid. Meeting the prelusory goal using lusory means lies between these two extremities. However, I will return to the ideal character of the three-standard account later in this paper. The next section will apply the two models of athletic superiority to Dixon's cases of failed athletic contests and analyse the results.

Four Cases of Failed Athletic Contests

In his article, Dixon (1999) presents four cases of failed athletic contests: refereeing errors, cheating, gamesmanship and bad luck. I will examine how Dixon explains these cases using the one-standard model and present how the three-standard model interprets each case.

Refereeing Errors

In his first example of a failed athletic contest, Dixon describes a football match replete with refereeing errors. In this match, the home team wins by one goal from a penalty kick. However, the penalty kick resulted from a refereeing error. Also, the referee called three of the away team's goals

as offside, even though they were perfectly good goals and all attacking players were onside. Thus, refereeing errors ruined the away team's chances, despite having had a strong constant control over the less skilful home team (Dixon 1999, 11).

Dixon regards this match as a failed athletic contest because the home team did not meet his criterion of athletic superiority: superior athletic skill. He writes, 'the home team did not deserve to win. The better team did not win' (Dixon 1999, 11). Dixon thus connects deserved outcome to athletic skill, suggesting that the home team did not display superior athletic skill (Dixon 1999, 11).

By contrast, the three-standard model explains this failed athletic as a conflict between the three standards. The away team displayed superior athletic skill, and scored three goals in accordance with lusory means, while the home team's only goal was not achieved through lusory means. In other words, the away team accomplished the task of getting the ball into the opponent's net according to the rules more frequently than the home team did. However, the home team was better according to the standard of formal result.

To summarise, Dixon defines this case of refereeing errors as a failed athletic contest because the results did not reflect his single standard of athletic superiority. In contrast, I suggest a conflict between three standards caused this failure: while the away team displayed superior athletic skill and better met the prelusory goal through lusory means, the home team achieved the better formal result.

Cheating

According to Dixon's minimal conception of cheating, an athlete cheats whenever he tries to break a rule while attempting to avoid detection and punishment (Dixon 1999, 12–13). Cheating can occur during a game and outside of a game (Dixon 1999, 12–13). To demonstrate cheating during a game, Dixon references an infamous case of cheating: Diego Maradona's "hand of God". During a quarterfinal in football's 1986 World Cup, Maradona scored a goal with his hand, an infraction that went undetected by the referee, who accepted the goal. Maradona later commented that the 'hand of

God' scored the goal (Dixon 1999, 13). To demonstrate cheating outside of a game, Dixon references the case of Ben Johnson at the 1988 Seoul Olympics. Tests indicated that Johnson had used anabolic steroids; consequently, officials stripped him of his Olympic gold medal (Dixon 1999, 12–13).

Dixon's explanation of failed athletic contests in cheating cases rests on his view that athletic skill is the only standard of athletic superiority. For example, he states that Johnson's race was not a legitimate test of athletic excellence because Johnson did not demonstrate superior athletic skills since cheating requires mental skills that are not essential to sport (Dixon 1999, 12–14).

Once a more, according to the three-standard model, Dixon's cheating cases are failed athletic contests because the three standards of athletic superiority conflict. In Ben Johnson's case, Johnson did not demonstrate superior athletic skill, arguably because his use of anabolic steroids meant that his athletic skills were not properly his own and so his victory was not a product of his own athletic skill. Nor did he best meet the prelusory goals using lusory means, since he cheated by using prohibited performance enhancers. However, he achieved the best formal result. These conflicting standards are the same as those in the previous case of refereeing errors.

Gamesmanship

Discussing a third context of failed athletic contests, Dixon presents two kinds of gamesmanship: professional fouls and dubious practices that do not violate rules. A professional or strategic foul is a breach of rules committed to prevent an opponent from scoring. The transgressor does not attempt to hide his offence and readily accepts the penalty. To illustrate a professional foul, Dixon describes a football match where the home team is dominating, but neither team has scored. In the final minutes, the home team's attacker receives an excellent opportunity to score, but a defender tackles him illegally. The home team receives a penalty shot, which the goalkeeper saves. At the very end of the game, the away team's attacker receives a similar excellent opportunity to

score, but the home team's defender does not commit a professional foul, even though he could. The attacker scores and the away team celebrates a victory (Dixon 1999, 15).

Dixon sees this football match as a failed athletic contest based on his single standard of athletic superiority. In this match, as in the case of the refereeing errors, the demonstrator of superior athletic skill was not the formal winner. Dixon states, 'the away team did not deserve to win, because it did not demonstrate superior athletic skill' (Dixon 1999, 15).

Again, the three-standard model identifies this case as a failed athletic contest because of a conflict between the three standards of athletic superiority. In this particular case, the home team displayed superior athletic skill, but the away team better met the prelusory goal using lusory means and also achieved better formal result. An elaboration of the standard regarding the accomplishment of prelusory goal through lusory means is that the away team scored its goal using lusory means because no offence occurred, and it also prevented the home team's goal using lusory means because the game's rules were applied appropriately in both cases. In other words, the away team's defender did not violate the rules in terms of avoiding punishment that is, the game went according to the rules. A player cannot tackle in a certain manner, but if he does, he should be punished; if punishment ensues, the game has followed procedure. Therefore, the away team better met the prelusory goal using lusory means.

Having assessed the validity of the one-standard model and the three-standard model in the case of professional fouls, I now turn to Dixon's (1999, 14–16) second category of gamesmanship: morally dubious tactics designed to unsettle opponents, like trash talking. Dixon develops two approaches to this kind of gamesmanship: tolerant and radical. With respect to the tolerant approach, Dixon supposes that athletic skills include some degree of mental tolerance of gamesmanship tactics (Dixon 1999, 14, 16). For example, a shy sprinter who runs exceptionally well in practice frequently loses serious contests due to nervousness. In one race, his rival tells a dirty joke during preparation and our nervous sprinter finishes last. Because of the sprinter's lack of

mental tolerance, or limited athletic skill, Dixon would probably argue this case is not an instance of a failed athletic contest (see also Dixon 1999, 20–21).

With respect to the radical approach, Dixon argues dubious practices can cause failed athletic contests in cases 'in which a clearly superior, but not great, player is so rattled by her opponent's gamesmanship that she loses her cool and the game' (Dixon 1999, 16). Here, Dixon seems to renounce athletic skill as a standard of athletic superiority to explain the failed contest. However, he does not thoroughly explain his view in the context of gamesmanship. He states, 'we may safely leave [the issue] unresolved at this stage', and states to explain later in his paper why 'we must also allow for the possibility that a team that loses a big game due to nervousness may nonetheless be the better team' (Dixon 1999, 16). I will discuss Dixon's explanation in a later section that addresses Dixon's special case of a failed athletic contest.

To summarise, Dixon argues professional fouls may create a failed athletic contest if the demonstrator of superior athletic skill is not the formal winner. However, I suggest that the failure results from a conflict between the three standards of athletic superiority. Dixon proposes that the second kind of gamesmanship may also create failed athletic contests in special circumstances. I will examine his detailed explanation later in this paper.

Bad Luck

With respect to his fourth type of failed athletic contests, Dixon describes a football match in which a dominating team faces several strokes of bad luck. The team does not score a single goal, despite hitting several goalposts. A sudden gust of wind, mud on the ground and a referee standing in the wrong place stop or alter other shots. What is more, a freakish deflection by a defender assists the opponents in scoring the winning goal (Dixon 1999, 16–17). As expected, Dixon considers the match a failed athletic contest because the formal winner did not demonstrate superior athletic skill. This follows from Dixon's assertion that the dominating team was better and deserved to win and the assumption that Dixon connects desert to athletic skill (Dixon 1999, 17).

As in the previous cases, I contend that this match is a failed athletic contest because of a conflict between the three standards of athletic superiority. The dominating team displayed superior athletic skill, but the lucky team better met the prelusory goal through lusory means, as there were no refereeing errors or misconduct. The lucky team also achieved better formal result. Thus, the conflict is the same as in the case of professional fouls.

I have now examined Dixon's primary examples of failed athletic contest. So far, neither model of athletic superiority – Dixon's one-standard model and my three-standard model – has faced difficulties, although I have preferred the three-standard model. The next section will analyse Dixon's last case of failed athletic contest.

A Special Case of Failed Athletic Contest

Dixon's (1999, 19–23) fifth, special context of a failed athletic contest concerns "inferior performance by superior athletes". It differs from the four previous ones, since Dixon appears, at least superficially, to replace his standard of athletic superiority, athletic skill, with compilation of formal victories in these cases.

Dixon writes that the: "team that performs better and deserves to win may still not be the better team." In his example, an unseeded player beats Steffi Graf in a Wimbledon final during Graf's period of dominance. The match involves no decisive refereeing errors, cheating, gamesmanship or bad luck. Hence, Dixon supposes that the unranked player displays superior athletic skill, declaring, 'She deserves her victory because, on that day, she is the better player'. However, he goes on to state, 'in another sense, she is not the better player'. Based on Graf's previous success, Dixon ultimately declares Graf is the superior athlete and identifies the match as a failed athletic contest. In his evaluation of this match, Dixon emphasises Graf's victories in several other tournaments and states that Graf would probably have won nine matches out of ten against the unranked player, but just happened to have an off day. Thus, in this case, Dixon's standard of athletic superiority appears to be a compilation of formal victories (Dixon 1999, 10, 19–20).

However, this apparent reformulation of athletic superiority to include the number of previous formal victories is unconvincing and problematic. It follows from his line of reasoning that in some cases, we could pronounce which team or athlete is superior prior to the match, thus destroying the inherent purpose of the athletic contest. The purpose of a sports competition is not to determine the best athlete overall, but to determine the best athlete in that particular competition. One of the distinctive and intriguing features of sports competitions is the possibility that a rookie could defeat a reigning champion. Sport is a field of opportunity.

Dixon's view can be salvaged if we assume that he has merely used language unwisely. Then, his error is not in introducing an implausible standard of athletic superiority, but in calling Graf's loss a failed contest. In this interpretation, Dixon does not mean that the match was failed athletic contest, viewed by itself. Instead, he means that the match did not provide an accurate overall measure of athletic superiority. Dixon is able to put this right later: "Think back to the example about Steffi Graf, where a single defeat in a major tournament to an unranked player would not have dislodged our belief that she was *the best women's tennis player in the world during her years of dominance*." (Dixon 1999, 20, italics mine). To conclude, Dixon holds that inferior performance by superior athlete, like the Graf example, is not a failed athletic contest after all in the paradigm of a single match.

The three-standard model fares at least as well as Dixon's view when applied to the Steffi Graf example. It can explain the aspects of athletic superiority both in a single match and in overall. Firstly, the three standards are in harmony in the context of the single Wimbledon final: the unranked player displayed superior athletic skill, better met the prelusory goal using lusory means, and achieved a better formal result. As a result, there is no failed contest. Secondly, I assume that Graf would have been superior on the three standards more frequently than the unranked player, had they duelled several matches, but on the Wimbledon final, the unranked player just happened to outperform the better overall player by all three standards.

In conclusion, when we correct the inconsistency in Dixon's account of inferior performances by superior athletes, his stance becomes plausible. Otherwise, the three-standard model would be the only account that can convincingly explain the Steffi Graf Example. Thus far, none of the cases of failed athletic contests has provided a clear argument for one of these two models of athletic superiority. However, I have not yet discussed what happens, if we blend some of Dixon's conditions for undermining athletic contests.

Failed Athletic Contests Blended

This section will blend some of Dixon's examples of failed athletic contests and argue that the three-standard model of athletic superiority can explain the issues that subsequently arise in a more satisfying way than Dixon's one-standard model. I will present two cases: first, a combination of refereeing errors and bad luck; and second, a mixture of cheating and bad luck.

The first combination draws on Dixon's example regarding refereeing errors. In my version of Dixon's football match, officiating errors benefit the away team granting them three penalty shots, each of which results in a goal. Although the away team dominates the match, bad luck prevents additional goals: the ball frequently hits the goalposts, and wind, mud and a badly positioned referee stop or alter other shots. The home team displays just one decent attack and manages to score a goal. This goal involves no refereeing errors. Because of the penalty shots, the away team wins 3–1.

According to Dixon's model of athletic superiority, this match does not represent a failed athletic contest. The away team demonstrated superior athletic skill and was the formal winner. However, in one sense the contest appears to have failed because the away team's victory depended on refereeing errors. In Dixon's example, decisive refereeing errors led to a failed athletic contest. Likewise, the three-standard model identifies this match as a failed athletic contest because the standards of athletic superiority conflict. The away team displayed superior athletic skill, and achieved a better formal result. However, the home team better met prelusory goals using lusory

means by scoring its only goal through lusory means, whereas, the away team scored each of its three goals on penalty shots that should not have been awarded.

The second combination, which includes cheating and bad luck, replaces the refereeing errors in the previous example with instances of cheating. In this case, the away team scores twice in the match as a result of cheating: unseen by the referees, an attacker punches the ball into the goal with his hand, on two separate occasions. As in the previous scenario, bad luck prevents the dominating away team from scoring extra goals. The home team scores one goal without cheating. The away team wins 2–1.

Dixon would presumably argue that the match is not a failed athletic contest because the away team, the formal winner, displayed superior athletic skill. However, there is grounds for declaring the match a failed athletic contest, since the away team's victory depended on decisive cheating. Similar cases of cheating resulted in failed athletic contests in Dixon's examples. Dixon's inconsistency is perhaps most obvious in this case: victory resulting from cheating is intuitively more suspicious than victory resulting from refereeing errors.

As in the previous example, the three-standard model unequivocally classifies this match as a failed athletic contest. The conflicting standards are the same as in the previous example: the standards of athletic skill and formal result identify the away team as superior, whereas the away team scored both its goals through non-lusory means, suggesting the home team better met the prelusory goal using lusory means.

There is a possible counterargument to my assertion that Dixon's account cannot adequately explain cases in which we mix the distractors of failed athletic contests. According to this counterargument, the blended examples are not failed athletic contests at all because the effects of undermining elements overturn each other in these cases. In my first example, the away team deserved to win despite the refereeing errors in its favour, since it displayed superior athletic skills. The refereeing errors merely compensated for bad luck that would have otherwise prevented the

rightful victors from winning. Similarly, in the second example, cheating compensated for bad luck to give the superior team victory.

However, this counterargument appears to neglect the possibility that there are some "wrong" forms of victory. My blended examples seem to epitomize these kinds of victory. In the both matches, the away team won, not due to its superior athletic skill but due to refereeing errors and cheating. This adds a tone of confusion or disappointment into the victory, and the joy of formal victory failing to compensate for the manner by which the victories where achieved. Two further examples illustrate that a deserved state of affairs can be partially eclipsed by the way it is obtained.

Firstly, there appears to be a "wrongway" to get an Olympic gold medal. Marion Jones won two Olympic gold medals in the 100 and 200 metres in Sydney in 2000, but was proven guilty of use of illegal substances several years later and stripped of her medals. Consequently, Pauline Davis-Thompson of Bahamas, the runner behind Jones in 200 metres, received a gold medal. There seems to be a convincing claim that the way Davis-Thompson received the medal was wrong as she was not allowed to feel the victory in front of the audience.

Secondly, an example outside the realm of sports demonstrates how one can get a hotel room the "wrong way". Imagine that Bob has reserved a room a month before his stay, but bad luck causes his reservation to lost, with no rooms left when he arrives at the hotel. The receptionist does not appoint a room for him. Nathan has reserved the last available room one day earlier and arrives at the hotel at the same time. However, the receptionist makes a mistake causing Nathan's credit card to become dysfunctional. It has to be reactivated at a bank. Nathan cannot pay and therefore, the receptionist gives his room to Bob. Now, Bob has the room, not because he had booked it earlier than Nathan, but because of Nathan's inability to pay. One assumes this is not the way in which Bon would have liked to secure a room.

The blended examples are designed to show that there are situations that Dixon's model is not able to explain that the three-standard model effectively addresses. This is the strength of my model compared to Dixon's account. Nevertheless, this might not be a fatal deficit in Dixon's view because these cases of athletic contests only appear to be mild failures opposed to significant failures.

Conclusion

According to Dixon, the inherent purpose of an athletic contest is to determine which team or athlete is superior, which is synonymous with providing an accurate measure of athletic superiority. Dixon's standard of athletic superiority is athletic skill. In Dixon's model, an athletic contest fails if it does not achieve its central purpose, that is, if the displayer of superior athletic skill is not the formal winner. However, there is an alternative view to Dixon's one-standard model: the three-standard model of athletic superiority. This proposed model consists of three separate standards of athletic superiority: the demonstration of athletic skill, the meeting of prelusory goals through lusory means, and the achievement of the better formal result. According to the three-standard model, a failed athletic contest occurs when any of these these three standards conflict.

Table 1 summarises which of the discussed cases each model classifies as failed athletic contests in the paradigm of a single competition. A convenient way to study the table is to imagine that it is based on a football match between teams A and B. However, it will apply also to other sports in which A and B participate. Bolded distracting factors refer to Dixon's examples, and non-bolded factors refer to my blended examples.

TABLE 1

The team that displays better athletic skills	The team that better meets the prelusory goal using lusory means	The team that has better formal result	Distracting factors	Status of the contest according to Dixon's one-standard model	Status of the contest according to three-standard model
B	B	A	**refereeing errors** or **cheating**	failed	failed
B	A	A	**gamesmanship** or **bad luck**	failed	failed
A	A	A	**inferior performances by superior athlete**	not failed	not failed
A	B	A	refereeing errors and bad luck or cheating and bad luck	not failed	failed

The three-standard model appears to be more sensitive than Dixon's one-standard model is. Unlike Dixon's model, the three-standard model can deal with cases in which undermining factors are mixed. In conclusion, to understand some nuances surrounding inherent purpose of sports competitions, we need to separate different standards of athletic superiority. I suggest that there are three: athletic skill, meeting the prelusory goal using lusory means and formal result.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

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