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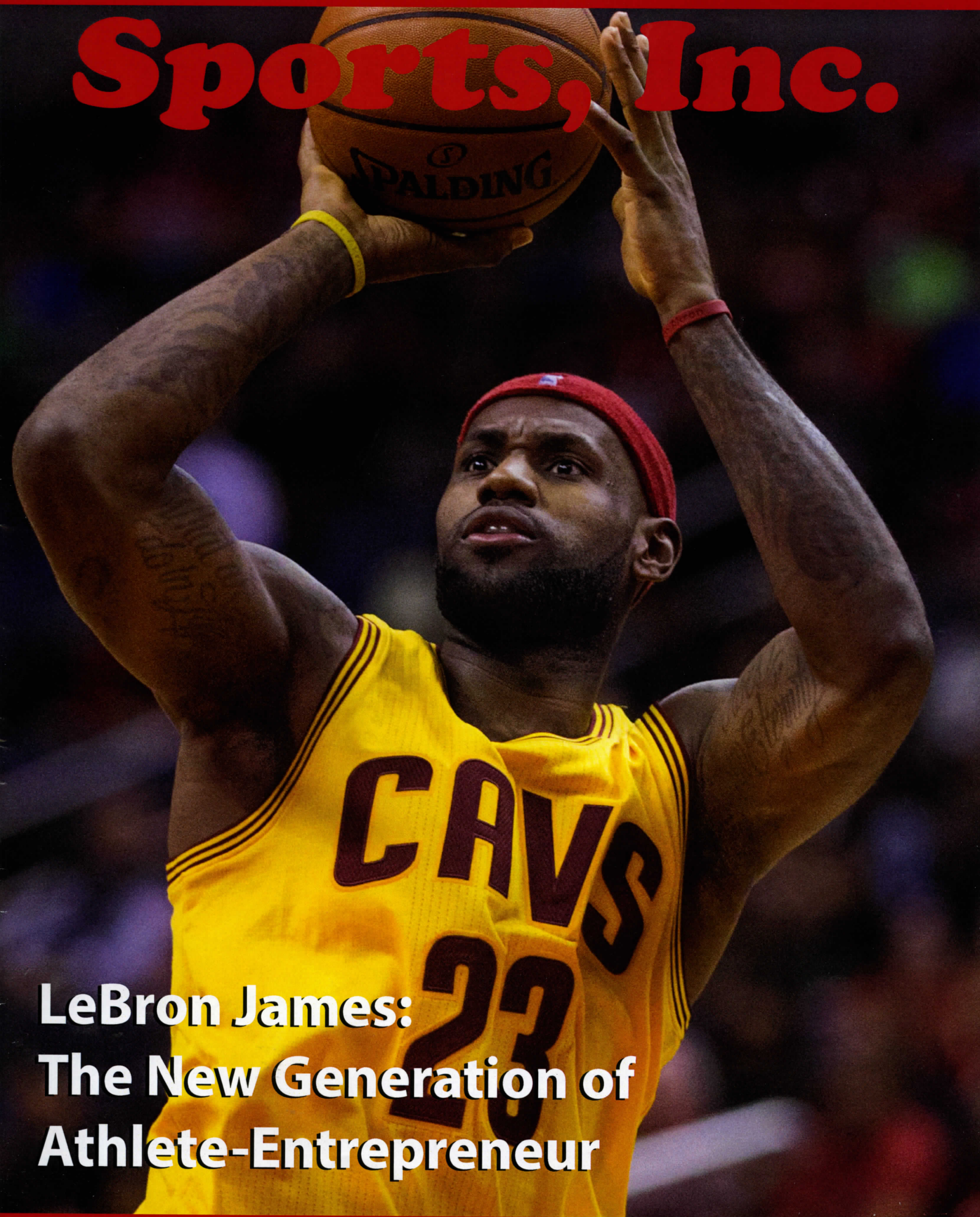

LeBron James: The New Generation of Athlete-Entrepreneur

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Oakland Gets "Raided" by Las Vegas Move

With the Raiders set to leave "O.Co" Coliseum, it remains to be seen if the Oakland Athletics will also soon vacate the "Home of Champions".

Photo courtesy of the Wikimedia Commons

Phillip Salmo '20

There is no doubt that the impact of the Oakland Raiders' future 2019 relocation to Las Vegas will be felt amongst the diehard fan base in the Northern California city and beyond. The football franchise has played in California since 1960, including 45 seasons in Oakland (with 12 seasons spent as the Los Angeles Raiders following a 1982 move to Southern California). It has undoubtedly become a part of the culture not only for the industrial Bay Area city, but also for the state as a whole. However, what will be the financial implications of this move, not only for the city of Oakland, but also for the team's eventual new home of Las Vegas? The answer to this question, ultimately, reflects a story of two cities being financially impacted in very different ways.

The impending loss of the Raiders franchise, in addition to the heartbreak of the fans, will also impact the city of Oakland in a variety of economic ways. The first of these is on a large-scale level for the city as a whole. There will undoubtedly be a loss in revenue generated by the city during the games, due to decreased tourism as a result of fans no longer coming to watch a home game. The revenue generated from the eight home games certainly can be seen as an economic boost to local businesses, such as bars, restaurants, and hotels, during the season. The Raiders generated $69 million in profits during the 2015 season when taking into account such factors as ticket sales and sponsorships which, while well below the league average, nonetheless contributed to the economic benefit that the city received from the franchise.[1] Aside from the economic impact of the Raiders' move, the city of Oakland, oftentimes known as a blue-collar city, has been declining economically. Due to the decreasing number of jobs to fit the blue-collar workforce and low property values, white-collar companies such as Uber are looking to move into the city, reflecting an even further change in Oakland's economic makeup.[2] Overall, we can look at the loss of the Raiders as a further indication of the decline of certain parts of the city's economy, and an event that in fact will further this decline. This is not the only way, however, that the city will be hurt by the move.

The relocation of the Raiders also poses an (perhaps more significant) economic burden at an individual level, in terms of impacting the city's residents, many of whom are diehard supporters of the franchise. The move will take many jobs away from the blue-collar workforce of the city. For example, the stadium employed a great deal of local residents from the underprivileged area of East Oakland.[3] Due to the economic hardships of that particular area, and the location of the stadium to that neighborhood in particular, stadium jobs were of great value to the residents. The job loss is exacerbated by the relocation of the Golden State Warriors to San Francisco in 2019, because now even more jobs for the residents of Oakland will be lost.[4] The move of the Raiders acts as yet another blow to the residents of the industrial city. While the Oakland Athletics have decided for the

"The relocation of a third major professional franchise would negatively impact a city that is already hurting, even putting aside the impact on the sports fans of the city."

time being to remain, as contingent upon a future new stadium, their future is ultimately uncertain.[5] The relocation of a third major professional franchise would negatively impact a city that is already hurting, even putting aside the impact on the sports fans of the city. Many residents in not only East Oakland, but also throughout the city, are losing hope for decent local employment, because their skills are not applicable to many of the remaining jobs. The fanbase of the Raiders undoubtedly reflected the city's tough blue-collar nature, and with the loss of the team, the residents are also losing some of the jobs that made their identity, in terms of their occupation and support of the team, so prominent.

In contrast to Oakland, the move of the Raiders to Las Vegas will reflect a large economic boom for the city. The impact of the move on the city of Las Vegas will not only be felt by the addition of a professional sports franchise, but also in the changing of the city's identity into an even greater "Entertainment Capital of the World." This is primarily because of the potential for the addition of Oakland Raiders' games as yet another premier entertainment event in the city, as well as because of the multi-purpose design of the new stadium. Firstly, there will be the potential for other businesses to have package deals with the stadium. One such option would be for the hotel-casinos to provide deals on airfare and hotel to tourists planning on watching the Raiders at the stadium.[6] This will undoubtedly provide more revenue to a city that already makes a great deal from its established businesses. This combination of eating, drinking, and event attendance will pump an even greater deal of money into the Las Vegas economy. In this way, we could look at the move to Las Vegas as one that is to an extent morally ambiguous because of the boost to an already thriving economy, while hurting another city's already struggling economy. While the state of Nevada does not have another NFL franchise, in contrast to California's multiple, Las Vegas nonetheless benefits from a variety of other enterprises. Secondly, the new stadium will not only be used to host the 8 regular season games of the Raiders, but it will host a variety of other events. In fact, the stadium will be expected to host anywhere between 30 and 62 additional events each year.[7] The nature of the events ranges from UNLV college football games to musical concerts featuring the world's most popular artists.[8] While Nevada taxpayers will ultimately pay $750 million of the $1.9 billion stadium price tag, the addition of the stadium will still prove to be a catalyst for the elevation of Las Vegas' already high potential for entertaining local residents and tourists alike.[9] Certain estimates place the number of annual visitors to the stadium for the variety of events that it would hold at approximately 450,000.[10]

Raiders fans in "The Black Hole" section will have to go to another state to enjoy watching their "home" team.

Photo courtesy of the Wikimedia Commons

Overall, the move of the Raiders will reflect the evolution of a city's identity in Las Vegas, while also reflecting the loss of a large piece of another city's identity in Oakland. The changing identity is not only reflected by sentiment, but also through economic impacts. Where one loses, another gains. It remains to be seen just how much Oakland loses, and how much Las Vegas gains. At this point, we can only speculate

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Phillip Salmo is a sophomore in ILR school.
He can be reached at pss234@cornell.edu

Lighting up the Ballpark: Explaining Baseball's Recent Power Surge

Aren Moss '21

Giancarlo Stanton trots around the bases after hitting yet another home run.

Photo courtesy of Sports Illustrated.com

It's September 19, 2017. Picture a calm night at Rogers Centre, home of the currently last place Toronto Blue Jays. Jays pitcher Ryan Tepera is on the mound in the top of the eighth inning to defend a four-run lead over the visiting Kansas City Royals. The count is full, and Royals veteran Alex Gordon rips the ball over the fence in right center field for a solo home run, his eighth of the year. Gordon's home run, in a lackluster season for the three-time All-Star, was nothing special to him. His home run was not a crucial one for his team either, as the Royals' losses had piled up throughout the season, ruining their playoff chances. However, in the minds of baseball analysts everywhere, Gordon's home run was record-breaking.

More specifically, this changed the world, well the world of baseball that is. Gordon's home run was the 5,694th of the season, making 2017 the year with the most home runs hit league-wide, ever. The 30 teams slugged 411 more long balls in the remainder of the season to finish with a combined 6,105 home runs. Sluggers such as Giancarlo Stanton and rookie Aaron Judge were nightmares to opposing pitchers, with Stanton scorching 59 balls over the fence and Judge following at his heels with 52 home runs. Stanton and Judge, two of the tallest, strongest, and most intimidating players in baseball weren't the only ones with a little extra pop in their bat this year. 117 players hit at least 20 home runs this season, more than double the number of players than 2014, only three years ago.[1] Scooter Gennett of the Cincinnati Reds and J.D. Martinez of the Arizona Diamondbacks both hit four home runs in a game, a feat that had been done only 16 times before in the history of Major League Baseball. Without a doubt, 2017 was the season of the home run.

The previous record was set in 2000, when the league combined for 5,693 home runs. However, that accomplishment comes with a stain. 2000 was right in the middle of what is known as the "Steroid Era" in baseball jargon, a time when many players throughout the league used performance enhancing drugs (PEDs) to improve their play. Some of baseball's biggest stars were linked to PED usage, such as sluggers Alex Rodriguez, Mark McGwire, and Barry Bonds, among other household names. For a long time, people thought the home run record would be unbeatable, as so many of the players were using steroids that all the stats were skewed. Enter 2017, and all expectations were shattered. It is normal to raise an eyebrow to such an impressive statistic. After all, the previous record was accomplished through the blood, sweat, and illegal PED usage of the players at the time. Last year the MLB ran over 8,000 drug tests, and only 13 tested positive.[2] All of the today's major stars are clean.

Surprisingly, the league totaled 4,186 home runs in 2014, almost 2,000 less than 2017's record. In order to see such a swift increase in home runs due to steroids, most of the game's players would have had to start doping at the same time, and the aforementioned negative drug tests disprove that. This likely puts PED usage out of the equation. So what happened in this three year stretch that explains the sudden rise in home runs?

One theory is that the home run surge was sparked by changes in the baseball itself. Baseballs have greatly evolved from their original design, but the MLB has always done their best to keep the balls as consistent as possible. However, even the smallest of tweaks can have a massive impact on the ball's movement. Since 2016, baseballs have become slightly smaller and their seams have lowered, despite claims from commissioner Rob Manfred that the balls have remained unchanged.[3] Players such as Astros ace Justin Verlander, Dodgers pitcher Brandon McCarthy, and Blue Jays pitcher Marcus Stroman all agree that there is no denying that the balls are changing, a term known as "ball juicing".[4] The new smaller and smoother balls effectively decrease air resistance, a long-known factor in determining home run rate. Take the Colorado Rockies' home stadium, Coors Field, for example. Sitting at over 5,000 feet above sea level, the highest altitude of any MLB stadium, Coors Field is the definition of a hitter's ballpark. The average

true distance of home runs hit in the 2017 season was 414.4 feet, greater than any other stadium.[5] The high altitude and thin atmosphere causes decreased air resistance, which is why the balls travel so far over the fence in Colorado. It is natural to infer that any decrease in air resistance will lead to balls being hit further, and therefore more home runs. A sudden change in the dimensions of the standard baseball could very well explain how the vast quantity of home runs skyrocketed practically overnight.

In addition to "ball juicing," other factors are contributing to the deluge of home runs. Recent years have seen the rise of Statcast, which MLB.com writer Paul Casella describes as "a state-of-the-art tracking technology, capable of gathering and displaying previously immeasurable aspects of the game".[6] Since its introduction, Statcast has had baseball analysts, coaches, and fans alike scrambling to dissect every play. Statistics such as exit velocity (the speed at which the ball leaves the bat when hit), launch angle (the angle at which the ball leaves the bat when hit), and projected Home Run distance are completely reworking hitters' approaches at the plate. In 2015, longtime New York Mets second baseman Daniel Murphy worked with hitting coach Kevin Long to change his batting stance by moving him closer to the plate. Using Statcast to track Murphy's hits, the pair was able to fine-tune his swing to improve his launch angle. The results are shocking. Murphy's average launch angle greatly increased, causing his home run rate to soar.[7] Murphy carried the Mets through the 2015 postseason, setting a record for the most consecutive playoff games with a home run. He hit seven balls out of the park that postseason, one shy of the major league record. Murphy carried his new uppercut-like swing with him to the Washington Nationals in 2016, where he set career-highs for doubles, triples, batting average, slugging percentage, and of course, home runs.[8] Murphy finished second in MVP voting that year. Statcast, it seems, turned a consistently average player into an all-star.

Bigger doesn't necessarily mean better. No matter the explanation, the influx of home runs has had unintended consequences on the sport, particularly on the rising strikeout rate. Any baseball player knows that swinging for the fences has two results: a home run or a swing-and-a-miss. Aaron Judge, who led the American League in home runs, also led the league in strikeouts. Amid 2017's top ten strikeout leaders were some of the game's biggest home run hitters, such as Judge (59 home runs, 208 strikeouts), Joey Gallo (41 home runs, 196 strikeouts), and Khris Davis (43 home runs, 195 strikeouts), among others. In fact, out of the 50 batters with the most strikeouts in 2017, 45 hit over 20 home runs.[9] Players struck out 40,104 times in 2017, a major league record. This, however, is not a new trend. The league has set a new record for most strikeouts in a season every year for the past decade.[10]

All of this comes at a time when the sport of baseball is struggling to capture the shortening attention span of its audiences. In modern America, people are finding less and less time to watch full games. Yes, seeing your favorite player send a baseball into outer space is undeniably enjoyable, but some recent teams have been scoring more than half of their runs that way.[11] This year, eight out of the ten playoff teams hit above the league average for home runs, which might make it seem like power correlates with success. This is not always the case. In 2015, the Kansas City Royals hit the 7th least amount of home runs, struck out the least, and had the second highest team batting average. They won the World Series that year not by hitting home runs, but by taking risks, getting simple hits, and passing the baton off to the next batter. It is time for the MLB to make positive changes to fit the new trends of the game. Instead of moving the fences closer in hopes that the players hit more home runs, stadiums should move their fences back to give more room for highlight reel catches. Instead of adding pitch clocks to speed up the game, the league should revert the baseballs back to the way they were. Instead of swinging for the fences, the league should focus on teaching little league players to value some of the game's equally important moments, such as clutch stolen bases, smooth double plays, and Clayton Kershaw's jaw-dropping curveball. After all, it doesn't take a 450-foot moonshot to keep true fans entertained.

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Aren Moss is a freshman in the Human Ecology school.
He can be reached at am2696@cornell.edu

LeBron James:
The New Generation of Athlete-Entrepreneur

Anthony Charles, Jr. '20

LeBron James takes everything to the next level. It's not enough to be proclaimed the best basketball player on the planet; he is also a billionaire businessman in the making and a generous philanthropist. On top of all of that, he's an admired family man. There are strategic factors that allow him to succeed as an entrepreneur and philanthropist in the prime of his professional career. This is no easy feat. James, however, breaks the mold. He appeals to people from all different socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. Yet, it is the very fact that the NBA star embraces his own background to create a uniquely powerful brand that makes him even more special. His approach to business and service appears to be starting a trend among his peers, and offers professional guidance that could benefit just about anyone.

Before examining some of the main keys to his success, consider that as the franchise player of the Cleveland Cavaliers, James is the ultimate example of the wealthy baller-turned-businessman given that a few generations ago it wasn't unusual for professional athletes to have a side job in the off-season. Some former Cleveland Browns players, including Hall of Famers, worked as teachers, mail carriers, and even repairmen.[1] With the advent of lucrative contracts came greater opportunities to be pitchmen for all kinds of products. Many of today's superstars have endorsement deals, but not ownership deals. While LeBron James is still one of the highest paid endorsers, what sets him apart is his motive to become a billionaire by pursuing partnerships. Peyton Manning, James Harden, Stephen Curry, and Raphael Nadal all have notable endorsement deals.[2] However, LeBron James established his own sports and marketing agencies with a vision that incorporates a sophisticated strategy.

First: Diversity in investments makes sense. This is true for most people, but for James, the strategy has him on the path to becoming a titan in the business world. Forming his own marketing firm, LRMR, with childhood friends, created limitless opportunities to build and control his brand.[3] For example, he is in movies—and his company produces film and television projects. His appearance in *Trainwreck* raised his profile as an actor,[4] and his SpringHill Entertainment hires actors as the production arm of his business that has projects with major movie studios and cable networks. Additionally, James has spent millions to create his own social media platform, Uninterrupted. He uses his brand to promote everything he does, from food to shoes. Nike signed him to a lifetime deal that may end up eventually surpassing the earning power that his childhood idol, Michael Jordan, has achieved with the brand.[5]

Second: Equity counts. James has equity in his biggest business deals. Years ago, he didn't just serve as a celebrity spokesperson for Beats headphones; he had an ownership stake in the company that eventually earned him a multi-million-dollar profit. While risky, you have to admit the "King's" fellow investors have to feel more comfortable that he is willing to put his own reputation and fortune on the line. For example, James' early endorsement deals had already confirmed that he would be a wealthy man in retirement before his first official tip-off in the NBA.[6] However, making the bold decision to end his promotion of McDonald's and establish himself as a partner with the Blaze Pizza chain (in its infancy) is leading to megawatt success. According to Forbes Magazine, Blaze is the fastest-growing restaurant chain in the history of the U.S. food service industry.[7]

"While LeBron James is still one of the highest paid endorsers, what sets him apart is his motive to become a billionaire by pursuing partnerships."

Third: Community investment is an obligation. LeBron James remembers where he came from. This is what I admire most about him. Being from Northeast Ohio myself, I've followed his career practically all of my life. (I was still in preschool when my dad took me to see the basketball phenom play when he was still in high school.) From the beginning of his career, he has always made a point to prioritize the City of Akron. He cares. He means it. He has

LeBron James with some young beneficiaries of the LeBron James Family Foundation.

Photo courtesy of Fortune.com

"King James" poses with the four MVP award trophies he has accumulated thus far.

Photo courtesy of Miami.cbslocal.com

contributed millions of dollars to his alma mater, St. Vincent-St. Mary High School. The LeBron James Family Foundation has established educational achievement programs that have helped thousands of kids and offered the promise of college scholarships. The foundation's "I Promise" initiative partners with the University of Akron. Young people are mentored beginning in elementary school through high school – and the support continues for those who attend UA. The youth who are participants in "I Promise" learn to give back to the community as ambassadors who carry out service learning activities. There's also a GED program for adults and "Home Town Hall" meetings where families in need can receive groceries.[8]

This dedication to the community is a model worth replicating. Derek Jeter, a living legend and one of the greatest New York Yankees of all time, is a James predecessor who has not only shown leadership on the field and in business, but also in communities through his Turn 2 Foundation. It is another remarkable example of a superstar athlete who has shown his commitment to people and places s where they have a strong connection. The Turn 2 Foundation is focused on promoting healthy lifestyles and academic achievement. It targets cities where Jeter has roots, including his hometown of Michigan, as well as New York, and the Yankees spring training home of Tampa.[9] Of course, Jeter is now also an MLB owner and CEO of the Miami Marlins.[10] James also aspires to become an owner a major U.S. professional sports league.[11] He currently has an ownership stake in the English soccer club, Liverpool FC, of the Premier League.[12]

It makes sense for professional athletes to capitalize on their talent and name recognition while they are still in the game, which appears to be easier to accomplish in endorsements rather than ownership. Michael Jordan has always served as inspiration for young professional athletes. But it was after his playing days were over when he earned the biggest payday. Jordan reportedly made more money in one year – $100 million (2014) – than he earned throughout his entire NBA playing career.[13] LeBron James has now set a new path for his contemporaries who want to shine on and off the court in business at the same time. The Golden State Warriors' Kevin Durant is among them. Like James, Durant apparently loves pizza, and recently announced a major investment in the restaurant chain Pieology.

James' business vision and community commitment have evolved into an empire that will have a lasting impact on society. If his endeavors represent the beginning of a trend among his competitors, it's a good one.

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Anthony Charles, Jr. is a sophomore in the ILR school. He can be reached at aac237@cornell.edu

Expansion in the MLB? An Exploration of Options from Mexico City to Montreal and Everywhere in Between

Dean Hasan '21

Currently, Major League Baseball sits at 30 teams, with two leagues (American and National) and three divisions (East, Central, and West) per league. The MLB has considered mixing things up by expanding the league to 32 teams (16 per league) for some time now. However, commissioner Rob Manfred has stated that the MLB's first priority is to resolve the stadium situations in both Oakland and Tampa Bay. That being said, back in July he did say (regarding potential expansion locations) that "... we have some great candidates...the mayor of Montreal has been very vocal about bringing baseball back to Montreal. It was not great when the Expos left. The fact of the matter was baseball was successful in Montreal for a very long time."[1] He also mentioned that "Charlotte is a possibility...Mexico City or some place in Mexico would be another possibility."[2]

One issue with adding two teams, however, is that this would make it so that two divisions had six teams each instead of the usual five. To avoid this, the MLB could rework the division system to include four divisions in order to have an even number of teams per division. One possible solution would be to restructure the league to be like the NFL, which currently has 32 teams split across four divisions per conference. This restructure could include a North, South, East, and West division in both the American and National League.

As for the new playoff structure, it would likely be best to also adopt the NFL's structure, as it rewards the top two performing teams per league with a first-round bye, while also maintaining the existence of the Wild Card, a key aspect of postseason baseball. The other two division winners would then face off in the first round against the wild card teams, seeded according to record. The Wild Card Round could be changed to a best of three, or it could remain at the current best of one. The LDS would remain at a best of five, and both the LCS and World Series would remain at best of seven.

The newest ballpark and the home of the Atlanta Braves, SunTrust Park, cost $672 million to build.[3] The costs of the ten ballparks built in the last 15 years are depicted in Figure 1.

Recent parks seem to range from about $411 million on the low end, and $672 million on the higher end for the most part. The only outlier was the new Yankee Stadium, which opened in 2010, and cost $1.6 billion to build. One important thing to note is the fact that a large portion of these stadiums are built with the taxpayers' money. SunTrust Park costed Cobb County nearly $400 million,[5] Hennepin County paid $350 million for Target Field in Minnesota,[6] the City of New York spent $220 million on infrastructure around Yankee Stadium,[7] and Miami-Dade County paid upwards of $350 million for Marlins Park.[8] As such, it is crucial for expansion cities to have either large tax bases or private ownership groups who are able to foot the majority of the bill for a new stadium.

The potential candidate cities for the expansion I have listed below are on the list for varying reasons. All of the cities have solid populations (and thus would likely be decent for public funding of a stadium); however, they are also present because they either lack major sports teams, are significantly unique in some aspect, or are both.

The Honorable Mentions on the list are Honorable Mentions because they have solid populations, are not particularly interesting or unique, but have at least two major sports teams (and would therefore likely provide solid fan bases for a new team).

Portland

Portland is probably the most well-rounded location on the list. They have a good population, fit easily into the current league, and they already have an ownership group in place led by former Blazers broadcaster Mike Barrett that is attempting to bring Major League Baseball to Portland.[9] They have a population of about 639,863,[10] however, the city (and state of Oregon for that matter) has only one major sports team in the Trail Blazers (NBA). Portland also has a solid location to join either of the West divisions. They would fit particularly well into the existing AL West alongside the A's, Angels, and Mariners. Both the Astros and Rangers would be able to easily move into

Ballpark (Team)	Opening Date	Price
Great American Ballpark (Reds)	3/31/03	$320 million
Petco Park (Padres)	4/8/04	$449 million
Citizens Bank Park (Phillies)	4/12/04	$458 million
Busch Stadium (Cardinals)	4/10/06	$411 million
Nationals Park (Nationals)	3/30/08	$611 million
Citi Field (Mets)	4/13/09	$632 million
Yankee Stadium (Yankees)	4/16/09	$1.6 billion
Target Field (Twins)	4/12/10	$545 million
Marlins Park (Marlins)	4/4/12	$515 million
SunTrust Park (Braves)	3/31/17	$672 million

Figure 1. Costs of Ballparks by year (last 15 years)[4]

SunTrust Park during its construction, Nov 2nd, 2016.

Photo courtesy of Curbed Atlanta.com

one of the newly minted South divisions. In addition to this, due to Portland's proximity to Seattle, a fresh rivalry would likely be in the works.

Score: 10/10
+Solid Location
+Easy fit into new division system
+Lack of major sports teams
+Potential rivalry with Seattle
+Ownership group already in place

Oklahoma City

With a population of 638,367[11] and only a single major sports team in the Thunder (NBA), Oklahoma City seems eerily similar to Portland, except for the fact that it's in Oklahoma, and not picturesque Oregon. No disrespect to any Oklahomans, but Oklahoma City doesn't exactly sound like the ideal landing spot for a new expansion team. In fact, their only major sports team, the Thunder, happened largely by accident. OKC got their first "Big-League" team when Hurricane Katrina displaced the New Orleans Hornets for the duration of the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 NBA seasons, during which they were the Oklahoma City Hornets. The Hornets did alright those two seasons, posting records of 38-44[12] and 39-43,[13] good for the 10th seed in the West both years (missing the playoffs by six and three games respectively). Despite their slightly below average record, attendance was up from 583,070[14] (good for dead last in the league) in the 2004 season to 744,920[15] (good for 11th in the league) upon their move to OKC during the 2005 season. To everyone's surprise, it turned out that Oklahoma City actually had really great fans. Attendance dipped slightly to 731,165[16] (15th in the league) from the 2005 season to the 2006 season, but it was clear that OKC fans extremely supportive. They loved having a team to call their own, even if that team was effectively a two-season rental. After a one season drought, NBA basketball was back in Oklahoma City after the Seattle Supersonics were transferred by new owner Clay Bennett.[17] Today, Thunder fans are ranked amongst the best in the league. Forbes has them as the 2nd best,[18] Sports Cheat Sheet has them at 7th,[19] and Bleacher Report ranks them at 8th.[20] The point of that long-winded story? While Oklahoma City might not sound like the ideal landing spot for a new MLB team, the fans there were incredible for their basketball team and could do an amazing job at supporting a new baseball franchise.

A new OKC team could fit into either one of the new South divisions, one of the two West divisions, or if needed, could belong to the North division along with some of the teams that make up the current AL and NL Central, at the cost of longer travel times.

Score: 9.5/10
++Fan Base
-Potential difficulty with fit into new division system

Mexico City/Monterrey

Now this is where things get interesting. Major League Baseball previously had two Canadian teams in the Montreal Expos (R.I.P) and the Toronto Blue Jays. After the Expos migrated to D.C to become the Nationals, we were left with 29 American Teams and one Canadian Team. That being said, there has never been a Mexican team, ever. As of 2016, 27.4% of MLB players were of Latin American origin, and while Latin Americans certainly have no shortage of players to get behind, they certainly have a shortage of teams to call their own. Mexico City boasts a population of 21.2 million people with 8.9 million living in the city.[21] While there is certainly potential for a solid fan base, there are definitely questions as far as funding the team goes. Who would pay for the stadium? Would citizens of Mexico City buy enough tickets to keep the team afloat? Additionally, the travel time from Mexico City to rival teams in the West or South Divisions would be significant, potentially leading to serious fatigue for the team. Another alternative would

be to put the team in Monterrey, Mexico. Monterrey is much closer to the mainland US than Mexico City is, allowing for much shorter travel times. However, Monterrey's population is significantly smaller at 1,122,874.[22]

Score: 9/10
+++First ever Mexican team (Latin American team for that matter)
-Travel times
-Who will pay for the stadium?
-Uncertainty with ticket sales

Las Vegas

How could Sin City be left off the list? Vegas boasts a population of 632,912,[23] and in 2016, nearly 43 million tourists visited, spending an average of $827 per person. If as little as 9% (3,870,000) of those tourists decided that it would be cool to check out a ballgame, the organization would instantly claim the top spot from the Dodgers (3,765,856)[25] for season attendance in the MLB (and that figure wouldn't even take into account any of the 632,912 residents of Vegas that might be interested in baseball). As such, Vegas has the highest potential for revenue out of any of the options on this list.

A team in Vegas would fit into either one of the West divisions or South Divisions rather well. Vegas does however pose several concerns. It is unknown how much Vegas locals will support the team. They might simply become something of a show that tourists come to witness (with no real fan base), but they also have the potential for a diverse fan base that spans the country (and maybe even the world for that matter). Secondly, no major sports team has ever set up base in Vegas. The NFL and NHL are both going to take a swing at it in the coming years, however, nobody knows for certain what will happen.

Score 9/10
++Massive attendance (and revenue) potential
+Potential for massive, diverse fan base
-Strength of local fan base is uncertain
-Unknown market, no major sports team has ever called Vegas home

Montreal

Expos revival anyone? Montreal has a population of about 4,098,927,[26] and they've been deprived of Major League Baseball since the Expos migrated to D.C to become the Nationals back in '04. Unlike every other team on this list, the Expos (assuming they keep the name) would already have their own ballpark. Montreal's Olympic Stadium (where the Expos formerly called home) is still intact. In fact, the Toronto Blue Jays have played two spring training games at Olympic Stadium every year for the last 5 years, and attendance is to the roof (literally) every time. Earlier this year, 95,382[27] fans came out to watch the Jays take on the Pirates in a two-game series at Olympic Stadium. The year before that, about 106,000[28] tickets were sold for the two-game series between Boston and Toronto. Clearly, Montreal still has an interest in baseball, and the fans would likely be ecstatic to get their Expos back.

The Expos could likely fit into either one of the East divisions or either of the North divisions. The only concern regarding an Expos return is the condition and price of Olympic Stadium. The stadium originally took 30 years and 1.5 billion to pay off,[29] and it would require $220 million (as quoted in 2015) in repairs over the coming decade.[30]

Score 8.5/10
+Existing fan base (attendance would be massive for at least the first couple years)
- - Massive repair costs

Honorable Mentions

As stated earlier, these options would work well for a new team, but their narratives aren't as interesting (which is my reasoning for their lower ratings). They deserve to be on the list nonetheless since they would be perfectly acceptable locations for expansion.

Charlotte

Charlotte has a solid population of 842,051,[31] and is home to the Panthers (NFL), and Hornets (NBA). Charlotte has the best potential for fan base support out the three honorable mentions. The Hornets ranked 17th in the NBA for attendance last season[32] and the Panthers were 7th in the NFL.[33] If fans supported a baseball team like they support either of these teams, they would be looking at attendance that could range from average on the low end and superior on the high end. Charlotte would reside in either one of the South Divisions, and could maybe swing being in one of the East Divisions (although they are pretty much at capacity as is).

Score: 8.5/10
+ Potential for quick fans given the existing Panthers and Hornets fan bases
- Uncertainty of fit into new divisions
- Not particularly interesting

New Orleans

The Big Easy has a relatively small population compared to the rest of the list at 391,495,[34] however, they did drag in 10.45 million tourists last year,[35] so that might help to compensate as far as game attendance and ticket sales go. New Orleans is home to the Saints (NFL) and Pelicans

Montreal's Olympic Stadium, former home of the Expos.
Photo courtesy of Ballparks of Baseball.com

"... it is crucial for expansion cities to have either large tax bases or private ownership groups who are able to foot the majority of the bill for a new stadium."

(NBA), so there are definitely fans in New Orleans that could get behind a new baseball team, however it is unknown how well they would support a baseball team given the fact that the Saints and Pelicans were on opposite ends of the attendance spectrum. The Saints ranked 9th in the NFL in attendance last season,[36] whereas the Pels ranked 24th in the NBA.[37] New Orleans would fit well into one of the new South Divisions, in either the AL or NL. Nearby competitors would likely include the Rangers, Astros, Marlins, Rays, Braves, and possibly the Cardinals and Royals as well.

Score 8/10
+Potential for quick fans given the Saints top 10 attendance ranking
-Potential for lack of san support if the fans treat them like the Pelicans
-Low city population
-Not particularly interesting (though their large tourism numbers give them decent revenue potential)

Nashville/Memphis

Nashville has a decent population at 660,388,[38] and Memphis is pretty similar at 652,717.[39] Nashville is home to the Titans (NFL) and the Predators (NHL), and Memphis has the Grizzlies (NBA). If the team went to Nashville, fans of the Titans and Preds might get behind the new franchise, however, both teams had fairly poor attendance last season. The Titans ranked 22nd in the NFL[40] and the Predators were 20th in the NHL.[41] On the other hand, the team could go to Memphis for a balanced two major sports teams per major Tennessee city, but they would still run into the same attendance problems given the fact that the Grizzlies ranked 23rd in the NBA last year.[42] If, despite the low attendance numbers, Tennessee was chosen for a new expansion team, it would likely reside in one of the new South divisions.

Score 7/10 (for both)
+Potential for new fans in Nashville; or even number of teams if it went to Memphis
-Memphis' fan base is pretty abysmal
-Both the Titans and the Predators are in the bottom half of the league for attendance
-Neither is particularly interesting

Conclusion

Overall, any city on the list would be a slid candidate, however, some cities excel in areas where others fall short. The best overall location would probably be Portland. They already have an ownership group in place, their location is solid, and they lack major sports teams. The most interesting expansion locations would certainly be the international cities: Montreal, Mexico City, and Monterrey. New teams would likely have the best fan bases if they set up shop in either Montreal or Oklahoma City. A team looking to generate massive profits should look to Vegas to call home.

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Dean Hasan is a freshman in the ILR school. He can be reached at drh243@cornell.edu

How the Increase in Premier League T.V. Rights Money Changes Soccer For Fans

Daniel Moran '21

In February 2015, the Barclay's Premier League, the highest league of soccer in England and Wales and one of the top leagues in the World, announced a new domestic television rights partnership with Sky and BT Sport paying £5.136 billion ($6.89 billion) over 3 seasons beginning in 2016.[1] With this deal, television rights alone will generate £10.4 billion for the Premier League, making it far and away the most lucrative deal in World soccer.[2] This revenue is distributed relatively evenly, with each club guaranteed £85 million and then anywhere from £2 million to £40 million based off of their rank in the end of season Premier League table [Premier League]. For comparison, Aston Villa FC, the last placed team in 2015, earned £66 million,[3] while Bayern Munich, the champions of Germany and one of the five biggest clubs in the world, earned only £35.7 million in television revenue.[4] For the casual fan, this may seem like a relatively insignificant off field issue, but it's drastically changing the game for everyone, including American fans. Much has been made of this deal regarding the networks, leagues, clubs, and players, but what does this mean for the everyday fan?

The new Premier League television deal has led to a vast increase in spending among English clubs, increasing competition. For fans, this is the ideal result; clubs spend more to bring in better players, and the end result of the season is less predictable.[5] Premier League spending on transfers reached £1.1 billion in 2014/15 in anticipation of the new television deal, more than double that of any other league. The way players change teams in European soccer is drastically different than in American sports. For starters, there are very rarely ever trades; instead, when clubs want players they have three ways to obtain them. A club can either offer money as a transfer fee to another club to convince them to sell a player, they can request to take a player on a loan for one season, or they can wait for his contract to expire and sign him as a free agent.[6] There is no real salary cap in soccer outside of Europe's Financial Fair Play, but clubs are allowed to spend as much money as they possibly can without going more than €5 million into debt in three consecutive seasons.[7] Since this spending disparity became prominent in 2014, Premier League fans have been exposed to major signings such as Paul Pogba, Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Kevin De Bruyne, Radamel Falcao, Alvaro Morata, and Javier "Chicharito" Hernandez as a direct result of the increase in television rights revenue.[8]

Manchester United (in red), a powerhouse in the Barclays Premier League, playing in the 2017 UEFA Super Cup against Real Madrid.

Photo courtesy of the Wikimedia Commons

Of course, not every game is a marquee matchup between two top teams. However, unlike most leagues, the Premier League has sufficient star power spread across all 20 teams to both keep games competitive and still draw in casual fans. Over the last 4 years, "mid-table" English clubs have had enough money to be able to purchase players from top clubs that would've been impossible 10 years ago. This explains how a club like Stoke City, who has never finished above 9th place and only has one major trophy, has the ability to purchase players such as Jese Rodriguez and Xherdan Shaqiri from major clubs such as Real Madrid and Inter Milan, respectively.[9] Neither of these players are on the level of Lionel Messi or Cristiano Ronaldo, but these players still left significant roles at major clubs to join the wealth and competitiveness available in the Premier League, which increases the quality of the league as a whole.

What makes the English league so much more valuable than any other soccer league? According to a paper published by Performance Communications regarding fan engagement, most viewers of a game are "weakly connected" sports fans who view primarily for entertainment rather than out of devotion to a specific team.[10] Considering how American fans are thousands of miles away from the main areas of support, it's logical to assume that most American fans fall into this category. Although this information is true, viewership for Premier League games has fallen by 11% in the first half of 2017, though this seems to follow the general trend of declining viewership across most television

programs due to cable cutting.[11] But, most people will tune in to watch teams that they're familiar with, and in World Football, no one brands themselves as well as British clubs. One prime example is Manchester United, a club who has been in a minor slump since 2013, never finishing above 4th place and finishing outside of the top 5 twice in 4 seasons.[12] Despite not being one of the top performing clubs in England, Manchester United is earning the most revenue out of any sports franchise in the World, pulling in nearly $80 million more than its next closest soccer competitor,[13] Barcelona- a team that has won 11 major honours in the last four seasons,[14] compared to Manchester United's three.[15] Television providers such as Sky and BT Sport are paying for this brand recognition, because this is what casual fans tune in for. This doesn't mean that every single fan benefits from this new increase in wealth across the Premier League. With television providers willing to pay so much more for rights, the cost of monthly subscription packages for live sports have gone up in order to recoup some of the investment.[16] For instance, NBC sports has split its U.S. coverage, providing some games at no additional cost to the games regularly featured on cable but then broadcasting 35% of the games through a $50 premium subscription.[17] Conversely, clubs are returning some of this money back to hardcore fans by freezing the costs of tickets for home games or subsidizing tickets for away games.[18]

For the casual soccer fan, the Barclay's Premier League's new television deal produces a superior product without a significant increase in cost. Fans are exposed to new players brought over from some of the World's best clubs, strengthening the league's talent pool and making every game competitive. Mega clubs like Bayern Munich and Real Madrid won't be significantly affected, but smaller clubs in Europe likely won't be able to compete with their English counterparts.[19] In a broad sense, this is the major marketing appeal of the Premier League- any team can beat any team in the league regardless of time or location, and this unpredictability is what brings excitement to the casual fan.

In the long run, it's tough to predict the effect of this television revenue on European soccer. It's likely that England's biggest clubs such as Manchester United and Chelsea will be able to buy their way into success, but that isn't happening currently. In 2015, Leicester City won the Premier League despite having a net spend of only 21.5 million (For comparison, Manchester City had a net spend of 165 million and finished in fourth place).[20] In addition, Tottenham Hotspur has managed to establish itself as one of England's top 4 clubs despite actually having a negative net spend in 7 of the last 9 seasons.[21] Because of this, it's nearly impossible to predict which club will win the Premier League or which English club will succeed in European competition.

Stoke City, a team that draws in less revenue but is competitive in the transfer market, faces off against Manchester United (in red).

Photo courtesy of the Wikimedia Commons.

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Daniel Moran is a freshman in the ILR school. He can be reached at am2696@cornell.edu

A Balanced Approach

The Chicago White Sox brought the 2005 Fall Classic to U.S. Cellular Field thanks in part to their balanced approach at the plate.

Photo courtesy of the Wikimedia Commons

Daniel Solomon '19

In the end, all that matters at the conclusion of each baseball season is who wins the ever-random postseason tournament. Great regular seasons get lost among the litany of playoff successes—fans sooner remember Derek Jeter's flip play against Oakland and the remarkable Luis Gonzalez blooper single off of the great Mariano Rivera than they do the record 116 victories earned by the Seattle Mariners during the 2001 regular season. World Series and pennant victories are the most significant numbers in the grand scheme of Major League history. But proper strategy to designing a roster that can successfully and consistently achieve postseason success remains a largely unsolved problem in baseball. Certain constants are necessary: a great starting pitching staff, bullpens that don't blow leads, and a potent offense that can score against what is traditionally the season's best slew of arms. But that last point is arguably the most contested aspect of all. While teams can assemble great regular season offenses, they often falter in the postseason. Too often, teams that lead the league in runs and home runs fail to make it to the World Series; look no further than the 2015 Toronto Blue Jays, who led the league by over 100 runs to the nearest competitor and out-homered every other club in Major League Baseball (MLB), yet lost to the light-hitting Kansas City Royals in the American League Championship Series (ALCS).[1]

World Series winners have varied dramatically in their offensive approaches. In the past twenty years alone, polar opposite teams such as the aforementioned 2015 Royals and the 2004 Red Sox have both won championships, despite the former striking out the fewest times in the league—they struck out just 973 times as a team—and finishing fourteenth in the American League (AL) in home runs, while the latter finished fourteenth in the AL in strikeouts yet finished fourth in home runs.[2,3] While the former relied on making consistent contact, getting on base, and creating havoc once aboard (Royals fans will never forget Eric Hosmer's mad dash to home plate) the latter utilized a long-ball approach to reach the World Series—ironically, it was Dave Roberts' stolen base against the Yankees in the ninth inning of Game 4 of the ALCS that instigated the Red Sox postseason resurgence, despite the team finishing eleventh in the AL in stolen bases that season.

Relying on speed or power in isolation does not assure postseason success. While stolen bases and home runs represent high excitement points within the game, they also symbolize the various extremes of roster construction. Almost no correlation exists between a team's total stolen bases and its ability to reach the World Series. In the past twenty years, an equal number of World Series contestants have finished last in their respective leagues in stolen bases as first. The lone team to win the championship in the same season that it led their league in steals was the 2003 Marlins,

who paced the National League with 150 stolen bases.[4] Similarly, just two teams in the past twenty years have won a World Series during a season in which they led the league in home runs—the 2008 Phillies and 2009 Yankees—while five eventual champions finished in the bottom third in their league in home runs.

Yet, despite the varied approaches to postseason success, three main statistics have remained powerful indicators of a team's ability to succeed in postseason baseball: team slugging percentage, batting average, and on base percentage. Of the past forty teams to reach the World Series, thirty-one have had slugging percentages in the top half of their respective leagues, twenty-eight have had batting averages in the top half, and thirty have gotten on base at a rate higher than at least half of their respective leagues.[5] Even more telling is that half of the past twenty championship teams have had top five slugging percentages. Though championship caliber teams have seen great fluctuations in terms of team strikeouts, hits, stolen bases and home runs, there is little variation in terms of league rank and actual slugging, average, and on base percentage. Sixty-eight percent of all teams that have reached the World Series in the past twenty seasons have finished the regular season within 0.04 slugging percentage points of each other. That difference in slugging percentage, which measures the impact of each hit by valuing extra base hits above singles, is rather insignificant in comparison to the overall league variance, which typically is 0.80 between the league leading and league worst rates. In fact, just three teams with slugging rates below 0.400 have even made the World Series in the past twenty years.[6,7,8] While slugging is directly increased by home runs, triples and doubles, it accounts for the number of at bats actually taken by the individual teams. Teams that hit home runs but fail to consistently reach base will have their failure to get singles accounted for with slugging percentage decreases. It provides a truer indication of a team's ability to get impactful hits on a consistent basis than other metrics such as hits or home runs, which fail to account for either the significance of each base hit or what precedes the long-ball. In fact, according to a 2006 article by Jahn k. Hakes and Raymond Sauer—professors at Albian College and Clemson University, respectively—a one percentage point increase in slugging percentage leads to a .802 percent increase in winning percentage, and a one-point increase in on base percentage has double that impact.[9]

Balanced teams would then theoretically be those most likely to succeed in the postseason tournament. That may be a major reason why the late 1990s Yankees were able to reach the World Series in six of eight seasons. The team had just eight players hit thirty or more home runs in a single season from 1996 to 2003. Furthermore, during the four seasons in which the team actually won the World Series just one player hit thirty or more homeruns—Bernie Williams hit thirty homeruns in 2000. Instead, they had balanced lineups, with their entire batting order contributing at rates above or near the league average. In 1999, for example, all Yankee players who qualified for the batting title had slugging percentages over .400.[10] Though not an incredible marker, it speaks to the depth of the roster and a lack of reliance on individual players. With the nature of baseball, where each player can only bat once in every nine chances, it is important for the role players to be able to contribute. This trend can be seen in this season's World Series. Nine of ten Astros that qualified for the 2017 batting title had slugging percentages above the league average of .426, as did six of nine Dodgers.[11,12,13] The Astros, in particular, epitomize the concept of a balanced lineup, relying heavily on players that perform well in all aspects of the game, including base running, power, and the ability to consistently make contact and get on base. Not a single one of their players struck out over 111 times (over 100 players struck out more than that) and just two qualified players had batting averages below .260.[14] And like those late 90s Yankees, they did not have just one player that carried the weight of the entire team. Though Jose Altuve may end up winning the American League Most Valuable Player Award, cases can be made that players such as Carlos Correa and George Spring were equally vital to the team's success. And their recent addition of Yuli Gurriel may have been one of the most crucial reasons for their extended postseason run. Though he did not produce a gargantuan stat-line during the regular season, his ability to make consistent and impactful contact has proved enormously helpful to the team in the postseason. He struck out just sixty-two times during the regular season, and that ability to make contact has translated to a .328 postseason batting average, through

"Relying on speed or power in isolation does not assure postseason success. While stolen bases and home runs represent high excitement points within the game, they also symbolize the various extremes of roster construction."

The diminutive Jose Altuve is a key cog in Houston's offensive juggernaut and an MVP winner.
Photo courtesy of the Wikimedia Commons.

game five of the World Series, against some of the best pitching in baseball.[15]

Another issue, though, is if the same statistics that lead to postseason success are important in the regular season. In 2016, all but one playoff team finished in the top half of its league in slugging percentage. This trend has been replicated throughout the past ten years, which have never featured a season with even half of the playoff teams finishing outside of the top half in slugging. Teams with middling offensive numbers have snuck into the playoffs on the backs of great pitching and even great luck. For example, the 2012 and 2016 Baltimore Orioles outplayed their Pythagorean records—which indicate expected records based on run differentials—by a combined sixteen wins, allowing them to make the playoffs twice during seasons in which they theoretically should have only been slightly better than mediocre teams.[16,17] But you cannot win without scoring runs, and slugging percentage is a direct indicator of a team's ability to do so. It is not surprising, then, that the only World Series contestants in the past twenty seasons that have finished outside of the top ten in their league in slugging percentage have been two upstart teams, the 1997 Marlins and 2014 Royals, and the 2005 White Sox. The White Sox notably stripped themselves of power hitters such as Carlos Lee in order to create a more balanced lineup around anchors Paul Konerko and Jermaine Dye.[18]

As long as the lineup has enough firepower to make it through the regular season, a balanced approach should be stressed. There is a reason so few teams that lead the league in home runs or stolen bases ultimately go on to make and win the World Series. Weaknesses are too often exploited in the postseason. Overreliance on one type of offensive approach generally leads to an early exit from the playoffs. But rosters that value players' ability to get impactful base hits and get on base at a constant rate are the ones more likely to succeed in October.

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Daniel Solomon is a junior in the ILR school.
He can be reached at dis49@cornell.edu

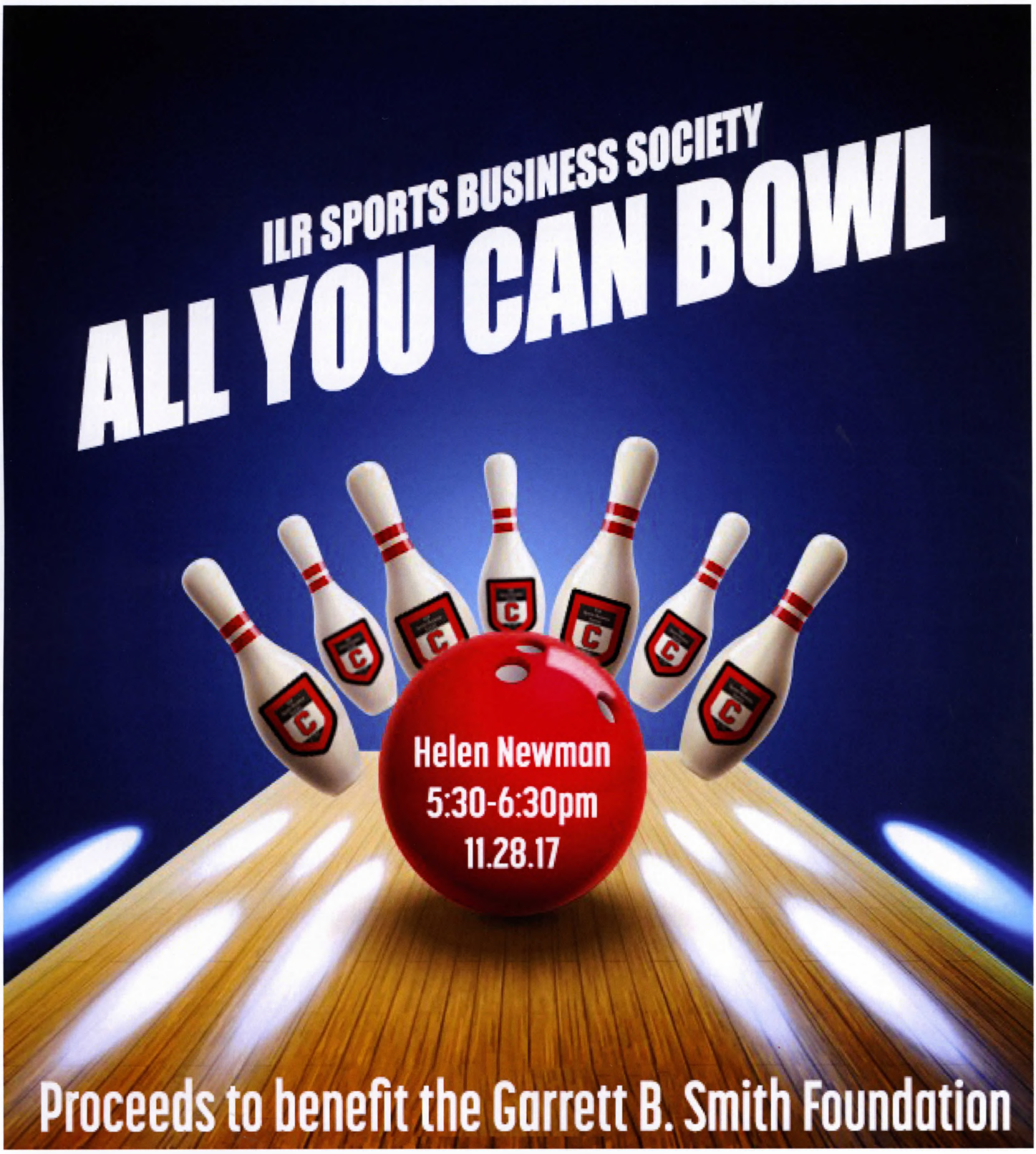
Words From the Presidents

As a student-run organization focused on helping students across the entire University connect their passion for sports with alumni in the industry, the Cornell ILR Sports Business Society is a trend-setting sports business organization. The club focuses on not only educating and preparing its members for careers in the sports industry, but also on original content production. These goals are achieved through the club's five main platforms: the club's "Speaker Series", the SBS website blog, the biannual publication Sports, Inc., the weekly "SBS Report" radio program, and a new research division. The Society's current focus is centered on further developing the research division, which aims to provide students the opportunity to tackle challenges in the sports world through analytical techniques that generate tangible results. The club holds a biweekly general body meeting, and these meetings consist of a combination of career spotlights, debates about hot-topic issues in sports business world, and job opportunities in all areas of the sports industry.

This semester, the club participated in a Nationwide SBA Call and the ILR Sports Leadership Summit, and the Society plans to attend the MIT Sloan Sports Analytics Conference in February of 2018. The Cornell ILR School successfully held its inaugural Sports Leadership Summit in New York City and featured a plethora of speakers, including ILR alumni Gary Bettman ('74) and Rob Manfred ('80). Over this upcoming year, the club hopes to continue to grow the club's impact on the sports industry as it welcomes new members and looks for further opportunities and venues to discuss issues of interest in the sporting community.

Additionally, the club is grateful for all the alumni and other professionals who have taken the time to visit campus or Skype with us. The stories they share about their own careers, their advice for students looking to break into the sports industry, and their assistance in building networks has been instrumental in the success of the club. This year we have been lucky to have the likes of Charles Baker, Scott Malaga, Jamey Horan, Marc Cornstein, Eric Fisher, Ron Klempner, Jim McCaffery and Rachel Krasnow speak to the club. We are very fortunate that our alumni have been so active with the Sports Business Society, as they have played an influential role in educating and aiding the club's members in the job search. As the alumni network continues to grow and spread across the sports industry, we hope to maintain our strong relationships and to continue to connect them with the Cornell community.

The Cornell ILR Sports Business Society strives to both connect and foster students' and alumni's passion for the business of sports. Cornell has become one of the most well-known and respected names within the sports industry and the Sports Business Society hopes to continue to enhance that reputation for years to come.


ILR SPORTS BUSINESS SOCIETY
ALL YOU CAN BOWL
Helen Newman
5:30-6:30pm
11.28.17
Proceeds to benefit the Garrett B. Smith Foundation

Special thank you to all who came out for our charity bowling event this semester!

The Garrett B. Smith Foundation is a foundation that aims to fight the battle against cancer in research labs and improve current paitents lives.

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