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NCAA Interdivisional Games: Are There More Injuries when David Plays Goliath?

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TOPIC: NCAA Interdivisional Games: Are There More Injuries when David Plays Goliath?
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TRACK: Leadership and Management

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Abstract

All intercollegiate football carries a risk of injury, given that it is a high-speed, high-impact collision sport. In fact, the NCAA reports that football is the NCAA's most injurious sport. For various reasons, schools from the Football Championship Subdivision (FCS – formerly Division I-AA) often play early-season games against schools from the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS – formerly Division I-A). While these games are often lopsided and uncompetitive, they do provide potential benefits for both sets of schools. FCS schools (David) often receive the largest payouts of their season by playing FBS schools, and therefore acquire significant funding for their athletic departments. FBS schools (Goliath) are able to schedule early-season games they are likely to win while also providing the opportunity to tune up their teams and prepare them for the remainder of the season. In this paper, our research question is to ask whether FCS teams report more injuries when playing FBS opponents than they report when playing fellow FCS opponents. Our null hypothesis is that the number of injuries reported should be the same, regardless of the level of an FCS team's opponent. To answer this question, we have received access to the NCAA self-reported injury dataset from Datalys. Our methodology will be to answer the research question using difference in means tests. This paper will report our findings upon accessing the injury dataset and will also provide a plan for our future research agenda.