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Guest editors' introduction

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Guest Editors' Introduction

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Ruud Koning is a professor of Sport Economics at the University of Groningen. His research interests include the economics of competitive sport and econometric statistical analysis of sport and financial markets.

Jochen Mierau is an associate professor at the Department of Economics, Econometrics and Finance of the University of Groningen. His research and teaching focus on theoretical, empirical, and applied topics in health economics and demographic economics.

Thomas Peeters is an assistant professor at the Erasmus School of Economics in Rotterdam and a fellow of the Tinbergen Institute and the Erasmus Research Institute of Management. His teaching and research are in applied industrial organization, personnel and sports economics.

This special issue of the *International Journal of Sports Finance (IJSF)* features two papers that were presented at the eighth conference of the European Sport Economics Association (ESEA). The conference was hosted by the Department of Economics, Econometrics and Finance at the University of Groningen, in close collaboration with the research school SOM. The conference began August 31, 2016, in the Noordlease Stadium of FC Groningen, and wrapped up September 2. In total, 97 abstracts were submitted for review, and 72 were accepted for presentation. A wide variety of countries were represented by the 148 participants at the conference. As in previous years, colleagues from the United States and Australia attended, as well as a delegation from China.

Preceding the conference, a PhD workshop was organized on “Empirical Economics in Sports and Health.” Rob Simmons (Lancaster University) discussed empirical methods in sport economics, and had the participants work on cases. Chris Bojke (Leeds University) gave a talk on empirical health economics, and Pamela Wicker (German Sport University Cologne) gave a presentation on academic writing.

The conference itself opened with a keynote address by Simmons, with the challenging title, “Do Sports Team Managers Matter?” If this question were to be answered by team managers themselves, the answer would undoubtedly be affirmative. Simmons showed that determinants of voluntary quits and forced firings are different, and that there is some evidence that firing a head coach may improve performance. A special session contributed to the program was one on teaching a course in sport economics. Different people discussed the themes that are part of such a course in Australia, Denmark, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the US.

Bojke gave the second keynote, “Fat Chance: A Marriage of Health and Sports Economics?” He discussed empirical methods in health economics, and the connection

between health economics and sport economics. For example, the obesity crisis creates a clear link between health and sport economics research.

Participants of the conference were invited to submit their paper to the *IJSF* for publication in this annual special issue. These submissions have undergone the normal double-blind review process. The two papers that came out of this selection are printed in this issue.

The first paper, by Sören Dallmeyer, Wicker, and Christoph Breuer, focuses on the public expenditures and sport participation. In particular, they distinguish between direct effects of public expenditures on participation, potential spillover effects, and substitution effects. Using individual data, they show that sport participation at the individual level is not only affected by direct sport-related public spending, but also indirectly through public expenditure on streets and transport infrastructure.

The second paper is by Julio del Corral, Carlos Gomez-Gonzalez, and José Manuel Sánchez Santos. They study the performance and efficiency of countries participating in the Olympic Games. They focus on the 2016 Summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, using stochastic frontier models. An important extension of their paper is that they consider the probability of winning at least one medal is considered an output for countries that do not win any medals.

We would like to thank the referees for their effort in assessing all of the submissions for this special issue. Furthermore, the conference itself was made possible by financial contributions of NOC*NSF, Healthwise, Mulierinstituut, Groninger Congres Bureau, Rao Foundation, the City of Groningen, and the Department of Economics, Econometrics and Finance. Thanks to you all!

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