Neighbour Effect in the Commonwealth Games

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Abstract

Research Aim / Background

This paper builds on prior work conducted by the authors on home advantage in the Commonwealth Games (CWG), which was presented at the 15th Congress of the European Association for Sport Management (EASM) 2007. The headline statistic for the said topic was that seven out of the eight host nations in the CWG between 1950 and 2006 enjoyed greater success on home soil than they did away from home. Following on from the work of Courneya and Carron (1992), studies on home advantage in sport have tended to focus on three factors namely: the influence of the crowd, the impact of travel and familiarity with local conditions.

Our research primarily examines the effects of travel in shaping performance and we have reviewed the CWG results archive to investigate the extent (if any) to which nations benefit from an improved performance as a result of the Games being held in their neighbouring surrounds.

Methodology / Research Design

The CWG results were collated from the official Games' website. For the purpose of this paper, we have focused on nations that have hosted at least one edition of the Games although it is proposed that subsequent analysis will encompass all participant nations for which an appropriate neighbouring host nation can be identified. At this stage the method used to classify a 'neighbour' reflects the broad geographical classification forwarded by the Commonwealth Games Federation (We anticipate that this classification will be refined to facilitate a more robust analysis of performance). Consequently only five out of the eight host nations were eligible for inclusion in the analysis – England, Scotland and Wales, as well as, Australia and New Zealand. Canada, Jamaica and Malaysia were exempt from the analysis as there are no obvious neighbours that have staged the Games to date.

The performances for the sample nations were analyzed using the concept of market share, as opposed to the conventional measurements of total gold medals or total medals won. Market share is a standardised measure of total achievement whereby the total medals won in an event are converted into points (gold = 3, silver = 2, bronze = 1) and the points won by a given nation is subsequently expressed as a percentage of the total points available. The neighbour effect for each nation was then calculated as

the difference between their 'neighbour' and 'away' performance scores (see results below).

Results / Discussion

Table 1 details the performances of host nations at home, away and neighbour editions, using the standardised measure of market share.

Table 1: Performance of sample nations

	Overall (%)	Home (%)	Neighbour (%)	Away (%)	Neighbour Effect (%)
England	21.4	18.7	26.7	20.7	5.9
Wales	2.5	2.8	3.4	2.2	1.2
Australia	26.9	30.2	26.4	25.8	0.5
New Zealand	6.2	10.4	5.5	5.2	0.3
Scotland	3.7	5.6	3.4	3.4	0.0

Four of the five nations in the sample demonstrated a positive neighbour effect. Scotland was the only exception, where no neighbour advantage was observed in market share terms. The magnitude of the neighbour effect, where prevalent, ranges from a low of 0.3% for New Zealand to a high of 5.9% for England. For two nations, England (26.7%) and Wales (3.4%), 'neighbour' performance is the key driver of 'overall' performance, reported at 21.4% and 2.5% respectively.

We are currently undertaking further research on the subject with a wider sample of nations in order to draw more meaningful conclusions from, and uncover any strategic implications of, the findings emerging from the analysis.

References

Courneya, K.S. and Carron, A.V. (1992). The home advantage in sport competitions: A literature review. Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology, 14, 13-27.