

A Vision for the Future of Academic Publishing in Sports Analytics

Abstract

Dear Colleagues,

It is our great privilege to introduce the *Journal of Statistics and Data Science in Sports* (*JSDSS*). We write to you not only to announce a new publication venue, but to share a founding philosophy that we believe is long overdue in our field. *JSDSS* is born out of a shared frustration with the increasingly exploitative dynamics of academic publishing, and a collective conviction that there is a better way forward. We are confident that many of you share this frustration.

As professors, editors, reviewers, and contributors to the academic literature, we have watched the pay-to-play model of open-access publishing grow from an occasional inconvenience into a structural barrier. Publishers have found clever ways to monetize visibility itself. It is not uncommon to encounter promotional language such as:

“Articles published open access with [publisher redacted] typically receive 35% more citations and over 5 times as many downloads compared to those that are not published open access.”

Statements like these represent a troubling commodification of scholarly impact that conflates purchased exposure with genuine scientific contribution. We believe the academic community deserves better. Accordingly, *JSDSS* is built on a different foundation: the conviction that high-quality sports statistics and data science research should be freely accessible to readers and free to publish for authors, without exception.

We, the five founding editors, share this vision and are committed to building a journal that reflects the values of academic rigor, reproducibility, and openness. We invite you to join us on this journey.

Founding Vision

JSDSS was founded on three core principles.

First, our commitment to open access is more than just lip service. At *JSDSS*, open access means **free** to read and **free** to publish—no exceptions. *JSDSS* is a [Diamond Open Access](#) journal. Research supported by academic institutions, public funding, or personal effort should not require a payment to reach the audience it deserves.

Second, reproducibility is essential and not an afterthought. The credibility of sports analytics research depends on our ability to verify, replicate, and build upon earlier work. *JSDSS* will actively incentivize transparency in data, code, and methodology, and work that meets our reproducibility standards will receive a special designation recognizing this commitment.

Third, we believe sport is a rich and underutilized laboratory for statistical and data science innovation. From player evaluation and in-game strategy to league design and fan engagement, sports data present compelling, real-world problems that demand rigorous and creative analytical thinking. We intend for *JSDSS* to be the definitive venue for this work.

Aims and Scope

Aims

The aim of the *Journal of Statistics and Data Science in Sports* is to provide an outlet for original, rigorous, practical, state-of-the-art, reproducible, and peer-reviewed analysis of sports data as well as the data science tools (software, applications, data, etc.) that support those analyses. The *Journal of Statistics and Data Science in Sports* will always be fully

open to both readers and authors: there are no fees associated with publishing or accessing articles in *JSDSS*.

Submissions will be required to follow the [Journal of the American Statistical Association protocols for reproducibility](#).

Scope

We define sports broadly to include any nondeterministic competition or game. Examples include basketball, soccer, badminton as well as competitions like chess and eSports.

We welcome submissions that analyze any aspect of sports data in appropriate and innovative ways. These analyses may include, but are not limited to:

- In-game strategy, player acquisition, and player and team ratings and evaluation,
- Predicting play, game, or season outcomes, analysis of league structures and rules,
- Analysis of player-tracking data,
- Any other analyses that would help teams, players, fans, leagues, media and researchers understand the game better or make more-informed decisions.

We also accept timely review articles and manuscripts discussing novel datasets, innovative software or applications and original applications of methodology to sports data. Applications should be focused on relevant questions whose answers are likely to be actionable by players, coaches, managers, and/or league officials. *JSDSS* is committed to making all articles about the analysis of sports data freely available. Additionally, reproducibility is strongly encouraged particularly when non-proprietary data is used, and articles that meet our standards of reproducibility will receive a special designation.

What Makes *JSDSS* Special

- **Genuinely free:** Unlike many open-access outlets, *JSDSS* charges no article processing fees. Publishing and reading are entirely free.
- **Reproducibility recognition:** Articles that meet our reproducibility standards — sharing data, code, and analytic workflows — receive a special designation visible in the journal.
- **Broad article types:** In addition to traditional research papers, *JSDSS* welcomes review articles, data notes, software/application papers, and rapid communications.
- **Community focus:** *JSDSS* is built by and for the sports statistics community. We welcome contributions from academics and practitioners alike, and we are committed to constructive, timely peer review.
- **Best-in-class open platforms:** *JSDSS* is published by the [J. Murrey Atkins Library](#) at the [University of North Carolina Charlotte](#), who is also providing backend support for our use of the [Open Journal Systems](#) platform. We are partnering with [Project Euclid](#) to disseminate our content, and will be experimenting with reproducibility reviews using [GitHub](#).

Peer Review and Publishing Ethics

JSDSS adheres to the highest ethical standards. All submitted manuscripts are subject to initial review by the editorial team, and those found suitable will undergo peer review by independent, anonymous expert referees. We are committed to timely review and constructive feedback. Our goal is to make *JSDSS* a venue where authors feel their work will be treated with fairness, expertise, and respect.

The Future

Sports analytics is a field that sits at the intersection of statistics and data science, and genuine public enthusiasm. We believe that manuscripts published in *JSDSS* have the potential to reach not just our academic community, but front offices, coaching staffs, and fans alike. That possibility is part of what makes this field exciting, and it is part of what motivates us to build a publishing home that aligns with our vision.

We warmly invite researchers, practitioners, and innovators to contribute their best work to *JSDSS*. We also invite feedback as we build this journal together. Together, we can demonstrate that high-quality, open, reproducible science and academic publishing are not mutually exclusive, but rather are complementary.

We look forward to working with you!

The Founding Editorial Team

- Michael E. Schuckers
- Benjamin S. Baumer
- Ryan Elmore
- Brian Macdonald
- Greg J. Matthews

References