

Berri, David J. The wages of wins: taking measure of the many myths in modern sport, by David J. Berri, Martin B. Schmidt, and Stacey L. Brook. Stanford, 2006. 282p bibl index afp ISBN 0804752877, \$29.95 Books by economists rarely make best-seller lists or take up shelf space in airport shops. Freakonomics, by economist Steven Levitt and writer Stephen Dubner (CH, Nov'05, 43-1689), was a deserved exception, and the present title has already garnered a flurry of attention. Though Wages is no Freakonomics (to paraphrase Lloyd Bentsen's remark to Dan Quayle), it is a solid addition to the burgeoning field of sports economics. Beginning with Michael Lewis's Moneyball (2003), talented writers, statisticians, physicists, engineers, and economists have not only displayed their research in academic journals but also "popularized" their findings for larger audiences. Thus far, most of the attention has been on baseball. Berri, Schmidt, and Brook (all well-known in sports-economy circles) apply measurement, quantitative analyses, and decision making not only to baseball (its alleged competitive balance problem) but also to basketball (balance and attendance in the NBA, productivity/efficiency of NBA stars, the relative importance of scoring) and football (mainly NFL quarterback rating systems). Bearing similarities to Baseball between the Numbers, written by experts at Baseball Prospectus (CH, Nov'06, 44-1585), this book will frustrate and disappoint some scholars, but many will find it a pleasurable read that will improve the quality of sports debates and arguments. Summing Up: Recommended. All readers; all levels. -- A. R. Sanderson, University of Chicago