**Sports, Statistics, and Economics: 15 warm-up Questions to ponder during Commercials**

1. “Baker Mayfield talks Super Bowl drive: ‘I hate losing more than I love winning.’” Thus read an April 29, 2021, Fox News headline. How would a behavioral economist think about this statement from the Cleveland Browns’ quarterback?

2. In 2002, Annika Sorenstam, then 32, dominated the LPGA, winning a dozen

tournaments. Toward the end of that year she said that she would likely cut back on her 2003

schedule and would probably retire before she turns 40. What does this behavior reflect?

3. Why do front-office jobs – marketing, ticket sales – with the Chicago Cubs pay so poorly?

4. People tend to bet on sports team they like (that is, they bet that a particular favorite team will win its game or championship). Is this consistent or inconsistent with other ways in which we “bet” on outcomes in non-sports walks of economic life? Explain.

5. 18. In the January 23, 2016, *Wall Street Journal* ‘The Count’ column, which focused on the designated hitter being considered for the National League. The last paragraph: “NL purists will bemoan the demise of ‘true baseball,’ but maybe the extra bat will help in the long run: AL teams have gone 14-10 in the last 24 World Series.” Comment.

6. “Hat Trick” questions: (a) The winning percentage of Major League Baseball (MLB) managers increases with age, so why don’t owners and general managers seek out and hire from the Social-Security-eligible pile of managerial candidates? (b) In the National Football League (NFL), the best field-goal kickers, based on percentage of attempts made, are the older kickers; younger kickers have lower success rates, on average. So why are teams always looking for young, inexperienced legs? (c) It turns out that participants in the Home Run Derby at the All-Star game each summer end up hitting fewer home runs after the A-S game than before it. Why is that?

7. Suppose that former Chicago mayor Rahm Emanuel levied a $10 per ticket tax to be paid by

Chicago Cubs’ ticket buyers, a notoriously loyal lot, to raise revenue to help with renovation projects

in the Wrigley Ville area. Diagram and explain this situation, including the incidence of the tax.

(Seating capacity is ~ 41,000 and the Cubs basically still sell out all of their 81 home games.)

8. If a team is, say, a 6 ½ point favorite to win the Super Bowl, what does that mean?

9. A study indicated that for every $1,000 in expected earnings, top golfers on the PGA tour reduced the number of tournaments they entered by 0.1. This was not true for the average touring pro. So?

10. In a *New York Times* story in 2012 on “The Next Big Idea” in Major League Baseball, the

reporter talked about the successes of the Tampa Bay franchise, which has won without a big

payroll or a new ballpark. He said that the Rays “concentrate heavily on finding advantages

before they become widespread.” And he quoted their (now former and current Los Angeles

Dodgers’) GM, Andrew Friedman: “The game is incredibly efficient right now. Our greatest

fear is that it becomes perfectly efficient.” What did Friedman mean by that comment?

11. How does the economic concept of “money illusion” come into play when thinking about the amount of scoring – points in an NFL game or goals in ice hockey or runs in baseball? Or does it?

12. Discuss briefly how an economist would react to the following Summer ’16 newspaper headline: “Atlanta Hawks get Dwight Howard in move that’ll benefit both parties.”

13. The cover of the November 13, 2017, *Sports Illustrated* magazine featured two of the Houston Astros World Series stars (George Springer and Jose Altuve) celebrating their “Wild Ride” and said that “This World Series Trophy Won’t Be Their Last.” Comment on that prediction.

14. Discuss the relevance and implications of these data points for the women’s downhill event in the Winter 2018 Olympic Games held in PyeongChang, South Korea: Gold Medalist’s time 1:39.22 seconds; Silver 1:39:31; Bronze (America’s Lindsey Vonn) 1:39.69; fourth-place finisher 1:39:85.

15. The favorite horse rarely wins the Kentucky Derby. In 2021, Essential Quality was the overwhelming favorite to win. Yet it finished fourth (it drew gate 14). Medina Spirit won the race and led pretty much wire to wire. (The first four horses finished within one length of each other.) Why is that? In fact, there have only been two triple-crown winners thus far in the 21st century. (There have been no repeat World Series winners thus far over that time span, only 1 repeat – yes, the Patriots – Super Bowl winner, and three repeats in the NBA.)