

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book would not have been possible without the direct and indirect assistance of many people. Direct assistance from Amy Alamar, Kevin Goodfellow, James Petite, and Shane Kupperman was incredibly valuable. Their input led to significant improvements throughout the process. For their indirect assistance, I would like to thank my fellow sports-analytic professionals, who have been on the cutting edge of this field, helping their teams win games. Most of the examples in this book come from the discussions I have had with other analysts and researchers at places like the MIT Sloan Sports Analytics Conference and the New England Symposium on Statistics in Sports. I have learned a tremendous amount from each of these discussions and am lucky to be able to share some of the insights they generated. I would also like to thank Michael Lewis for both *Moneyball* and *The Blindside*. *Moneyball* directly led to my first job as a sports statistician, and working on *The Blindside* has led to many interesting questions and opportunities for me to extend my work in sports. I would like to thank Sam Presti, Rob Hennigan, and the Thunder organization for being interested in sports analytics and allowing me a seat at the table.



# **SPORTS ANALYTICS**



## INTRODUCTION TO SPORTS ANALYTICS

The most meaningful way to differentiate your company from your competitors, the best way to put distance between you and the crowd is to do an outstanding job with information. How you gather, manage and use information will determine whether you win or lose.

—BILL GATES

**A**nalytics is a relatively new and rapidly evolving set of tools in the business world, and these tools are being adapted more and more to the world of sports. Analytics includes advanced statistics, data management, data visualization, and several other fields. Because this list is ever changing, implementing an analytics program to gain a competitive advantage is not a straightforward process. Every sports organization faces its own set of challenges in introducing and developing analytics as part of the decision-making process, but understanding the components of an analytics program will help managers maximize the competitive advantage they can gain from their analytic investment.

The push in sports—as in business—to use analytic tools comes from advances in computing power and the availability of massive amounts of data to both teams and the public, which create an opportunity for competitive advantage. Having access to information that competitors do not has a long history of providing teams and businesses with advantage. Teams such as the Oakland A's, Tampa Bay Rays, and San Antonio Spurs have embraced the use of analytics, and all three clubs, though they are in small markets and so have limited resources, have seen tremendous success, in part because of the