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Champions in the Age of COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

How should sport deal with prematurely ended seasons? This question is especially relevant to the current COVID-19 interruption that threatens to leave many leagues without champions. We argue that although there can be no winners, in certain situations there should be champions. Relevant to the current situation, we argue that Liverpool FC—currently with a 22+ point lead—should be crowned champions of the English Premier League. However, things are not as simple as simply handing the championship to whoever was in the lead when a season is prematurely ended. Through analogy with a fictional decathlon competition—and with the understanding that sporting seasons are themselves a type of game—we identify three reasons why leading at the moment of cessation is insufficient to be crowned a victor (of an individual event) or a champion (of a season-long competition): doing so fails to respect some valuable skills, fails to allow for luck to play out in an interesting way that affects competitions, and fails to respect competitive strategies. This discussion can then inform determining what, if any, end-of-season accolades are relevant, such as championships, relegation, or promotion. No team can win in a league that has failed to be completed, but there can still be a champion.

KEYWORDS

COVID-19; championships; seasons; interruptions

Introduction

With seasons threatened by the COVID-19 pandemic, the sport world is grappling with the question of how to deal with season-long accolades and rewards. But in a world devoid of completed competition, there are no winners. Nonetheless, we will argue that in some cases there are champions as well as teams that belong at the bottom of the league or in other important positions, both for historical purposes and for practical purposes such as promotion spots, qualification to competitions (like the Champions League), and relegation. To offer some specifics, we think that Liverpool FC should be crowned champions of the English Premier League but Barcelona FC should not be crowned champions of La Liga. Of course, these particular cases might be settled by a season-resumption, but the principles we will defend apply to any season-ending event, and now is as good a time as any to consider how—either now or in the future—we should deal with a season that ends before it should and which cannot be resumed.

No one can win a game that is not completed, and sport seasons can be argued to be themselves games. As has been discussed by Avery Kolers (2016) and Alex Wolf-Root (2019), there can be games that are comprised of smaller, individual games. As Kolers put it, 'games can be nested: playing one game can be the lusory means of a second, larger game. The lusory goal of the inner game is a constitutive rule of the larger game.' (Kolers 2016, 731). Wolf-Root specifically connects this to sport tournaments. For example, he looked at the game of 'NFL Playoffs', which is made up of suitably connected individual games of typical American football, where the result of each individual game of typical American football is a move in this larger game of the NFL Playoffs. Just like the individual games of typical American football, the NFL Playoffs has its own goal and its own internal logic and tactics; it is more than simply an aggregation of unconnected games of typical American football. The same can be said of season-long competitions.

It is relatively straightforward that there strictly speaking are no winners in a non-completed game. This is because to win a game is to fulfil certain conditions premised on completion, usually something like 'score more goals than the opponent within 90 minutes' or 'have the highest score after 27 outs'.¹ But although there can be no winners, it is much less obvious how we should treat the end conditions (perhaps even 'results') of a non-completed game. Our argument is that although there are no winners of incomplete games, there might be victors. Similarly, for seasons, there might be champions, runners-up, holders of the wooden spoon, and so on.²

Yet we do not think that there should always be champions. A first thought is that whoever is in the lead when a game is called should win, so the parallel would hold that in the current case of the COVID-19 interrupted 2019–2020 Football season, Liverpool would be champions of the English Premier League and Barcelona would be champions of La Liga. But this is far too simplistic. To bring to light some important considerations, let's take a look at a fictitious game of decathlon.³

The Decathlon and the Football Match

Freak external circumstances force the cessation of the decathlon right after event #7 (the discus throw) and make it impossible for this decathlon to resume. The standings at this time are 6,310 for competitor-A, 6,254 for competitor-B, and 5,912 for competitor-C. While A did not win (the competition was not completed so no one could win), shouldn't we treat A as the winner since they did the best over the entirety of the competition that was contested? No.

The athletes entered the decathlon with the intention of completing a decathlon. They measured their efforts and focused their training for a decathlon, not this shortened set of activities. Like many other games, in the decathlon, different athletes have different strengths. It's not uncommon for some athletes to be especially good at later events relative to other decathletes. Imagine we have such a situation here.

Although A is leading B by 56 points and C by 298 points after the discus throw, history strongly suggests that C will do much better in the remaining events than A. His personal best in the following event, the Pole Vault, is 5.50, and besides for a single no height, the worst he's ever done in his twenty prior competitions is 5.00, itself over 100 points better than A's best of 4.65. Couple this with C having much stronger bests in the Javelin Throw and 1,500m (77.13 to 62.57 for a 222 point difference and 4:11.79 to 4:32.46 for a 137 point

difference, respectively), this suggests that C would likely have won had the event played out in a typical fashion. Given this, one might now think that C should be given the honor as though he had won the competition, because he probably would have won had the decathlon gone to form. We also reject this.

One of the things that we love about sport is the unpredictability of it, and event #8, the pole vault, is especially unpredictable. As mentioned above, C has no heightened before, and doing so now would plummet him down the rankings. While there is only a 5% chance of this happening based on past information, this is not insignificant. For example, in the decathlon at the 2019 IAAF World Championships in Athletics (which inspired this example), then-reigning World Indoor and Outdoor Champion and current World Record-Holder Kevin Mayer was leading the competition before a devastating no height in the pole vault, opening the door for Niklas Kaul's brilliant performance over the last three events to move from ninth to World Champion.⁴

There are many other unknowns in the decathlon that could impact the usefulness of this historical data in predicting what would have happened. For example, any significant crosswind could drastically reduce the ability to score well in the pole vault or a surprise rain could cause a slicker runway leading to more fouls or more cautious throws in the javelin, and such conditions could be better or worse for particular athletes depending on when in the competition they hit. Further, unexpected changes in previous events, such as unexpectedly having to take three attempts at multiple early heights in the pole vault, would impact an athlete's abilities in later events.

Some of these unknowns are built into the nature of sport, but others are not. It is worth exploring this difference in a little more depth because it might shed some light on the conditions that affect whether or not there should be a victor in uncompleted matches or a champion in uncompleted seasons.

Bernard Williams distinguished between luck *intrinsic* to a project and luck *extrinsic* to the project (1981, 25–27). In Williams's example, Gauguin sets off to Tahiti to become a painter (25–26). If he suffers from some injury in his journey to Tahiti (say, the ship hits stormy weather, he falls and mangles his painting hand), he fails in his project to become a painter—but this 'does not provoke the thought ... that after all he was wrong and unjustified' (25). This is extrinsic luck, and in this class fall all the lucky occurrences that seemingly have nothing to do with his project. On the other hand, there is intrinsic luck, and this is the luck that is intimately related to painting, such as getting the right inspiration or capturing the light just right. In a case of intrinsic luck, it 'would not just be that [his project] failed, but that he failed' (25).⁵

To appeal to a sports-related example, one might compare Manchester United's 'Busby Babes' and the Total Football Dutch side of the 1970s (Wojtowicz 2018, 54–55). The Busby Babes were involved in a horrific air accident which killed several members of the team, a team who were genuine contenders for the European Cup; the Dutch side were runners-up at the '74 and '78 World Cups. The failure to win these competitions is clear: the Busby Babes failed to win because of a stroke of horrific bad luck that has little to do with football; the luck that afflicted the Dutch is the luck of ordinary footballing life, such as failing to score an opportunity or a defensive slip-up. No doubt there is some spectrum upon which intrinsic and extrinsic luck exist, and there will be marginal cases, but we should be able to grasp the rough distinction. We will return to this distinction below, for now, it is important just to note that rain and crosswinds are part of the luck any

decathlete has to put up with, and the unknowns surrounding this sort of luck are part of the unpredictability of sport that we so love.

Returning to the decathlon, there is another concern with declaring C the victor despite past form indicating that C would have been likely to have won the competition had it gone to completion: doing so would disrespect competition-long strategy of effort allocation. With few exceptions, most sports require competitors to measure out their effort, and different competitors can vary significantly in how they choose to do so. Past form might suggest that C tends to make up such a significant lead due to his strong final three events, but events in the decathlon cannot be taken individually. C might have pursued an especially aggressive strategy early in the competition to try to stay even with competitors A and B, putting forth far more than normal effort into some of the earlier events. For example, on most other occasions, C might be content to simply throw one moderate effort in the discus and pass the remaining two so as to prepare for the pole vault, as he knows he's comparably less strong in the discus, yet on this occasion choose to put in significant effort on all three attempts so as to close the gap on A and B. Such additional energy allocation earlier than normal for C would likely reduce the typically strong performance he tends to achieve in the remaining three disciplines. Likewise, A may have taken it relatively easy this time, knowing that he can establish a lead over C early on, and exert more energy in the latter events to keep C at arm's length. As this example illustrates, we think that using past form along with current score can still be insufficient to treat someone as a victor in a prematurely ended competition, as it ignores this important factor of energy allocation.

Up to this point, we've largely been discussing a relatively abnormal (but especially brilliant) sport in the decathlon. While this example was one where we should not act as though there is a victor, we can easily come up with another one where we get a distinct result.

Take a game of football that is forced to stop at 87 minutes, where team D is leading team E 3–0. It is logically possible for E to win, but nonetheless we should act as though D won the competition. They competed for nearly the entirety of the completion, D had thus far performed significantly better than E—not only have they played the most attractive football, not only have they had more chances, but they have taken the chances better and conceded no opportunities—and there are no significantly different skills that would be tested were the game to go to completion (as their might be if it was 3–2 and might plausibly go to penalty shootouts). While it would be unfortunate for the game to not truly come to completion, no one could plausibly say it was unfair to act as though D won the match. We can—and should—declare them the victors and hand them the three points.

What our longer decathlon example and much shorter football example shows is that the decision to act as though there is a victor in a prematurely ended competition will vary based on circumstances. Our view is that although there is not a winner in a prematurely ended competition, sometimes we should act as though there is a winner, with all the attached glory, prize money, medals, etc. There cannot be a winner, but there can be a victor.

Victors, Champions, and Winners

The above discussion illustrates at least three considerations concerning valuable aspects of games that are relevant when trying to decide if someone should be treated as though they won a competition in cases where the competition was not completed.

The first consideration our decathlon example illustrates is the types of skills having been tested. In this case, some significantly important skills to the overall decathlon had yet to be tested, despite the competition being far more than 50% complete. Acting as though we can crown a champion from an uncompleted competition would disrespect the sport and competitors by ignoring these important skills. This is quite different from our football example, where the skills that would be exhibited in the last 3 minutes (plus stoppage time) wouldn't be significantly different from those from the first 87 minutes (plus first-half stoppage time), provided the goal is simply to win.⁶ It's worth noting that while the decathlon is relatively unique in this regard by testing such a wide range of skills at different times, other more uniform games see the types of skills tested changing over time, from attacking on power plays in hockey to defending against bases loaded in softball. There is also the more general phenomena of a fitter but less skilled team gaining an advantage over a tiring opponent as a game progresses.

The second consideration is the number and strength of unknowns. In addition to typical variations in an athlete's performance and more massive failures such as a no height/no mark, other factors such as the weather can exacerbate the uncertainty of how an event would have played out. Part of what makes sport so exciting is the unknowns, and acting as though there were a champion in such an uncompleted competition would disrespect this significant aspect of sport. It is unfair to other competitors to act as though there is a victor when that 'victor' may have failed due to these intrinsic aspects; he may have failed to take account of the wind or tried three times to pull off a skill that he knows fails 20% of the time, and had the bad luck of failing on each attempt. These unknowns concern the luck that Williams called *intrinsic*—they are the type of luck that are inherent in that particular sport. What's more, they are the type of unknown that lead an agent to think that *he* has failed: he has failed to account for the wind or he has failed to fully exercise his skill (even if this is compatible with the thought that he just didn't get the breaks he needed).

Extrinsic luck might inspire a different sort of thought. In the football match, there really aren't many pieces of intrinsic luck that could line up to see team D throw away their lead and lose. The extraordinary weather or floodlight failure that makes the game end is not the sort of luck that should lead team D to think *they* failed to win the game, rather the failure is entirely outside their hands. team E does not have recourse to claim that they are treated unfairly if we treat team D as the victor. And although sport is exciting and deep partly due to some unknowns, it is *intrinsic* unknowns that lend sport this excitement and depth: we want to see whether a team can muster the strength of will, and get the lucky breaks, to overcome a superior opponent; that is not the case when a piece of luck entirely unrelated to the elements intrinsic to a sport steps in. Floodlight failures and extreme weather have nothing to do with the depth and excitement of sports, and sometimes when they occur there are no interesting unknowns left. There have already been sufficient opportunities for both teams to overcome all (or almost all) of the intrinsic unknowns that might affect the result of the match, and so we do not besmirch the depth and excitement of sport if we declare team D the victors.

The third consideration is how competitors measured their energy throughout the competition. While all athletes likely gave their best effort in the running disciplines, it's fairly common for athletes to not take all their attempts in field events so as to save something more for future events. Exactly how they choose to measure their efforts will

vary wildly based on their performance thus far, their perceived strengths overall, and how the competition is doing. To act as though there is a victor of an uncompleted competition would be to disrespect the competitors' right to compete tactically in this regard, as well as to disrespect the sport whose internal logic supports such decision-making. Again this is not a problem for the football example, where competitors know that coming down from 0-3 with 3 minutes remaining is nearly impossible, and even were they to have been holding back earlier when things were 0-1 they would have almost certainly been giving (nearly) their all recently.⁷

We have argued that there are important value-based considerations that preclude us from always acting as if whoever was in the lead at the time of cessation is the winner, and we have argued that there is a definitional argument that precludes any team from winning an uncompleted contest. But there can be a great loss if a team, who exhibited all the skills that would ordinarily have won them a game, a team who vanquished all of the 'unknowns' that we expect to find in sports, fails to win a game solely due to a massive stroke of extrinsic bad luck. They fail to get what they deserve; their skills go unrewarded. And there could be major impacts on broader competitions such as if there isn't time to replay the tie or if it is a knock-out competition and a replay is ordered and team E gets a fresh chance to beat team D. Nobody can win a game that has not been completed, partly for definitional reasons, but we think that team D can be treated *as if* they won; for instance, they should go through from the knock-out tie or be awarded the points they would have received had they won. They can be declared the victors. To mark this in a slightly artificial construction: although team D did not win, they are the victors.

Here is one possible objection. Some sports, such as one-day cricket, seem to leave space to have a winner when the event is not completed. For instance, one-day cricket (as well as other short forms of the game) employs the Duckworth–Lewis method to set run targets in rain-interrupted matches. Some might see this as making room for a winner even in cases where a match is not completed. We disagree. As we see it, one-day cricket sometimes doesn't last as long as it usually lasts but the match is still complete. Although standardly one-day cricket lasts for 50 overs for each team, we might think that when rain interrupts play, a match instead lasts for, say, 50 overs for the first team and however many overs are allowed for the second team (with a revised target for the second team). The rules incorporate the Duckworth–Lewis method as a way of coming to a result when 50-overs are not able to be completed.

Teams usually have some indication that there may be a rain delay and are aware of what they would need to score should rain stop play. Teams thus know that they must utilise not just the skills to build a steady score, but also the skills required to chase a target (the Duckworth–Lewis Method accounts for the fact that later overs often see higher scores, so if the teams know that rain will interrupt around the 30th over, they know that they need to use their more aggressive run-chasing skills earlier on since their target will be higher than it would be at the end of the 30th over than had they had a full 50 overs); even if they do not know that rain *will* interrupt, teams often know there is a chance and thus must take account of this in selecting which skills they should use and which strategies they should utilise. Secondly, the luck involved in rain interruptions becomes more intrinsic due to the inclusion of methods of dealing with rain in the rules. Thirdly, teams can strategise and allocate effort knowing that they may need to score more earlier on if rain threatens.

If, say, there were rules that governed interrupted matches (or competitions), many of the objections to early-awards that we have raised may be met. The fact is, though, that there are no such rules governing many sporting seasons, and sports may need to come up with such rules; we think our conditions provide a good way of setting these rules, as we will now explain.

Thus far, we have been focused on the question of if we should act as though there's a victor when a typical sporting competition is prematurely ended, but the more pressing questions are what to do when sporting seasons are prematurely ended. We think that a similar discussion applies when deciding whether we should act as though there's a champion in a non-completed sporting season. Although a team cannot *win* an uncompleted season, they can be awarded the championship and can be champions; although a team cannot 'lose', they can be far enough behind to be relegated.

Seasons, like games, share the three considerations discussed above. Firstly, in addition to the skills involved in playing individual games—some of which may become more prevalent when a team is chasing a title—there are skills involved in getting the right sort of result (avoiding an upset, settling with a draw, or knowing that a win is necessary) and coping with the pressure of being in a title race, skills that are only used later in a season. Secondly, this will involve many unknowns, missed penalties, season-ending injuries to star players, unexpected and unlucky results. Furthermore, teams will measure their energy over a season in different ways, aiming to peak earlier or later. These skills, including the tactical skill of load-management, are valuable, and succeeding in pulling them off is an important part of deserving to be champion. To award a championship to a team when the season is not complete risks handing the title to a team who would not have won, a team who do not deserve to be champions because they simply have not done enough to assure us that they have the skills and can ride out the rest of the season, protecting their lead in the way that champions do.

Barcelona are not like team D. They are 2 points ahead, having traded leadership with Real Madrid several times. To award the title to Barcelona would be unfair to Real Madrid if, for example, their training schedule had been designed to offer a late-season peak in fitness that could very well take the title from Barcelona. Liverpool are like team D. They have manifested a wide array of skills to climb to an impressive lead and there is no opportunity for them to exhibit any relevant skills concerning holding on to a lead because it is so easy for them to finish the season on top; there are few exciting unknowns left because there is no realistic chance that Liverpool lose their lead due to bad luck or bad play; and their competitors are not poised ready to eat up their lead in the last part of the season, as would be the case if, say, Liverpool were only a few points ahead and competing seriously in other competitions.⁸ It is not unfair to act as though they won the title and to award all the accolades and rewards that go along with it because at the time the season was paused Manchester City, say, did not have any realistic chance of exhibiting skills and getting the good intrinsic luck (and Liverpool's bad intrinsic luck) of Liverpool slipping up enough for City to win the league. Liverpool would have won the league, and we should act as if they did win it—though, strictly speaking, they did not. Despite not strictly winning the league, they are rightfully the champions.⁹

This should not be seen as too radical a suggestion. Occasionally, victories or championships have been awarded to individuals or teams that did not win in the traditional manner. Take, for example, Italian football's *Calciopoli* scandal, which came to light in

2006. AC Milan, Fiorentina, Juventus, Lazio, and Reggina engaged in attempts to pressure referees and to secure favorable refereeing allocations. This was often very subtle and clever; for instance, harsher referees would be appointed to referee Juventus's opponent's prior match, so that key players might be more likely to pick up a card and be suspended for the match against Juventus.¹⁰ Juventus finished first, by quite a margin, in the 2005–2006 Serie A season, but they were stripped of this title. AC Milan finished second but their punishment knocked them down the table. So, the championship was handed to third-placed Inter Milan.

Developing This Account: Fairness and Value

We have highlighted some important considerations in deciding whether or not to award a title to a team in a season that is halted before it could end. We noted that there are important considerations that affect the fairness of awarding a title, and we concluded that in some cases we can nonetheless act as though they won and rightly regard them as champions. But this leaves us with two important questions, on which we will make just brief remarks. Firstly, when should we award a title? Secondly, what is the value of this award?

On the first point, there will inevitably be marginal cases where it is not clear whether it is fair to award a championship to a team. We think that whatever one decides in the marginal cases, it is clear that the title should not just be awarded to whichever team is in the lead nor just to whichever team probably would have won. The decathlon parallel makes this clear; it would be unfair and would rob the competition of some important values. Further, there are some cases where it would not be unfair, and would not rob us of anything important, as in Liverpool's case. How are we to decide whether a team is far enough in the lead to be awarded the championship?

One big problem in deciding these cases is that passions obviously run high in sports and we are often highly biased towards our own sides. When it became clear that COVID-19 would hugely affect the 2019–20 Premier League season, club officials and league officials met and decided to postpone the season, but two clubs pushed to annul the season and totally wipe its results. Tottenham Hotspur and West Ham United had had poor seasons, so it was little surprise that they would push for a clean slate.

David Hume (1978) recognized that our sentiments varied: 'We sympathize more with persons contiguous with us, than with persons remote from us: With our acquaintance than with strangers: With our countrymen, than with foreigners' (Hume 1978, 581). Yet Hume thought we could come to moral judgments, judgments that recognize those close to us can be just as virtuous as those far from us, by adopting a general point of view that abstracts us from these particularities (Hume 1978, 582). We might also think about the veil of ignorance (Rawls 1999, sec.24): what would teams (or fans) choose if they knew the league standings, but not which team occupied each place? This also brings impartiality in, because particular circumstances no longer affect the choice.

Morality is one thing, sport another. A die-hard Manchester United fan might be able to grant that Trent Alexander-Arnold is pretty good, but it might be just too much for them to grant that Liverpool should be champions. So, we might not be able to get all the fans, or the teams involved, to agree. Instead, we should look to the purist fan and see what they think. As explored by Nicholas Dixon, a purist fan

'supports the team that he thinks exemplifies the highest virtues of the game, but his allegiance is flexible' (Dixon 2001, 149). The purist cares only 'that the game be played skillfully, fairly and with style' (Dixon 2001, 157). While Dixon actually argues that we should not be purist fans but rather 'moderate partisans', the idea of a purist fan who cares only for the sport-specific skills gives us a domain-specific arbiter along the lines of the impartial observer. For our purpose, the purist fan is ideal: this fan does not have biases towards the success of a particular club, yet they have a deep understanding of the sport. The purist fan is thus well placed to judge whether the aforementioned important conditions to award a championship have been met in the first place (e.g. that all clubs had sufficient opportunities to display the relevant skills during the season). If the purist fan were to think that other teams might have been able to catch up, be it through the chance for bad intrinsic luck for the leading side or through the fact that a chasing side were clearly going to peak soon while the leaders would run out of energy, this would suggest that no champion should be declared.

On the second point, we think that teams who perform well enough to be regarded as champions in cancelled seasons should be treated just like any other title winners. If they had such a lead that we can award them the championship (even though they might not have 'mathematically' secured the title with the games played), they should be treated like title winners in an ordinary season, trophies and all: after all, they have overcome all the intrinsic bad luck needed to have a sufficient lead and have exhibited the important skills we expect from champions.¹¹ Although Juventus fans might feel bitter and not regard Inter Milan as 2005–2006 champions, this is sour grapes. The rest of us can recognize that they were the best team who did not cheat. Inter Milan are the rightful champions.¹² Liverpool are not competing against nefarious opposition, their misfortune, the misfortune that might stop them from winning the Premier League, is just sheer bad luck. But it should not stop us from recognizing that Liverpool are the rightful champions.

Similar considerations are relevant when deciding what to do about season-ending implications on such things like relegation, draft order, and prize money. We have argued that when a season ends prematurely, we should not just automatically make it such that the team in first place finishes first and is awarded the championship, nor should the teams in the last places be confirmed in those places and be relegated. In the Premier League, West Ham, Watford, and Bournemouth are separated only by goal difference, with Bournemouth currently in the relegation position. Had all the fixtures been played out, it would be fair to relegate Bournemouth, but when the margins are so fine, we cannot fairly relegate Bournemouth: they have not had the opportunity to exercise the skills that might drag them above the other teams, they haven't had the chance to get the good intrinsic luck (nor fail through bad intrinsic luck), nor have they been given the chance to peak later in the season. Similarly, if it were the case that a league where drafting players matters were to be cut short as the European football was, we should use the same reasoning to determine drafting order where possible. When differences between teams are too close to fairly declare one the relative-victor over the other, something like the NBA's draft lottery—where teams that failed to make the playoff have weighted chances to win top picks in the upcoming draft—could be used as a model for overall draft ordering.

Conclusion

Liverpool did not win the 2019–2020 Premier League, and—unless the season resumes—they never will. Nonetheless, they should be awarded the championship, complete with all the relevant accolades, from pride in their championship to financial compensation.¹³ And while this global pandemic robbed us sport fans of countless hours of entertainment, we can be secure in knowing that no matter how convincing our arguments in this paper, fans around the world will never tire of asking the question: ‘okay, but *if* they got to compete ...’. But sometimes, it really is clear who would have been victorious in ordinary circumstances, and in such cases, there may not be winners but there can and should be champions.

Notes

1. For a nice discussion (with a less nice result for football fans) about the distinction between time-regulated and event-regulated games, see Kretchmar (2005).
2. In rugby, and also in the MLS, the team at the foot of the table gets the wooden spoon.
3. The decathlon consists of 10 events each separated by at least 30 minutes and completed over two days. Each event is scored independently, with the winner of the decathlon being the person who has the most total points after the tenth event. Events on the first day are the 100 m, Long Jump, Shot Put, High Jump, and 400 m. Events on the second day are the 110 m hurdles, Discus Throw, Pole Vault, Javelin Throw, and 1,500 m.
4. At the league level, Leicester City, in the 2014–15 season, had been bottom of the Premier League table for over four months, but they won seven of their final nine league games, having won only four of their first thirty-one games, to ensure survival. (The next season they went on to an even more remarkable feat: they won the Premier League.)
5. In fact, Williams’s distinction is more complicated, since there can be cases of luck intrinsic to a project that are not ‘determined by’ the agent (26). For instance, there’s the bad luck of a competitor having an excellent day. We do not need to get into this.
6. Depending on circumstances, there might be goals other than simply to win this game which would lead to different skills or tactics that are significantly different from the skills used in the first 87 minutes. For instance, the losing manager might send the center back up front or push the wingers right up. Regardless of this, these skills or tactics *wouldn’t make a difference to the result*. A manager might try to get a late goal, but unless he is trying to improve his team’s goal difference, the value is merely the expressive value of showing that they won’t entirely give up: massively out-performed teams do not go on to win or draw with three minutes left when they are three goals down.
7. Of course, there will be borderline cases, and we cannot give a formula for working these out (though see the below discussion of the purist fan). Nonetheless, it should be clear that sometimes the losing team has no chance of victory. Perhaps a team trailing 3–0 after 79 minutes still has a chance of catching up so no victor should be declared, but not so if they’ve been thoroughly outplayed and are 6–0 down at that time (see Brazil v Germany in the 2014 World Cup).
8. At the time the season was paused, Liverpool had played one game more than Manchester City. Had City won this extra game, Liverpool would have a lead of 22 points, with 27 left to gain; Liverpool have only dropped 4 points in 29 games, and—if the season resumes—they would have to drop 23 in 9 games for City to even have a chance of winning the league.
9. Note, this does not apply to the entire Premier League. There are genuine competitions, and the chance for genuinely valuable skills being exhibited, at other levels: in the chase for the Champions League, in the relegation scrap, and so on. But it does suggest to us that if the season must be abandoned, it would be legitimate to crown Liverpool champions, no matter what we do with the other positions.

10. For a brief overview, an excellent podcast episode is *Golazzo: The Totally Italian Football Show* 'The notorious Moggi'.
11. If, despite our championship-caliber argumentation here, league officials fail to apply our lessons and don't actually award the title when the purist fan would judge a team to be the champion, the team should nonetheless be viewed and celebrated as the champion in all matters of fan prestige and appreciation.
12. Unless as some allege, Inter Milan also engaged in illegitimate behavior.
13. The question of season-end prize money depends on more than just the considerations here. Given the worldwide pandemic, there are good reasons to drastically reduce the money spent on professional sport to better fund global health, but such a discussion is far outside the scope of this paper.

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