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International Tournament Formats

Introduction

Hello and welcome to this yet another module on physical education. We had discussed something about the tournaments and the different formats of tournaments. In this episode, we are going to delve in detail again about the various types of tournaments.

There are a number of formats used in various levels of competition in sports and games to determine an overall champion. Some of the most common are the single elimination, the best-of- series, the total points series, and the round-robin tournament.

A Single elimination ("knockout") playoff pits the participants in one-game matches, with the loser being dropped from the competition. Single elimination tournaments are much more common in individual sports like tennis. In most tennis tournaments, the players are seeded against each other, and the winner of each match continues to the next round, all the way to the final.

International Formats

Of the big four American sports leagues, only the National Football League uses this system for all rounds of its postseason. This works for the NFL because its regular seasons are much shorter (16 games) than those in the other sports (from 82 to 162 games), and the difference in quality between teams is believed to be more quickly discernible. The rigors of individual games, held only once per week, also preclude the possibility of longer playoff series. Since the 1990 season six teams are seeded from each conference, with the top two getting a first-round "bye". The remaining teams pair off, with the higher-seeded team hosting. The winners of those games then play the higher-seeded teams that received byes in elimination playoffs, and then the winners of those matches face each in another in elimination playoffs to

determine who will represent each conference in the Super Bowl. The winner of that game wins the championship.

Until the late 1960s, the only regular post-season fixtures in U.S. professional football were the league Championship Games. Divisional playoffs were only held in the event of a tie in the division standings. Divisional playoffs as a regularly scheduled event were not introduced in the NFL and rival American Football League until the seasons immediately preceding the AFL-NFL merger in 1970.

Like the NFL, the Canadian Football League also uses one game playoffs, and has used them almost exclusively since the 1973 season. In the CFL, six teams qualify for the playoffs, divided into two divisional brackets of three teams each. The second place teams in each division host the Division Semi-Final, while the division winners each receive a bye to the Division Final. The Division Final winners play in the Grey Cup. Unlike the NFL, divisional playoffs have been a regular fixture in professional Canadian football since the 1930s. The main rationale for their introduction was that Canadian football clubs were (and, to a considerable extent, still are) more heavily dependent on a steady stream of gate receipts compared to their NFL counterparts, largely due to their playing in relatively small markets and small stadiums compared to NFL teams. A more inclusive playoff structure was therefore seen as necessary to ensure as many games as possible up to the end of the season were "meaningful" so as to encourage fans to attend games.

The only exception to a strict single-elimination format since the early 1970s was in 1986 when the league amended its playoff format to allow a fourth place team in one division to qualify in place of a third place team with a worse record. That year, when only two East Division teams qualified compared to four Western teams, the rules mandated the two Eastern teams play a two-game total points series over two weekends while the four Western teams played a single elimination playoff over the same time frame. The CFL eventually amended this format into the present "crossover rule" so as to allow a qualifying fourth place team to compete as the third place team in the other divisional bracket, thereby preserving the first place byes. Prior to 1973, the CFL used two game and three game playoffs in its divisional rounds, as discussed below.

Beginning in 2012, Major League Baseball expanded its playoffs from 8 teams to 10, adding a second wild card in each league. The wild card teams now play a one-game playoff to

determine which club advances to the best-of-five division series to meet the team with the best overall record in that particular league.

Playoff formats

In both the men's and women's NCAA college basketball tournaments, 64 teams are seeded into four brackets of 16 teams each. (From 2011, the men's tournament features a "First Four", with the four lowest-ranked conference champions and the four lowest-seeded at-large teams playing single games to enter the 64-team draw.) The #1 team plays the #16 team in each bracket, the #2 plays the #15, and so on. Theoretically, if a higher-ranked team always beats a lower-ranked team, the second game will be arranged #1 vs. #8, #2 vs. #7, and so on.; the third will be arranged #1 vs. #4, #2 vs. #3; the fourth will be arranged #1 vs. #2. If for instance #9 beats #8 in the first game, the #9 will simply take the theoretical spot of #8 and play #1. Winners advance through each round, changing cities after every two rounds. The Final Four teams, one from each bracket, play each other in the last weekend, with the winner of the final two being awarded the championship.

National association football competitions usually don't have playoffs, but when employed, use single-elimination formats to determine finalists and winners. The Major League Soccer playoffs use such a format; since 2012, the first round in each conference and the championship final, known as the MLS Cup, are conducted as single games, while the conference semifinals and conference finals are two-legged matches determined on total goals scored. The FIFA World Cup tournament also uses knockout rounds after a group stage of 32 teams divided into 8 groups of 4 determines who advances to them.

Some knockout tournaments may also include a third place playoff, a single match to decide which competitor or team will be credited with finishing third and fourth place. The teams that compete in such third place games are usually the two losing semifinalists in a particular tournament. Although these semifinalists are still in effect "eliminated" from contending for the championship, they either may be competing for a bronze medal like some tournaments in the Olympic Games or basically just to salvage some pride in a consolation match, like in the FIFA World Cup or Rugby World Cup.

When a playoff of this type involves the top four teams, it is sometimes known as the Shaughnessy playoff system, after Frank Shaughnessy, who first developed it for the International League of minor league baseball. Variations of the Shaughnessy system also

exist, such as in the promotion playoffs held by France's Rugby Pro D2 (union) and League 1 of British rugby league. In the two aforementioned cases, the playoff involves four teams, but not the top four. The Pro D2 playoffs involve the second- through fifth-place teams at the end of the league season, as the champion earns immediate promotion to the Top 14. In League 1, the top two teams at the end of the league season contest a one-off match for promotion to the second-tier Championship; the loser of that match joins the third- through fifth-place teams from the league season in a playoff for the second promotion place.

The "stepladder", named so as the bracket resembles a step ladder is a variation of the single-elimination tournament; instead of, in a 16-team tournament, the #1 seed facing the #16 seed in the first round, the bracket is constructed as to give the higher seeded teams byes, where the #1 seed has bye up to the third round, playing the winner of game between the #8 seed the #9 vs. #16 winner. This setup is seldom used best-of-x series as this may yield long waiting times for the teams afforded the bye, while the teams that played in the earlier rounds would be spent when they reach the latter rounds.

The Big East Men's Basketball Tournament used this format in a 16-team, 5-round format. The PBA Tour uses the 4-player, 3-round format (sometimes a 5-player, 4 round format). The University Athletic Association of the Philippines Basketball Championship uses this format (4-teams, 3-rounds) only if there's an undefeated team, otherwise it uses a single-elimination format.

While Nippon Professional Baseball's Climax Series has been called a "stepladder" playoff with only three participating teams (2 rounds), it functions mostly as a single-elimination tournament with 3 teams, and is structurally the same with a 6-team, 3-round playoff. The KBO League's Korean Series, on the other hand, is considered a stepladder system - the teams that finish third and fourth place play a best-of-3 series (with the third place team automatically a 1-0 series lead), whose winner then plays the second-place team in a best-of-5, whose winner in turn plays the first-place team in a best-of-7 for the title.

WNBA has their playoffs done this way: the 5-8 and 6-7 seeds play in the first round. The top two seeds get double byes and the next two seeds 1st-round byes. The first two rounds are single-elimination; all others are best-of-5.

Tournaments Formats

In contract bridge a "tournament" is a tournament in the first sense above, composed of multiple "events", which are tournaments in the second sense. Some events may be single-elimination, double-elimination, or Swiss style. However, "Pair events" are the most widespread. In these events, a number of deals (or boards) are each played several times by different players. For each such board the score achieved by each North-South (NS) pair is then measured against all the other NS pairs playing the same board. Thus pairs are rewarded for playing the same cards better than others have played them. There is a predetermined schedule of fixtures depending on the number of pairs and boards to be played, to ensure a good mix of opponents, and that no pairs play the same board or the same opponents twice.

Poker tournaments

In poker tournaments, as players are eliminated, the number of tables is gradually reduced, with the remaining players redistributed among the remaining tables. Play continues until one player has won all of the chips in play. Finishing order is determined by the order in which players are eliminated: last player remaining gets 1st place, last player eliminated gets 2nd, previous player eliminated gets 3rd, so on.

In a "shootout" tournament, players do not change tables until every table has been reduced to one player.

Challenge, Ladder format & Conclusion

In this format, champions retain their title until they are defeated by an opponent, known as the challenger. This system is used in professional boxing (see lineal championship), and the World Chess Championship. The right to become a contender may be awarded through a tournament, as in chess, or through a ranking system: the ranking systems used by boxing's governing bodies are controversial and opaque. If the champion retires or dies, then the current top challenger may be declared champion or the title may be vacant until a match between two challengers is held. Prior to 1920, the reigning Wimbledon champion received a bye to the final; the official name of the FA Challenge Cup reflects a similar arrangement which applied only in that tournament's very early days. The America's Cup is decided between the winners of separate champion and challenger tournaments, respectively for yachts from the country of the reigning champion, and of the other countries. The Ranfurly Shield in New Zealand rugby union is a challenge trophy between provincial teams, in which the holders of the Shield retain it until they are beaten by a challenging province.

Ladder tournament

The ladder is an extension of the challenge system. All competitions are ranked on a "ladder". New contestants join the bottom of the ladder. Any contestant can challenge a competitor ranked slightly higher; if the challenger wins the match (or the challenge is refused) they swap places on the ladder. Ladders are common in internal club competitions in individual sports, like squash and pool. Another ladder system is to give competitors a certain number of ranking points at the start. If two competitors play each other, then the winner will gain a percentage of the loser's ranking points. In this way competitors that join later will generally start in the middle, since top competitors already have won ranking points and bottom competitors have lost them.

A champion may be selected by an authorised or self-appointed group, after a vote. While common in non-competitive activities, ranging from science fairs to cinema's Oscars, this is rarely significant in sports and games. Though unofficial, the polls run by the Associated Press and others were prestigious titles in American college football prior to the creation in 1998 of the Bowl Championship Series, a quasi-official national championship (to this day, the NCAA does not officially award a championship in the top division of college football). From 2005 until the final season of the BCS in 2013, the AP Poll operated independently from the BCS, and two other polls were part of the BCS formula. The BCS was replaced by the College Football Playoff, a four-team tournament whose participants are chosen by a selection committee, in 2014; since then, all polls have operated independently from the CFP.

So in this episodes, we have discussed tournaments in a much more detailed manner and as you might have observed, there are so many competitions and so many championships but the formats are comparatively very well designed and defined. I hope the information presented was of some use to all of you. Thank you so much for watching.