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Explaining match outcome and ladder position in the National Rugby League using team performance indicators

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Abstract

Objectives: To examine the extent at which match outcome and ladder position could be explained using team performance indicators in the National Rugby League (NRL).

Methods: The dataset consisted of 13 performance indicators acquired from each NRL team across the 2016 season ($n = 376$ observations). Data was sorted according to *a priori* match outcome (win/loss) and ladder position (ranked one to 16). Given the binary and categorical nature of the response variables, two analysis approaches were used; a conditional interference classification tree and ordinal regression.

Results: Five performance indicators ('try assists', 'all run meters', 'offloads', 'line breaks' and 'dummy half runs') were retained within the classification tree, detecting 66% of the losses and 91% of the wins. A significant negative relationship was noted between ladder position and 'kick metres' (β (SE) = -0.002 (<0.001); 95% CI = -0.003 – <-0.001) and 'dummy half runs' (β

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