

HOME ADVANTAGE IN THE COMMONWEALTH GAMES

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INTRODUCTION

The Sport Industry Research Centre (SIRC) at Sheffield Hallam University has collated an extensive database of Commonwealth Games (CWG) performance tables whilst conducting performance evaluations for three of the four UK Home Nation Sports Councils. During the course of one such evaluation, undertaken for **sportscotland**, it was discovered that Scotland's success as a host nation surpassed its exploits away from home. Funding agreements for hosting elite sporting events are subject to the promise of delivering certain measurable objectives, with improved performance often perceived as a derivative of competing under familiar conditions and home crowd support. We subsequently analysed performances of all CWG host nations post World War II to determine the correlation between staging the Games and host nation success. The findings of this research are pertinent from a policy perspective as they stand to inform the decisions of key stakeholders in placing a bid for the CWG.

METHODS

The Commonwealth Games results between 1950 and 2006 were collated from the official Games' website. In total, eight nations were eligible for home advantage calculations - Australia, Canada, England, Jamaica, Malaysia, New Zealand, Scotland, and Wales - each having hosted the Games on at least one occasion. Home and away performances for the eight host nations were analyzed using the concept of market share (as opposed to the conventional measurements of total gold medals or total medals won) and home advantage for each nation was calculated as the difference between these two performance measures.

RESULTS

Table 1 details the performance of nations having hosted at least one edition of the CWG since 1950, using the standardised measure of market share.

Table 1: Performance of host nations 1950 - 2006.

	OVERALL	HOME	AWAY	HOME ADVANTAGE
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Australia	26.9	30.2	26.0	4.3
England	21.4	18.7	21.8	(3.1)
Canada	16.2	21.3	15.0	6.3
New Zealand	6.2	10.4	5.3	5.1
Scotland	3.7	5.6	3.4	2.1
Wales	2.5	2.8	2.5	0.3
Malaysia	2.0	5.3	1.6	3.7
Jamaica	1.7	2.4	1.6	0.8

<http://www.commonwealthgames.com>

Market share is a standardised measure of total achievement whereby the total medals won in an event are converted into points (gold = 3, silver = 2, bronze = 3) and the points won by a given nation is subsequently expressed as a percentage of the total points available.

DISCUSSION

Seven of the eight host nations have enjoyed greater market share success on home soil than they have away from home. England is the only nation to show a home disadvantage, but this appears to be the exception rather than the general rule. Previous research also indicates that home advantage is not universal across teams; for example, Clarke (2000) in his study of home advantage in the Summer Olympic Games found that Canada fared worse at its home Olympics.

The apparent absence of home advantage in the case of England is magnified by the nation's superior performances in the Games held by its immediate neighbours; England's two best performances came about at the 1986 (boycotted) Scotland Games and the 1958 Games in Wales. The relatively high market share success in Scotland and Wales may be attributed to the role of learning/familiarity and travel factors in shaping performance.

The magnitude of home advantage, where prevalent, varies by nation - ranging from 0.3% for Wales to 6.3% for Canada. There is no discernible link between the extent of home advantage and the relative strength (quality) of the host nation, i.e. superior host nations do not necessarily benefit from disproportionately greater home advantage. For example, New Zealand has greater home advantage than Australia and Malaysia's home advantage outstrips that of some of the traditionally stronger host nations in the CWG.

The forthcoming CWG in 2010 are scheduled to be held in India. This is India's inaugural involvement with staging the event and historically the nation has averaged 4.8% of the available market share. Using regression analysis on historical performance data, India can be expected to win 7.6% of the market share in their home Games. In other words, India can benefit from a 2.8% increase in market share by way of hosting the CWG. However, reviewing India's performance in the more recent Games shows a better than average away performance (8.7% in 2002, 7.5% in 2006 cf. 4.8% overall). Thus, a market share of 7.6% may be regarded as a prudent estimate of the anticipated return. Moreover, a strategic approach to selecting sports (and the number of events contested within those sports) might lead to an even greater home advantage.

REFERENCES

Clarke, S.R. (2000). Home advantage in the Olympic games. In *Proceedings of the Fifth Australian Conference on Mathematics and Computers in Sport* (edited by G. Cohen and T. Langtry), pp. 43–51. Sydney, NSW: University of Technology Sydney.