

# NATIONALIST AND HOME FIELD BIAS IN SPORT PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS

An example from the ski jumping World Cup

Torkild Hovde Lyngstad\*, Department of Sociology and Human Geography, University of Oslo.

Leiv Tore Salte Rønneberg, Department of Medical Statistics, University of Oslo

Juho Härkönen, European University Institute

\*Corresponding author: T.H.Lyngstad, PB 1096 Blindern, 0317 OSLO, Norway. E-mail:

[t.h.lyngstad@sosgeo.uio.no](mailto:t.h.lyngstad@sosgeo.uio.no).

## *Abstract*

High stakes and prizes in international sports competitions necessitate efficiently identifying legitimate winners. Illegitimate biases of non-independent judges and home field advantages represent two major threats to the legitimacy of international competitions. Judges' nationalities represent one source of bias, as they may prefer athletes of their own nation. Judges may also favour athletes competing within their home countries, creating another potential bias. Such biases, conscious or unconscious, may affect the outcomes of competitions. The literature offers no complete consensus on the magnitude of such biases, hence not whether they affect competition outcomes or not. In this paper, we shed light on these problems, using international ski jumping as an example. We draw on data from the FIS World Cup competitions in the 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 seasons, and use several fixed-effects based regression designs. Our results reaffirm suspicions of national bias and home field advantage in major ski jumping competitions, but also show their magnitude is too little to be of major relevance to competition outcomes. "

*Keywords:* nationalist bias, home field bias, skijumping, judges, evaluation

## *Acknowledgements*

The authors are grateful for financial support from the Småforsk programme at the University of Oslo, and to Marte Knutsson for research assistance in the early phase of establishing the data set. At publication time, all code and material used to produce this paper (with the exception of the proprietary data) will be available. The authors are also grateful to Matti Nykänen for being an enduring source of inspiration in many aspects of our lives.

*Running head:* Judging biases in skijumping