

Conclusion: What Sport Taught Us About Business

This book began with a sprint. Not with the finish, not with the moment the result became visible, but with the blocks. The preparation that happens before the gun fires, before the cameras find the story, before the performance becomes something anyone can observe and judge. Those seconds in the blocks, invisible to most of the crowd, are where the result is already taking shape.

That image was chosen deliberately, because it captures something that the sixteen chapters of this book have been circling from different directions: that the outcomes we observe, the championship, the collapse, the turnaround, the culture that produces champions year after year, are almost never produced by the moment we are watching. They are produced by everything that happened before anyone was paying attention.

Sport makes this easier to see than most environments do. The feedback is immediate. Cause and effect sit close together. A penalty is taken and either scored or missed, and the difference between the two can be traced, precisely and empirically, to the quality of attention in the fraction of a second before the run-up began. A team wins a World Cup and the medal ceremony looks like the story, but examine it carefully and the real story is a professional league funded six years earlier, when the women's game was not commercially viable and the return was genuinely uncertain.

The patterns are visible in sport in ways they rarely are in the environments most readers inhabit. But they are the same patterns. That is the argument this book has been making from the first page. And in this conclusion, it is worth stating that argument plainly, as a whole, before turning to what it asks of anyone who has taken it seriously.

The Four Layers of the Same Argument

The book is organised into four parts, each examining a different layer of performance. But they are not four separate arguments. They are four expressions of one.