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It's a

Numbers Game

By Jane Kelley



Contents

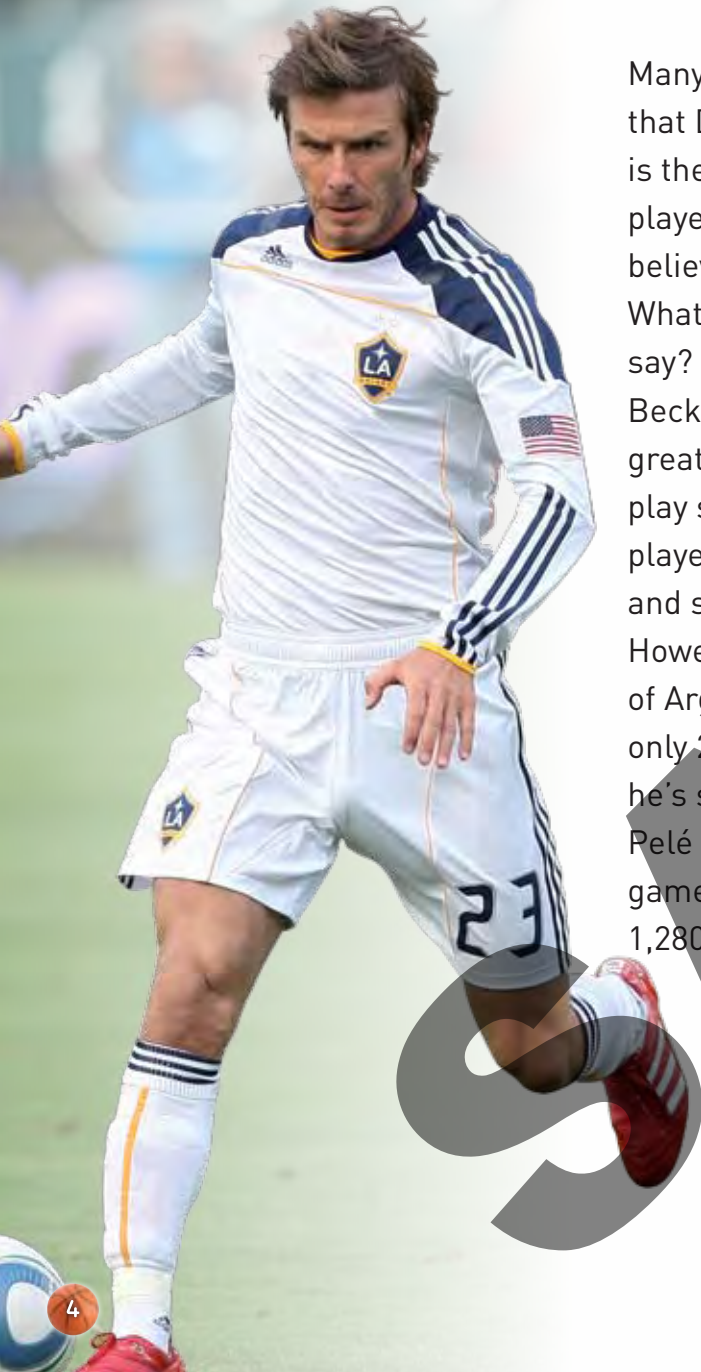
Introduction	2
Who's Really Number One?	4
Way above Average	14
Turning Heads	19
Scores or Saves?	23
Statistics in Action	27
Glossary	28

Introduction

Sport competitions are a big part of our lives. Some people enjoy playing sports such as soccer. Others like attending sport events, and some enjoy reading about sports or watching them on TV. No matter how people choose to participate, when major competitions such as a World Cup or the Olympic Games happen, almost everybody discusses the teams and **athletes** who are in the spotlight. Who won? Who lost? Who improved? Who collapsed right before the finish?

Statistics are a great way to make sense of sports. Yet, what exactly are they? In simple language, statistics are collections of numbers that help people understand something.

Who's Really Number One?



Many people believe that David Beckham is the greatest soccer player ever. Others believe that Pelé is. What will the numbers say? It's true that Beckham is one of the greatest players to ever play soccer. He has played in 644 games and scored 119 goals. However, Lionel Messi of Argentina has played only 233 games, yet he's scored 150 goals. Pelé has played in 1,360 games and has scored 1,280 goals.

◀ David Beckham

Lionel Messi ▶



Is there a way to compare the number of goals these players have scored even though they haven't played in the same number of games? Yes, there is. We can fairly compare the three athletes' accomplishments with the help of statistics.

Pelé ▶

