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COMPARING COUSINS: A HARMONIZED ANALYSIS OF RACKET SPORT SET SCORES BASED ON RACKETLON WORLD TOUR RESULTS

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While tennis, table tennis, badminton, and squash have several characteristics in common, they all have different scoring systems. Due to the different scoring systems, direct comparisons of match scores across racket sport have not yet been possible. Instead, comparative studies between racket sports have so far required scaling of match scores to a common format. However, such rescaling does not capture the mental aspects of different scoring systems, e.g., how the hierarchical scoring in tennis influences players differently as compared to the point-a-rally scoring of squash. In 2015, the English Racketlon Association introduced a new ranking system based on a ratings system, i.e., a player's ranking depends on the individual performance in each match played. Moreover, as the rules of racketlon harmonizes the scoring systems of the racket sports, and the UK ranking system is based on match results from more than a year of international racketlon tournaments, a unique comparison of set scores across racket sports is now possible. We present an initial analysis of how set scores compare for different racket sports when the harmonized scoring system of racketlon is used. Our analysis shows that table tennis is the sport in which big wins are most likely. Furthermore, we report that while the variance in badminton and squash set scores decreases for better players, the opposite applies to table tennis matches. Our comparative study provides a novel perspective on set scores in competitive matches in the world's four major racket sports, and our findings reveal that table tennis is particularly different. Future work should explore a larger set of match results, but our insights might already be used to inspire future match tactics and training regimes in racket sports.