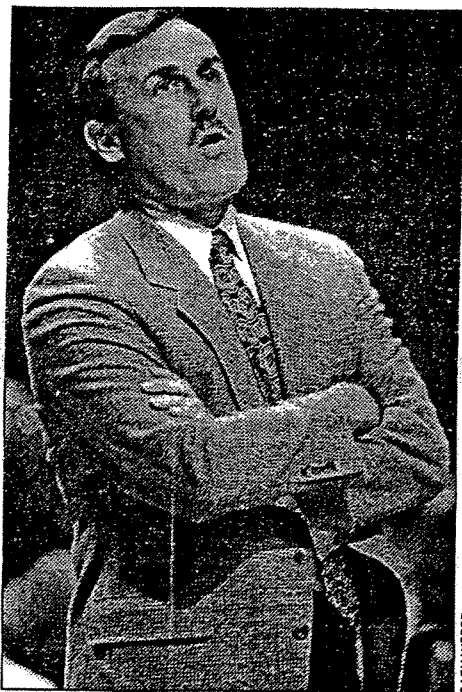


Fruitless Reign

Fans of several terminally inept NBA teams probably feel their team is the most pitiful, but now there's a mathematical formula that statistically proves once and for all which franchise is truly the most hapless.

That distinction belongs to the Sacramento Kings franchise (and its predecessors in Kansas City, Cincinnati, and Rochester), which has failed to win an NBA title in 47 years.

The equation, dubbed the Futility Index, was invented by two Silicon Valley-based lawyers, Rick Climan and Eric Reifschneider, to measure just



Adelman has quite a futility streak to break as the Kings' new head coach.

BASKETBALL DIGEST

which sports teams are truly the most hapless. The Index takes into account both the number of years since a team has won a title and the number of teams vying for that championship in a given year.

The genesis of the Index can be traced to Climan's days at Harvard in the mid-'70s. Climan, a diehard New York Rangers fan, got tired of hearing Boston Red Sox fans lament their team's

misfortunes. He argued that the Rangers, having gone Stanley Cupless for so many years in a smaller league, were actually the sorrier franchise.

"The only way to get that point across was to actually quantify it," says Climan.

Earlier this year, Climan found himself talking to Reifschneider about the idea of the index and the next thing he knew Reifschneider, who has a math degree from MIT, started crunching the numbers. To legitimize their work the pair had a professional mathematician validate the methodology and check the calculations. As it turns out, the Rangers' streak of 53 years without a championship—which mercifully ended when the team won the 1994 Stanley Cup—translated to a staggering 583.2 Futility Index rating. By comparison, the Red Sox, who last won the World Series in 1919, have a current rating of only 71.8.

"The Index caters to people's love of the underdog, that's part of the American sports psyche," Climan says. "It really is helping sports fans measure the depth of their anguish."

Climan and Reifschneider have begun working on a number of follow-up statistics. One, the City Futility Index, measures the most futile sports towns by taking into account both how long it's been since one team in the city has won a championship and how many teams there are in the city. After some initial calculations, the most futile city appears to be Cleveland. Sorry Cavaliers fans.

They've also considered developing a Dynasty Index that could measure the relative dominance of say the Boston Celtics or the Chicago Bulls.

And at least new Kings coach Rick Adelman can take solace in this fact. While the Kings may have a the highest current NBA rating with 31.9, they're nowhere near the lowliest franchise in the four major sports. That distinction belongs to—you guessed it—the Chicago Cubs, who haven't won a title in 90 years, translating to an astonishing 136.9.