

Abstract Submitted
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Untangling Performance from Success¹ BURCU YUCESoy,
ALBERT-LASZLO BARABASI, Northeastern University — Fame, popularity and
celebrity status, frequently used tokens of success, are often loosely related to, or
even divorced from professional performance. This dichotomy is partly rooted in the
difficulty to distinguish performance, an individual measure that captures the ac-
tions of a performer, from success, a collective measure that captures a community's
reactions to these actions. Yet, finding the relationship between the two measures
is essential for all areas that aim to objectively reward excellence, from science to
business. Here we quantify the relationship between performance and success by
focusing on tennis, an individual sport where the two quantities can be indepen-
dently measured. We show that a predictive model, relying only on a tennis player's
performance in tournaments, can accurately predict an athlete's popularity, both
during a player's active years and after retirement. Hence the model establishes
a direct link between performance and momentary popularity. The agreement be-
tween the performance-driven and observed popularity suggests that in most areas of
human achievement exceptional visibility may be rooted in detectable performance
measures.

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