

HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

Sports analytics is all the rage, and two high schoolers want to give their peers a taste of the action

By **Michael Silverman** Globe Staff, Updated February 18, 2024, 1:00 p.m.



Jayan Gandhi (left) is an 11th grader at Buckingham Browne & Nichols and Jai Malhotra is a 10th grader at Milton Academy. MATTHEW J. LEE/GLOBE STAFF

Jayan Gandhi and Jai Malhotra love sports as much as the next 16-year-old.

It's their ability to quantify that love that separates them from the pack.

Their mutual delight and knack for sports analytics has led them to establish what they believe is the first sports analytics conference for high school students.

Scheduled for Saturday, March 2, the National High School Sports Analytics Summit at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center will host up to 200 students with a similar bent for digging into the data that underlie performance, as well as business, in sports.

Invitations have been sent to Boston Public Schools and Greater Boston high schools seeking students to submit original research, network with other students, and increase their analytics skills.

A bonus will be three keynote speeches from well-established names in sports analytics: Daryl Morey, president of basketball operations for the Philadelphia 76ers; Jessica Gelman, CEO and co-founder of Kraft Analytics Group; and Nate Silver, founder and former editor-in-chief of FiveThirtyEight.

“We’re super pumped to start this,” said Gandhi, a junior at Buckingham Browne & Nichols, “because we both really believe that this will be a great opportunity for high school students who are interested in analytics.”

And not necessarily sports analytics.

“Just get them exposed to the field of data,” said Malhotra, a sophomore at Milton Academy. “We’re doing it through sports at a conference, but we’re also just trying to show students and high schoolers that data is such an important part of our society nowadays and how it can be implemented to a lot of different fields.”

ADVERTISING



Attending the conference will cost students \$35 each, and that includes cookies, chips, water, a t-shirt, and maybe even a water bottle, too.



Malhotra (left) and Gandhi will have their fellow analytics enthusiasts following the bouncing balls — and numbers — at their conference. MATTHEW J. LEE/GLOBE STAFF

Malhotra and Gandhi are raising donations from their own schools and outside sponsors for students who need financial assistance.

“One of our main goals we want to do for this conference is to make it as inclusive as possible,” said Malhotra, “so that people who are not very affiliated with the sports analytics field get more affiliated with it.”

The high school conference is not formally associated with [the MIT Sloan Sports Analytics Conference](#), also being held at the Exhibition Center center that weekend.

Morey and Gelman are co-founders of the MIT Sloan conference.

Malhotra’s father, Deepak Malhotra, is a professor at Harvard Business School who knows Morey. Their connection opened the door to Gandhi and Malhotra, who met at pre-school and were classmates at the Chestnut Hill School, making an event out of an interest each has had since middle school.

Gandhi, who is preparing a paper for the conference on a new football statistic for kicker analysis that adds temperature and humidity to the customary distance and wind-speed variables, has been interested in sports analytics since he was 8 or 9 and his parents told him to do something productive rather than simply watching sports from the couch.

“That’s where sports analytics came into play,” he said. “It could combine both the worlds of sports and math and analytics, and put it into one.”

Malhotra’s initiation came in middle school when he was asked to research a subject he was passionate about. Basketball was, and still is, at the top of that list, so he researched what has greater value to a team — great ball-handling or great shooting.

The data delivered “mixed conclusions” said Malhotra.

This conference is the newest version of their longtime interest.

“We’re really excited about the conference,” said Malhotra. “From the beginning, we knew it’d be a lot of work, but we’re pretty passionate about it and knew it was something we wanted to do. We’ve devoted a good amount of time to it, and so far it’s looking pretty good.”

For more information about attending the conference as well as research guidelines, head to: <https://www.nhssac.org/>

Clarification: This story was updated to more accurately reflect the pricing and nature of both conferences mentioned.

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