

# Vanderbilt Hustler

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## Economics class has sporting good time

Professor John Vrooman applies sports, koozies and Friday labs to Economics curriculum

By LANEY WOOLFOLK

Legendary classes, such as Popovich's medieval art history and Lachs' ethics class, typically take a decade or so to cement themselves in the prestigious "Take-This-Class-Before-You-Graduate" Hall of Fame. However, in a quick five years, a new class has become the talk of Arts and Science: John Vrooman's Sports Economics.

Sports Economics is well-liked for its association with America's pastime and known primarily for unofficial Friday afternoon "lab" at Sam's Sports Bar and Grill. The class is limited to senior majors, and economics students fight to be on this elite class roster. Of the 109 students that registered this fall, only 26 were able to enroll.

Vrooman attributes the popularity to word of mouth, and describes the class as a "capstone" for an economics major. Contrary to popular belief, the class is not solely about sports.

The class is a real world application of economics that uses sports as a method for study. Due to the high salaries and revenue of baseball, it is the main concentration, but all sports are fair game for discussion.

"Sports are everywhere," Vrooman said. "It's got a lot of history, and there is a lot of statistical information. Sports are incredibly valuable for job interviews and trying to break the ice. Sports mimics

life."

Each student (or pair of students) presents a term project in which they research and present a paper on their own topic. Vrooman said he believes that whatever reasons the student signed up for the class, this is what he or she enjoys the most. Doing the term paper and researching a theory is the way students come to understand economic theory through sports.

Also, contrary to popular belief, the class is not all athletes and the best performers tend to be women.

"Guys get too caught up in the sports part of it, and women focus on the theory," Vrooman said.

The class is a unique community. They have T-shirts with a different slogan each semester (this fall's slogan is "Bring It") and koozies that are popularly described as the "lab pack."

The unofficial Friday afternoon lab at Sam's is from 5 to 7 p.m. Sometimes it runs later. All the students are over 21.

In the lab they discuss statistics and trivia that are not discussed during class. Parents sometimes attend the lab, and there is an official "Alumni Section" filled during homecoming weekend.

Despite Vrooman's humility about the class popularity, the source of it may be his attitude towards his students.

"I let my students know their

### Vrooman brings "unique perspective" into the classroom

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minds are quality, and I respect them," he said. "The best thing about Vanderbilt is the undergraduate students. The class helps me; if you can explain a theory to a senior, an inquisitive and challenging student, you know its good."

Sports economics, a relatively obscure discipline eight years ago, has quickly become a prospering field. Vrooman's class, which began at Rice University, was one of the first in the nation. Vrooman also has his own unique monopoly, because he is the only former college football player and Economics professor in the nation, he said.

"I don't know as much about sports as you think, but I think my experience with the game allows me a unique perspective," Vrooman said.

He said has been contacted by many professional sports organizations for advice and published highly regarded sports articles.

"I am a teacher first and a sports economist second," he said.

If you are looking to get in the class, you're best bet is to know Vrooman. If you did well in his Econ 100 class or have excelled in Economics at Vanderbilt, you are likely to have a shot.

Some students who are bumped in the fall have attended every Friday lab with hopes of being admitted in the spring. Vrooman also considers recommendations from Econ 280 alumni.

Nepotism, though always attempted, is not recommended.

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