Table 1. Expectation and occurrence of the number of games in the World Series from 1905 to 1971.*

Expectation		Actual occurrence	
No. of games	p	1905–1944	1945–1971
4	.125	6/37 = .162	4/27 = .148
5	.250	14/37 = .378	4/27 = .148
6	.313	9/37 = .243	4/27 = .148
7	.312	8/37 = .216	15/27 = .555

*The years 1919, 1920, and 1921 are excluded because the series consisted of the best five out of nine games.

has won that game only four times! If the teams are matched, the probability of winning less than five times is

$$\sum_{m=15}^{19} C_m^{19} (1/2)^{19} = 0.0096$$

The phenomenon becomes even more unlikely when one realizes that the teams are not evenly matched and that the team that was ahead going into the sixth game was possibly the stronger team.

The theory has been advanced that there is a "back-to-the-wall" effect operating which tends to favor the trailing team in the sixth game. This explanation, however, is refuted by the fact that prior to the end of World War II the sixth game phenomenon is not detectable; the length of World Series agrees moderately well with theoretical prediction, although occurrence is biased toward slightly shorter series, probably due to team imbalance (Table 1).

Furthermore, analysis of other "back-to-the-wall" situations fails to indicate that this is a significant effect. The anomaly is clearly associated with the sixth game and with post-World War II baseball. Clearly some hitherto undetected behavioral influence is operating that warrants further investigation.

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