

Chaos Butterflies



In chaos theory, the butterfly effect refers to a small change creating a large difference later.

A football game is a good example. At the snap, one offensive lineman's unraveled shoe lace (no doubt loosened by a butterfly) causes him to lose his footing. He inadvertently bumps his teammate who then interferes with the center's hike. The quarterback takes an extra split-second to control the ball but loses enough time for him to hurry his pass. It's deflected by a blitz and falls into the control of his teammate for an interception. This change of possession winds up changing momentum and turning the game around. The unraveled shoelace has caused the team ultimately to lose the game.

How many teams who were no better than the other teams in their league have had good or even championship seasons because they just had good butterfly events often enough or bad butterfly events less often?