I’m Grant Gardner and you’re listening to Statistically Speaking, a podcast from the Samford University Center for Sports Analytics in Birmingham, Alabama. I’m Zachary Taunton and each week we are going to explore how big data and advances analytics is impacting the business side of sports. So, here is this week’s episode...

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Grant Gardner (GG): I'm Grant Gardner here with Statistically Speaking and we’re here with Dabo Swinney, the head coach of the Clemson Tigers, and he's here at the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame Induction for the 2018 class. So, this is a podcast about sports analytics and we just wanted to ask you how that has impacted your career as a coach and how it has evolved through the years you've been coaching football?

Dabo Swinney (DS): I didn’t know what an “analytic” was until… you know I had Stats in school and all that but it's taken on a whole new meaning these past few years. We have a data analytics staff person that that's all they do is analyze the catapults stuff, the GPS stuff, the player loads, and speeds and impacts of everything. It’s a big part now of how we structure practice, how we monitor certain guys and things like that. It's become a definitely another edge. I think you're always looking for that edge and I think this is one of the areas where you can gain an edge. And that’s the health part of it, then you got the the informational side of the analytics you know on how people do certain things and situations and so forth and you try to take all that information and analyze it and then apply it to your game plan.

Zachary Taunton (ZT): So, a few weeks ago we were down in Atlanta with Rich McKay, the President and CEO of the Falcons, and we were asking him how analytics played into the Draft, which is happening right now, and he said it's actually really difficult to use analytics in the Draft because you're talking about someone who might go in the first round in college and they are playing against someone who has no shot. He said that means the analytics are often really skewed and I imagine that is only amplified when we're talking about looking at high school players. From a recruiting perspective how does that work? Can you use analytics?

DS: I don’t wanna apply any of that. A good old-fashioned eyeball test and just due diligence. We gather our own analysis if you will, but we don't rely on or allow any type of software or program to tell us something. I mean we evaluate tape, we verify in person and then it's about the guy. We study their social media, I want to know who they are. Obviously, their academics the transcripts, you know it's pretty much black and white. We are checking a lot of boxes. Their character and we do a lot of research on who the person is that wears the helmet not just the tape. Obviously, they got to be good enough, but we're looking at so much more than that. The analytics really, for us, we don't we don't really use it in the recruiting process.

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Thank you for listening to Statistically Speaking. This podcast was created and produced by Zach Taunton and Grant Gardner. To learn more about the Samford University Center for Sports Analytics, and download more episodes of the podcast, visit our webpage at samford.edu/sports-analytics and follow us on Twitter @SamfordSACenter.