



2026
SMT
DATA CHALLENGE



CHANGE THE GAME

LAUNCH YOUR CAREER

The SMT Data Challenge is an advanced data competition that invites students to analyze real-world baseball tracking data. Projects are open-ended and data-driven, rather than strictly quantitative, and they emphasize process, relevance, creativity, and communications. With its uniquely available tracking data, the Data Challenge has become a rich recruiting ground for MLB teams. **More than 25% of students who submitted projects have been hired by professional teams or sports companies.**

2026 PROJECT TOPIC

ON THE BIG SCREEN! At its core, baseball is entertainment. The technological advancements in baseball have always strived to increase fan understanding of the game. SMT amplifies fan engagement with real-time data visualization tools, changing the game by how we tell stories for all audiences. In 2026, we want your help in telling stories better through a metric, visualization, or interactive fan experience that could be displayed on a Minor League Baseball scoreboard. Examples include:

- A leaderboard ranking the fastest sprint speeds to first base
- An entertainment metric for which player makes the unlikely plays
- A game where fans vote if a runner is out or safe based on the player tracking data

MLB teams have asked for creative and original ideas with a clear explanation of how you moved from problem to solution.

| REGISTRATION *Deadline April 29*

Students may participate individually or in teams of up to 4 students. Individuals who want help building a team can identify themselves when registering.

Data will be made available on or after May 4

| SUBMISSION CONTENT *Deadline July 27*

- Abstract
- Narrative Paper (PDF max: 2000 words)
- Analysis Code

| TUTORIAL TOPICS

- Math Review
- Feature Engineering
- Analysis Code
- Supervised Classification
- Narrative & Technical Writing
- Navigating the Hiring Process

Virtual Office Hours Available May 6 - July 26

| JUDGING

Judges from academia, industry, journalism, and sports will evaluate submissions based on creativity, relevance, methodology, storytelling and communication to technical and non-technical audiences.

| FINALISTS *Announced Sep. 30*

Three finalist teams will be invited to a showcase weekend at SMT headquarters in Durham, NC to present to a panel of judges in person. (Mid/Late Nov, date TBD)



CLICK OR SCAN
TO REGISTER

DEADLINE April 29

Must be 18 years or older and enrolled in both Spring and Fall 2026 semesters to enter.

For questions, contact us at datachallenge@smt.com