

Research on the Developing Trend and Strategies of the NBA Games and NBA Players

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Abstract. Since the birth of the professional league, players have become entertainment products for the public. From Paul Arizin, the inventor of the jump shot who also earned part-time money, to LeBron James, who is worth hundreds of millions of dollars, this entertainment maximizes the value of players and promotes the game of basketball to the world. The National Basketball Association is arguably the world's most competitive professional basketball league. It features all the top players, coaching staff, and trainers. It has been established for 75 years. However, each period of the league has some special trends of it. As the league is stepping into the 2020s era, it's quite significant that people can observe new trends involving playing styles and players. This paper discusses and investigates the trend of the NBA playing style and player builds using static and situational analysis. This paper also made predictions about the NBA Draft prospects. Then, this paper will present the methods and data, followed by the results and discussions to improve the NBA's development. Such as the periphery taking IP as the core and spreading it to the periphery; the Industrial chain Logic of IP Event tourism development, and adhering to the "star" strategy to create idols and aggregate the flow of fans.

Keywords: NBA games; Development strategy; Professional league players.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research background

The National Basketball Association is arguably the world's most competitive professional basketball league. It features all the top players, coaching staff, and trainers. It has been established for 75 years. However, each period of the league has some special trends of it. As the league is stepping into the 2020s era, it's quite significant that people can observe new trends involving playing styles and players.

In the league's early days, physicality was essential to the ball game. With players like Magic Johnson and Penny Hardaway at the point guard position, everyone on the floor was pretty aggressive on the floor. Guys like Dennis Rodman and Shaquille O'Neal raised strength to another level. From 1950-2009, 51% of MVP winners were centered, and 33% of top-three picks were centers [1]. However, the modern era of the NBA is experiencing a skyrocketing number of threes launched, owing to players like Stephen Curry and Damian Lillard. The rising popularity of three-point shooting and "run and gun" makes the league less physical, indicating that players' body strength is not as important to the games anymore compared to the old era. On the other hand, their shooting ability and skills are what an NBA scout is looking for.

During the 2014-2015 season, the Golden State Warriors and Stephen Curry made their "run and gun" offense a major problem to the league. With Klay Thompson and other great shooters around him, warrior head coach Steve Kerr could maximize the effectiveness of this play for his team. Teams across the league realized this playing style was the most effective way to score. It's a simple math problem, Why shoot a midrange jumper worth two points when you can shoot a "similarly difficult" 3-point jumper worth one point more? The average number of three points each team takes in a game

(3PG/A) increased 15 more from 2003-2004 to 2019-2020 [2]. The increasing number of threes players taking each game refers to a major trend in the league, small ball, also known as “run and gun”. Also, the big men whose job was to guard the paint and make simple layups have gotten substantially better at shooting threes. Take Brooke Lopez, for example; he went from shooting 0.2 3s per game at 14.3% in 2015-16 to 5.2 3s per game at 34.6% just one season later [3]. This is a great way for big men to adapt to the modern game, and players like Lopez are now plenty in the league, Nikola Jokic, Kristaps Porzingis, Joel Embid, or Karl-Anthony Towns, who can also shoot 3s, does a few more positive things for the offense a big man on the court. Having a long-range shooting ability helps these big men score more points on the floor and increases their value as a player. Thus, the trends for the so-called “perfect” NBA player build are made pretty obvious. Scouts and team managers are looking for a dynamic tall offensive player who can shoot from deep.

A player with a long body length and skillful hands can always impact the game deeper than a small point guard who only has the skills. Furthermore, because of the success of drafting taller offensive initiators like Lamelo Ball and Luka Doncic and the valuable elite two-way wings like Leonard and Jayson Tatum, the director of scouting and drafting will be pushed in that direction. Take this year’s draft (2022 NBA draft), for example. Compared to the old days, from 1950 to 2009, 33% of the top-three picks were centered. All the top three picks are big men with some crafty fingers, Chet Holmgren, Paolo Banchero, and Jabari Smith Jr are all power forwards/centers with remarkable shooting ability. Especially for Chet Holmgren, the number two overall pick was already known for his extraordinary ball handling skills and shooting ability as a seven-footer in high school. Scouts and NBA team managers were impressed his insane length and agility on display. The current NBA superstar Kevin Durant is a great example of a “unicorn”: NBA players who are both versatile and dynamic. He is almost seven feet tall and one of the best scorers ever to play the game of basketball. KD was already the second overall pick in 2007. By winning multiple FMVPs, an MVP, and scoring champs, tell the public and the league that a player like him has great potential to become a superstar when entering the draft.

1.2 Research framework

In this paper, we discuss and investigate the trend of the NBA playing style, and player builds using static and situational analysis. We also made predictions of what the future NBA Draft prospects are going to be like. In the following part of the paper, we will present the methods and data, followed by the results and discussions.

2. Methods: Analysis of Historical NBA three-point shooting Trends

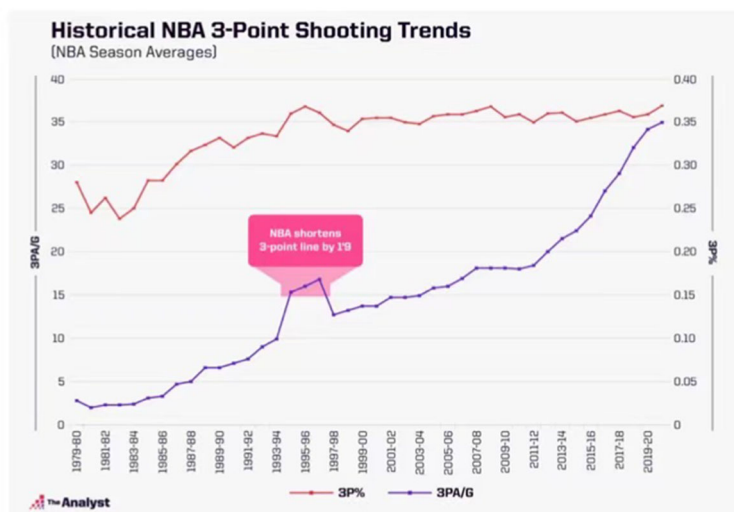


Figure 1. Historical NBA 3-Point Shooting Trends

We analyzed NBA three-point shooting trends from the 1979-1980 season and the 2019-2020 season. We find a diagram that describes the situation. The x-axis represents the season we are looking at, and the y-axis represents the average three-point attempt per game for a team. As shown in Figure 1, we can hand out that there’s an average three-point attempt per game increase for a team, which is also what they value. It went from about 2.5 attempts per game in the 1979-1980 season to almost 35 attempts per game in the 2019-2020 season. There’s an obvious growing trend of three-point shooting in the league. That’s the sign of an upcoming trend of a new playing style.

3. Result: Analysis of big man (6’10’ or taller) three-point shooting trends

We did data analysis on NBA big man shooting trends from the 1979-1980 season to the 2019-2020 season. We find a diagram that describes the situation, the x-axis represents the season we are looking at, and the y-axis represents the average three-point attempt per game for big men (6’10’ or taller). By plotting the number on the graph, we can find out that there’s an increase in average three-point attempts per game for big men in the league who are 6 foot ten or taller, which is also the y value. It went from 0 attempts in the 1960-1980 season to almost 50 attempts across the league. From Figure 2, we can find out that there’s an increase in the number of big man’s three-point shooting attempts, which shows us that three-point shooting for big men are becoming an essential part of the game.

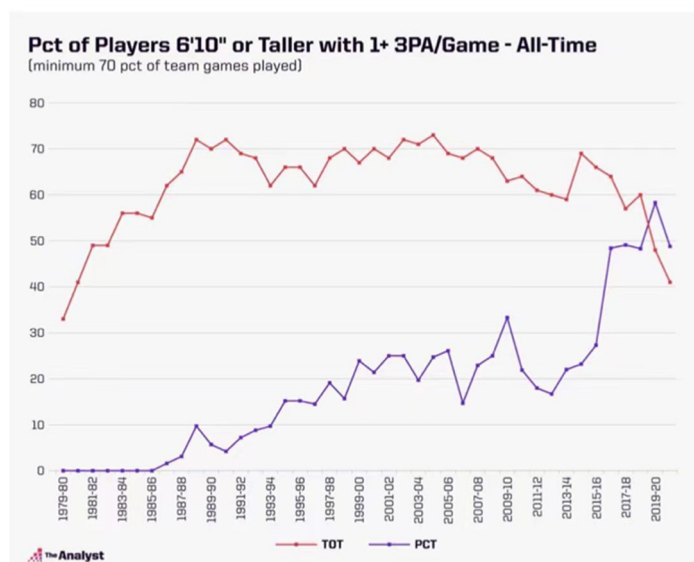


Figure 2. Pct of Players 6’10’’ or Taller with 1+3PA/ Game- All-Time

As time goes by, the NBA basketball games are progressing. To illustrate, there are several key factors of NBA progression. To begin with, the rhythm of the basketball games is becoming faster and faster. As pointed out, today’s basketball games trend is quicker than before [4]. For instance, let us take the Phoenix Suns in the 2006-2007 season as an example, commonly accepted as one of the earliest teams that significantly brought up a fast break wave to the NBA games. That year, the Phoenix Suns’ players, namely Steve Nash, Amar’s Carsares Stoudemire, Shawn Marion, and others, had used their fast, unique playing style to win sixty-two games and rank number one in the league. Compared to classical basketball teams like the San Antonio Spurs, their high transition intensity is completely different. Their strategy, called “run and gun”, which refers to that every player could be the starter or finisher of the fast break, had been a tremendous success. Then this led to a wave of rapid transition across the league in the following years. Apart from that, another significant phenomenon of quicker rhythm shown is that three-pointers are shot more times in today’s games. To illustrate, Stephen Curry was considered one of the greatest shooters of all time, and his and the Golden State Warriors’ rise over the last decade has illustrated the answer to this era of basketball: the three-point shot. More and more players are practicing their three-point shots, from small guards

to big centers, and it must have seemed ridiculous that centers would take so many three-point shots in the past. Players who are less adept at three-point shooting, such as the former Seventy Sixers player Ben Simmons and the Bucks' player Giannis Antetokounmpo, will be defended accordingly. In other words, players without three-point shooting ability are not in high demand in this new generation of basketball players. Also, many three-point shots occurred on the fast break, so there are fewer slow, positional plays. Some of the best shooters these days shoot transition threes very quickly, such as Stephen Curry and Trae Young. These great shooters prove that basketball games' style and pace in this era are fast.

In addition, in today's basketball games, the define today's basketball games, players' sense of position has become increasingly blurred. In the past (for example, before 2012), every player had a specific position in a five-person squad. In today's league, we see a lot of swingmen or four or five swingmen. We see this very clearly in [5]. Many players no longer have a defined pitch because they combine the strengths of various position players. For example, Draymond Green of the Warriors has been a character player for the past few years. He's not tall but extremely physical and can defend himself inside or outside. His ability to guard multiple positions on the defensive end and his ability to organize and shoot on offense has made him successful. And just like Green, we've seen a gradual decline in height in the paint in recent years. Such phenomena are also evidence of a player's blurred sense of position.

Furthermore, there are also some other changes: the game of basketball relies more and more on the whole team rather than only the superstars. Teams that win championships and have superstars have very tough role players. For example, the San Antonio Spurs have many good bench players in addition to their three famous players, Ginobili, Parker, and Duncan. Many teams with just one or two superstar players often fail. To illustrate, if we analyze the reserves' statistics in the 2007 Finals, we can see that the team with more bench players' scores has an advantage over the others.

Table 1. Reserves in the first three games of the 2007 NBA Finals

The team	The number of play	Score	The team scores	Scores of all team percentage
The SAN Antonio spurs	6	28	85	0.3294
	6	55	103	0.5339
	5	26	75	0.3466
	5	37	76	0.4868
The knight	7	45	92	0.4891
	4	9	72	0.125

Judging from the current development of the NBA, the entire NBA is improving. This evolution can be seen in many aspects and details. The first is the look of the squad. We all know that the NBA has 30 teams, 15 from the East and 15 from the West [6]. Nevertheless, NBA teams have also undergone numerous evolutions throughout their history. In the 1985-86 season, the NBA had 23 teams, and the East had 11. The 1988-89 season saw the emergence of two new teams in the East, the Charlotte Hornets and the Miami Heat. 13 in the front, 12 in the back; he has appeared in the NBA for a total of 25 teams. In the 1989-90 season, the Orlando Magic joined the Eastern Conference with 14 teams. The Minnesota Timberwolves join the West, bringing the West to 13 teams for 27 NBA teams. In the 1995-96 season, the number of NBA teams was 29, with the Toronto Raptors and Vancouver Grizzlies leading the East with 15 and the West with 14. In the 04-05 season, the Charlotte Bobcats joined the Eastern Conference. The New Orleans Pelicans have moved from East to West. At this point, the status of 15 NBA teams has been officially established. Over the past 30 years, the number of NBA teams has grown to seven. All NBA teams significantly contribute to the local economy and the development of the NBA. With such a development trend, I think the NBA will develop more NBA teams in more cities as their home courts. And the scope and size of the team will also become larger. The second is the salary of the NBA players on the team. There are far more NBA players than before. In the 2015-16 season, the salary cap of NBA players was only \$70 million, but in the 2016-17 season, it skyrocketed to \$94 million. This year, the salary cap of NBA players reached

150 million US dollars [7]. The average NBA salary for the 2020-21 season is \$7.9 million, and the projected 2021-22 season is \$8.25 million. In the 2005-06 season, the average salary of an NBA player was only \$3.89 million. The salary of NBA players has been greatly increased every year. Why do NBA salary caps and player salaries rise so fast? [8]. The first is because NBA teams make more money, and the league and their respective teams have signed a lot of high-value broadcast contracts. Due to the impact of the epidemic and the wider audience of the NBA, more and more people will be more willing to watch some online live broadcasts. This shows that the NBA's broadcast contract can have more room for development. Now the NBA and many companies are signing contracts a long time ago at very low prices, and as the contracts expire, the NBA will now sign more and more expensive contracts. And now the price of NBA tickets and advertising costs have not increased. With this trend, NBA player wages will be even higher. The commercial value of the alliance will be even higher. And in this way, the NBA will have a better development trend. Finally, discuss the changing trend of the NBA's playing style. Now the way NBA players play has also changed a lot. In the old days, players preferred high-intensity, high-resistance confrontation with a breakthrough as an important part of scoring.

But with the changes in the team's tactics, the current team is more willing to recruit shooters. Focusing on three-pointers and mid-range shots, scoring efficiency has become higher, and players are less prone to injury. So, 3-point shooters like Stephen Curry can always be re-signed at the maximum salary. However, the audience prefers to see the collision between the players. Even if the three-point or mid-range shooting is very efficient, it lacks viewing, and the audience may not feel the excitement and enthusiasm of the game. And the frequency of whistle-blowing by referees is very high now. I think the league can change the degree of referee's penalty and reduce the frequency of whistle-blowing, thereby increasing the intensity of confrontation between players. This way, we can gain more audiences, increase your profitability, and increase your business value.

4. Discussion

4.1 Sports event tourism industry chain: take IP as the core and spread it to the periphery

First, relying on the unique IP resources of scarce events, clubs, star athletes and so on, it gathers a large number of fans, provides a resource entrance for peripheral industries to create value, and imports traffic to the service supporting layer. Secondly, the strong peripheral industry provides capital flow for developing and operating the core layer of sports IP and supports its expansion and innovation. Therefore, the development and operation of sports IP must be built on the solid material foundation of the peripheral industry. The moderate expansion of spire IP will positively impact services, products, and other industrial links and eventually form a mature development mode of "IP driving -- industrial chain synergy -- benign interaction of industrial factors" [9].

4.2 Industrial chain logic of IP event tourism development

The operation of sports IP is the core of sports event tourism development. Throughout the world, the tourism development of IP of top sports events is all carried out around IP operation, and its industrial chain is comprehensively expanded. On the other hand, only by following the industrial chain logic with IP operation as the core can we fully explore the value of the event IP itself and achieve the ultimate tourism development.

4.3 Adhere to the "star strategy" to create basketball idols and aggregate the flow of fans

Every sports star is a "walking IP". Fans participate in sports events to travel and watch them, largely to cheer for their idols. Sports fans gather wherever sports stars go. The NBA has always adhered to the "star strategy", through the endless star-making movement, the achievement of Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant, LeBron James, and other phenomenon basketball idols carrying the basketball dream of generations. Every team in the NBA is trying to create its star players, who are

the team's core, brand, and soul, and also an important means for the NBA to improve brand awareness and attract tourists [10].

On the one hand, the NBA Star-making campaign will fully tap the stars' outstanding basketball talent and outstanding personality traits, shaping them into representative of the NBA spirit of "diligence and courage, courage to climb mountains, cooperation and win-win". At the same time, through brand cooperation, they achieve their extraordinary commercial value. During the Jordan era, he endorsed nearly a hundred advertisements covering shoes, clothing, batteries, hamburgers, cars, perfume, etc., which increased the sales performance and brand value of related brands. Jordan's retirement and comeback can cause the Nasdaq stock index to go up and down.

In addition to the commercial endorsement, the NBA also supports and encourages players to invest in the entertainment industry and participate in various commercial and social activities. The more players are exposed to public view, the more fan interaction and tourism can be triggered. The participation of NBA star players in social activities can attract fans to gather offline, satisfy fans' interest in star-chasing, enrich the tourism experience, and further promote the pan-entertainment tourism IP marketing of the NBA.

In addition to the current star development program, the NBA is very focused on reserve talent. Nearly 90% of the people in the United States have participated in basketball, and there are millions of basketball fans in middle schools. American college basketball teams are a rich "resource pool" of NBA reserve talents, and some college students can directly enter the NBA draft in college. The NBA has established a perfect training model for basketball reserve talents, which ensures the continuous injection of basketball talents into the NBA.

5. Conclusion

Sports are an inherent demand of people and an important way of self-realization and self-transcendence, which contains a huge and profound spiritual value. With the evolution of human society, this spiritual value has been continuously spread and enlarged, gradually producing a huge commercial value -- the sports industry. The market for NBA stars is growing rapidly with the moderate growth of the global sports industry and the continuous improvement of business models.

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