

# Tanking?

“Once we were eliminated from the playoffs, we did everything possible to lose games....”

- Mark Cuban, Dallas Mavericks Owner





Tanking has been an issue in the NBA for a long time.

“We’ve got to bite the bullet. We can win by losing.”  
- Donald Sterling, former owner of the LA Clippers



# What is Tanking?

- To *deliberately* lose.
- It is somewhat counterintuitive because the goal in sports is to WIN.
- The logic is as follows:
  - Intentionally lose and finish towards the bottom of the standings. Given the rules of the lottery, the teams at the bottom of the standings have the highest chance to win the top picks for the upcoming draft.
  - Continue to draft players from the top end of the lottery until you get a top-tier talent level player.
  - WIN...hopefully..

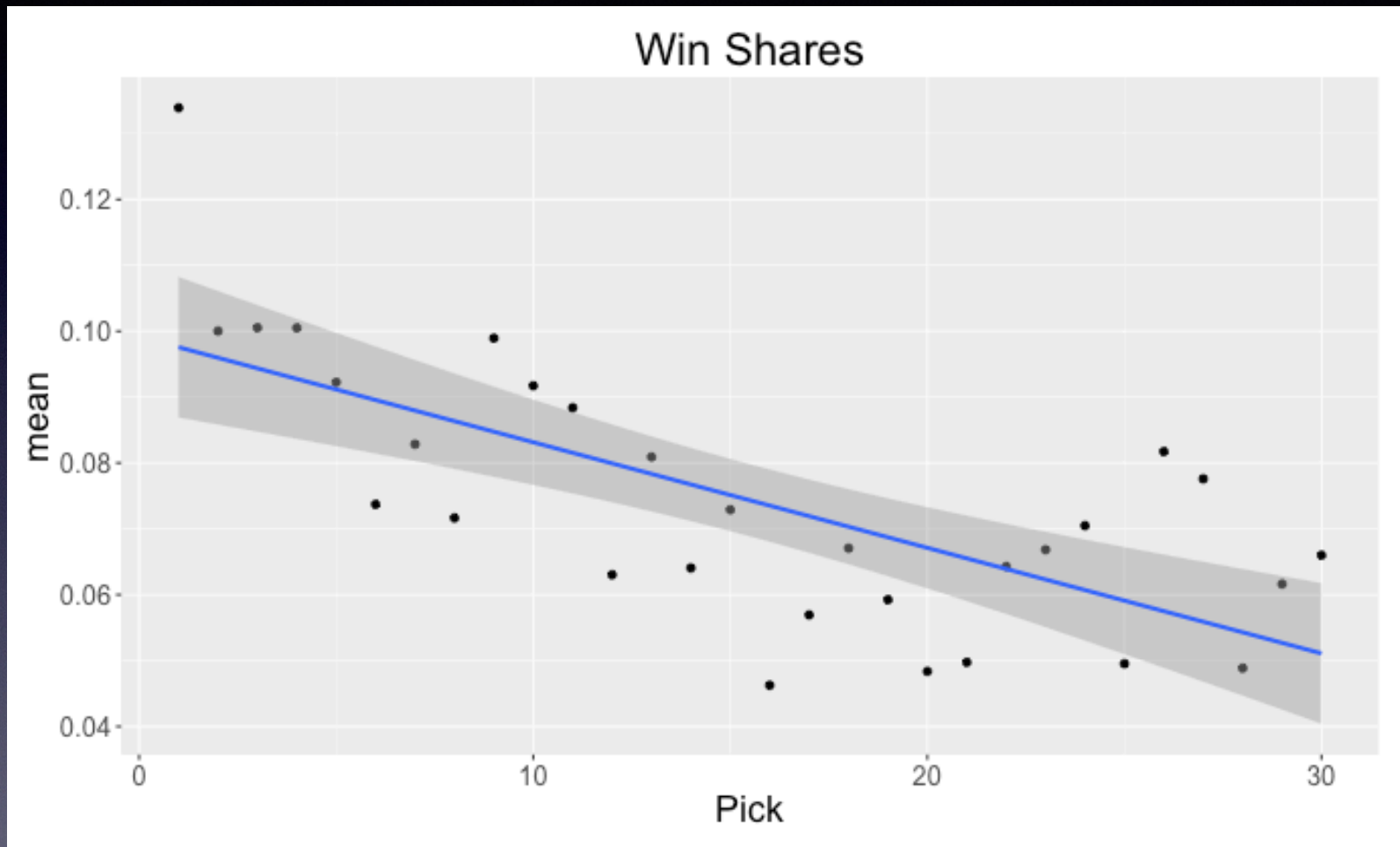


# Does It Work??

- The NBA is a super-star driven league. Having that one dominant player is enough to make you competitive.
- Example- LeBron James has appeared in 7 straight NBA Finals on two different teams.
- He has a career win share of 23.89%. He alone contributed to around 24% of his team's wins.
- Average NBA team size- 14 players ~ 7.14%



# A Brief Look At Average Win Shares by Pick



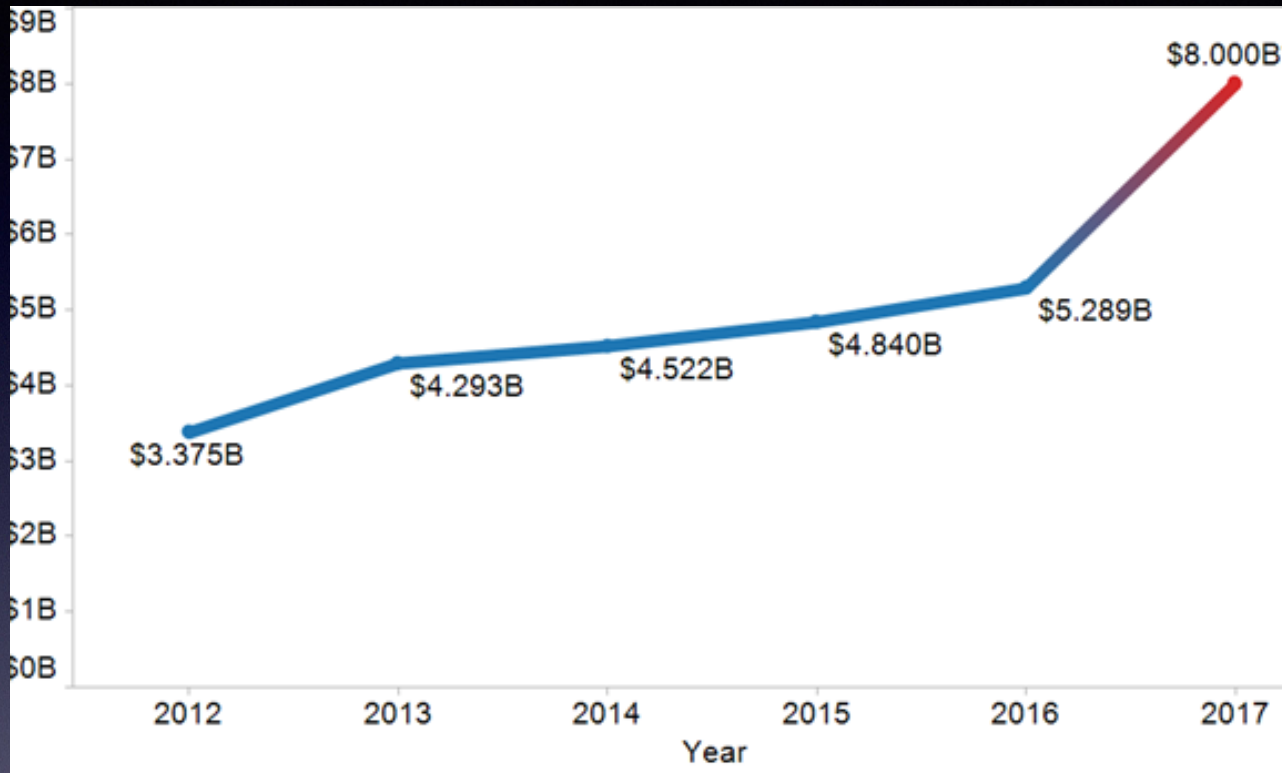
Higher picks have a higher average win share,  
especially the 1st Pick

# So What???

- What is the problem? The ultimate goal of tanking is to win, just through a long-term approach.
- Should it really matter that some teams choose to “win by losing?”



# It's Always About The \$\$\$\$



\$5.289 billion in revenue in 2016 and continuing to grow



# Lack of Competition = Less Viewership

- NBA has a \$24 billion dollar TV deal with ESPN & Turner Sports. A lot of money is at stake.
- Difficult task to convince paying customers to watch an intentionally subpar product

“...Games featuring the starless and woeful 76ers as the visiting team have been the lowest-attended of the season.”

- Brian Windhorst, ESPN Sportswriter



# Proposed Fix For The Lottery

“We’ve tinkered with the draft lottery five times in the last 30 years, but we’re still not at a point where it’s frankly working.” – Adam Silver, NBA Commissioner

- Two major competing interests to balance
  - 1. Eliminate tanking incentive
    - Teams that tank at the end of the season (once mathematically eliminated).
    - Teams that enter the season with the intention of tanking.
  - 2. Retain reverse order of standings to some degree
    - Need some way for “actually bad” teams to improve.



# Shiny App!!