

Keon Ellis: Why Teams Want Him (2025–26)

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Executive Summary

Keon Ellis profiles as a low-usage, high-impact rotation guard whose value is driven by defensive event creation, offensive efficiency, and versatility rather than raw box-score production. Across multiple seasons and data sources, Ellis consistently grades as a positive on-court contributor despite moderate usage and fluctuating team context.

Offensively, Ellis functions as a connective piece rather than a driver. His shot diet is tightly constrained to efficient zones, his turnover rates remain low, and his efficiency holds as minutes differ game-to-game. Defensively, he produces events at an elite rate, placing him near the top of the league in steal-based metrics and stop creation, making Keon one of the leagues most disruptive perimeter defenders.

For teams seeking perimeter defense without offensive drag, Ellis is a scalable, playoff-viable role player whose value increases alongside offensive talent.

Impact Metrics

Across Cleaning the Glass and Databallr, Ellis' impact profile is unusually consistent for a low-usage perimeter guard.

Table 1: Cleaning the Glass – On/Off Differentials (On minus Off)

Season	Min	Net Rating (On-Off)
2023-24	912	2.8
2024-25	1,929	5.0
2025-26	424	-0.5

- 2023–24: Ellis posted a slightly positive net rating (+2.8 on/off) despite largely neutral offensive indicators. Even early in his career, his defensive presence led to him having a meaningful impact.
- 2024–25: That trend strengthened meaningfully. Lineups with Ellis on the floor improved by +5.0 points per 100 possessions, driven by a +3.9 offensive points-per-possession differential. Established him as a clear lineup booster rather than a defense first guard with questionable offense.
- 2025–26: So far, the 424-minute sample shows mixed results and should be treated as noise, particularly given Sacramento's volatile lineup context.

Importantly, Ellis' positive on/off impact persists without scoring volume. As shown in Table 1, on-court offensive ratings trend upward with increased minutes, while turnover rates remain low and efficiency stays stable.

Table 2: Databallr – Impact and Event Creation

Season	MP	O-DPM	D-DPM	RAPM	STL%	BLK%	STOP%
2024-25	1,900	-0.2	1.2	1.2	3.1	1.6	4.3
2025-26	458	-0.5	1.0	0.5	3.6	1.1	5.3

Advanced metrics reinforce this profile.

From Databallr (Table 2), Ellis posts:

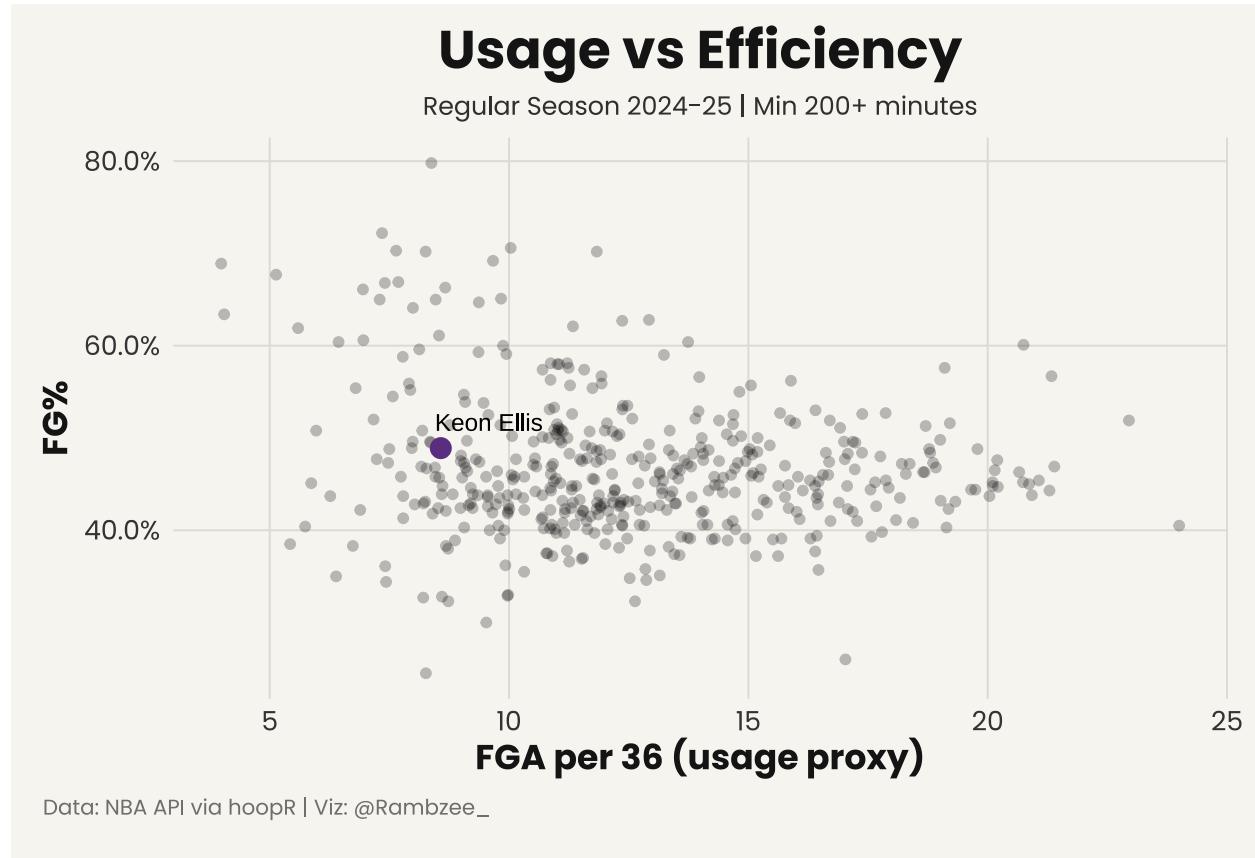
- Defensive DPM: +1.2 (2024–25), +1.0 (2025–26)
- RAPM: +1.2 (2024–25)
- STOP%: 4.3% → 5.3% (2024 → 2025)

Offensive metrics remain near league average, but do not negate his defensive value. This combination of positive defense without offensive drag is rare among perimeter role players and explains Ellis' persistent positive impact.

Keon Ellis contributes to winning without requiring the ball or concessions on offense.

Offensive Role & Shot-Profile

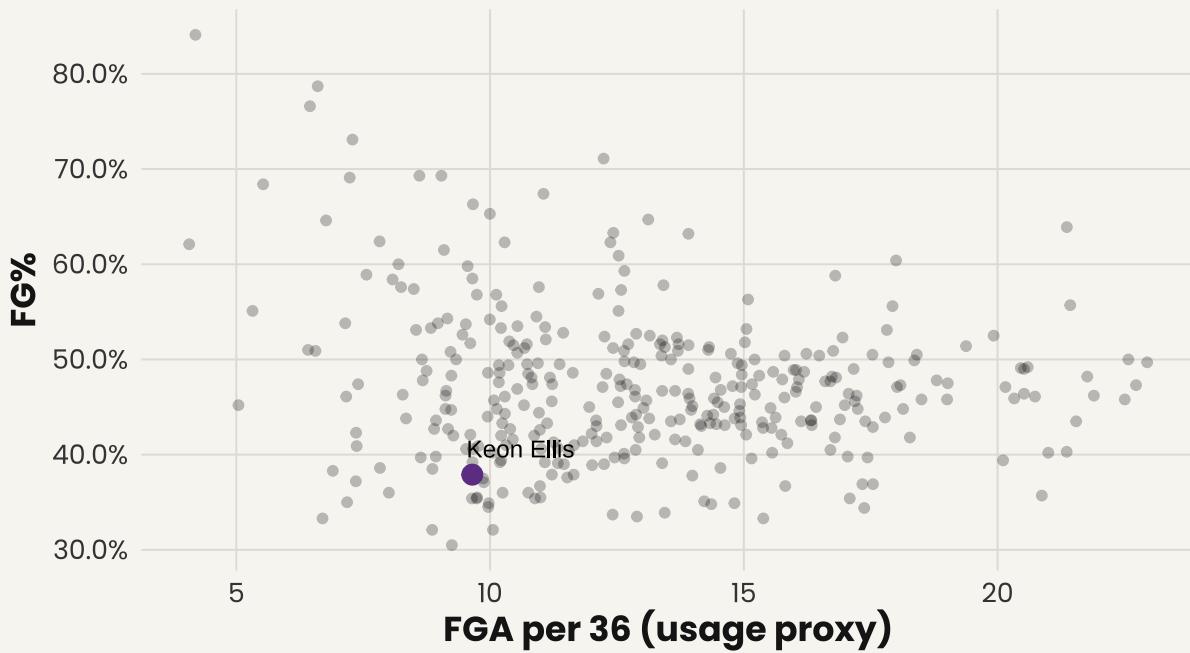
Ellis' offensive game is defined by role adherence.



Data: NBA API via hoopR | Viz: @Rambzee_

Usage vs Efficiency

Regular Season 2025–26 | Min 200+ minutes



Data: NBA API via hoopR | Viz: @Rambzee_

The usage-versus-efficiency scatterplots contextualize Ellis relative to the league.

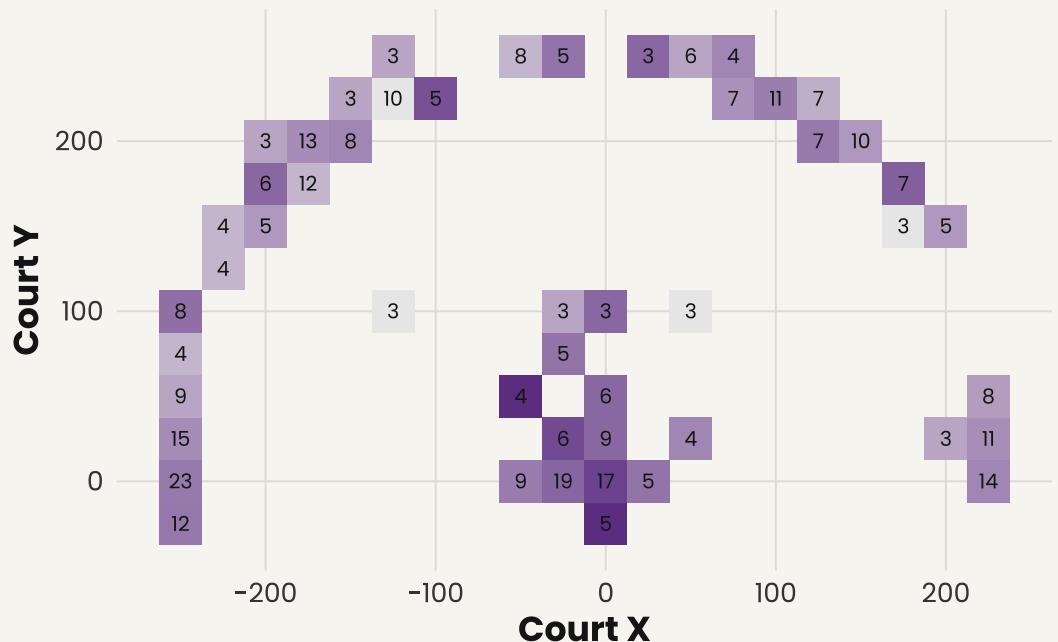
Across both seasons shown:

- Ellis operates at low-to-moderate usage (FGA per 36 well below primary scorers)
- His field-goal efficiency remains above league average in 2024-25 & remains just below league average through this season.

This combination of low-usage and moderate-to-good efficiency is precisely the offensive profile contending teams need.

Keon Ellis shot chart (2024–25)

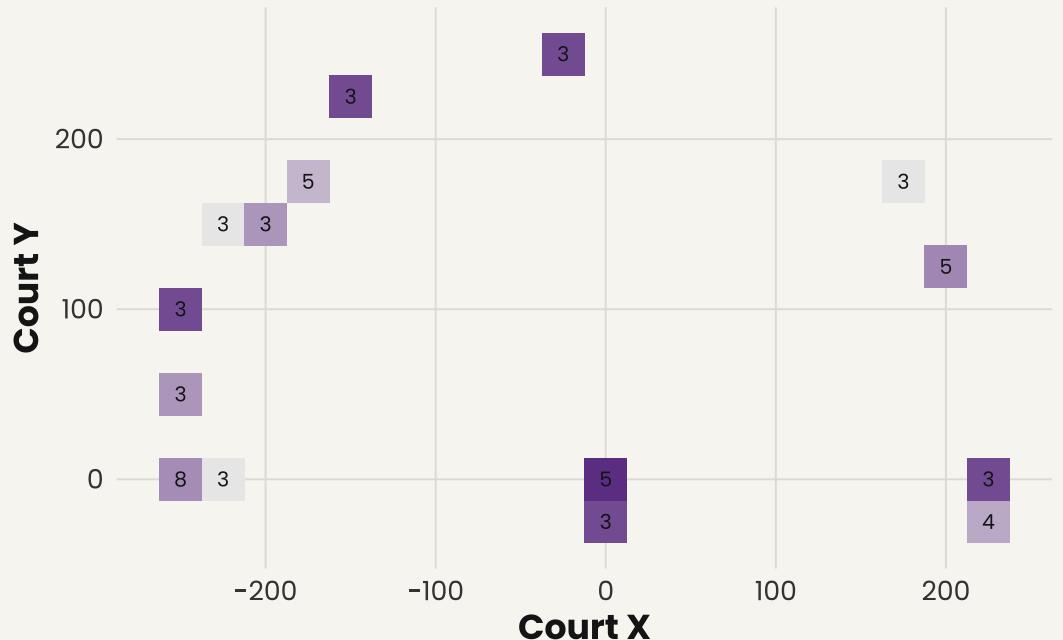
Binned shot map. Color = FG%, number = attempts (min 3 per bin).



Data: NBA API via hoopR (ShotChartDetail) | Viz: @Rambzee_

Keon Ellis shot chart (2025–26)

Binned shot map. Color = FG%, number = attempts (min 3 per bin).



Data: NBA API via hoopR (ShotChartDetail) | Viz: @Rambzee_

His shot charts show a tightly constrained shot diet concentrated on capitalizing on advantages created by him & his teammates:

- Catch-and-shoot threes (especially from the corners and wings)
- Rim attempts
- Opportunistic transition attempts

His shot-chart visuals illustrate this clearly. Attempts cluster along the arc and at the rim, with minimal activity in low-value midrange zones. This profile produces sustainable efficiency rather than variance-driven scoring.

Ellis is not an offensive initiator. Instead, he operates as a play-finisher and advantage extender, an archetype that sustains offensive efficiency in a variety of lineups without disrupting hierarchy.

Table 3: Efficiency by Context (Databallr)

Season	MP	Spot-up		Finishing	Overall rTS	3P%
		TSA	Spot-up rTS			
2024-25	1,900	7.1	8.9%	4.8	8.8%	43.3%
2025-26	458	7.1	-1.5%	5.2	-3.0%	35.2%

Contextual efficiency data further clarifies how Ellis scores.

As shown in Table 3:

- 2024-25:

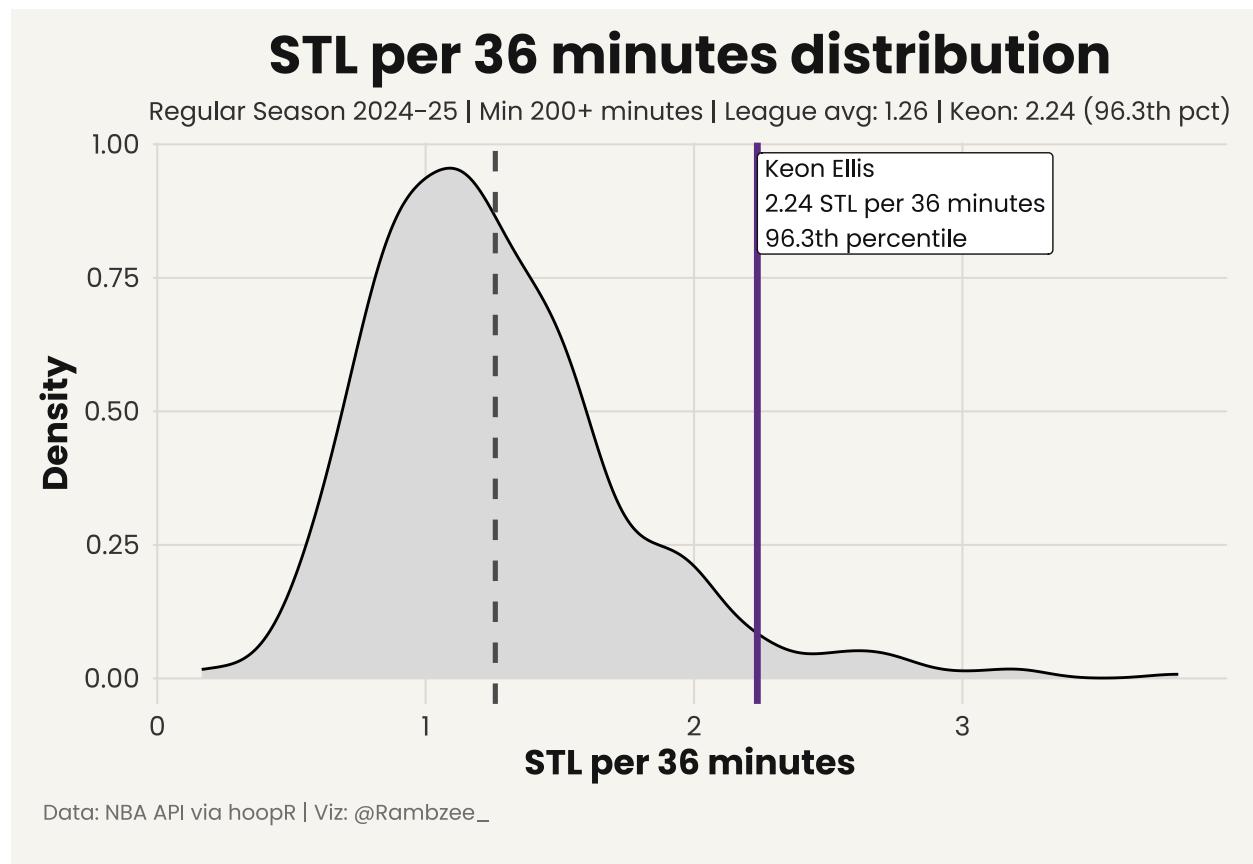
- Spot-up possessions: +8.9% relative TS
- Finishing possessions: +8.8% relative TS
- Overall rTS: +8.9%
- 3P%: 43.3%
- 2025–26: Efficiency dips alongside reduced sample size, reinforcing the need to contextualize that season appropriately.

In 2024–25, Ellis ranked in the 95th percentile or higher in both spot-up and finishing efficiency. These are not creator reps; they are role-player reps. Keon Ellis takes the right shots and finishes at an elite rate if he gets to the rim.

This efficiency profile explains why his offensive impact remains positive even when his usage stays low.

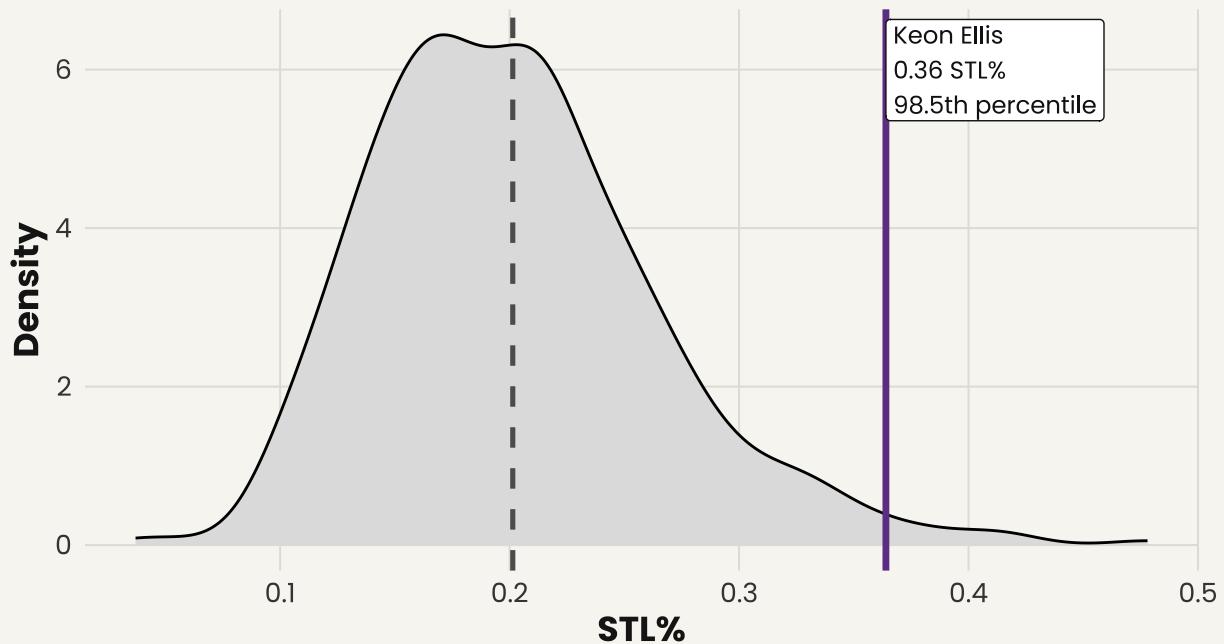
Defensive Playmaking & Event Creation

Ellis' defensive value is anchored in elite event creation, supported by both tracking data and impact metrics.



STL% distribution

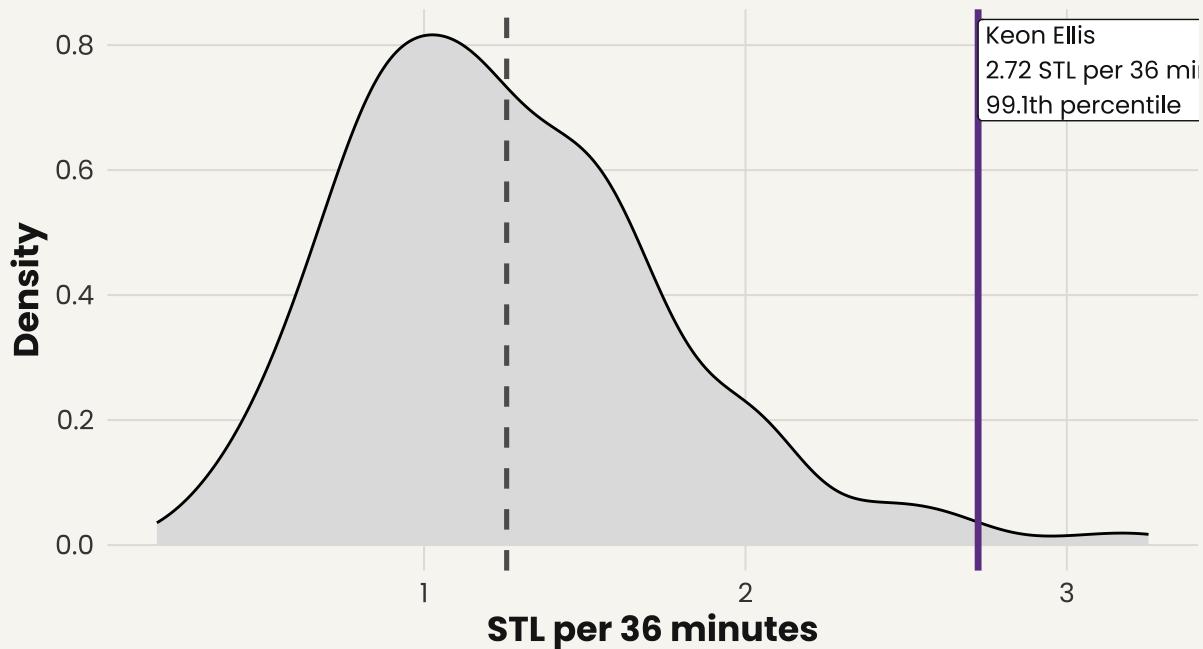
Regular Season 2024–25 | Min 200+ minutes | League avg: 0.2 | Keon: 0.36 (98.5th pct)



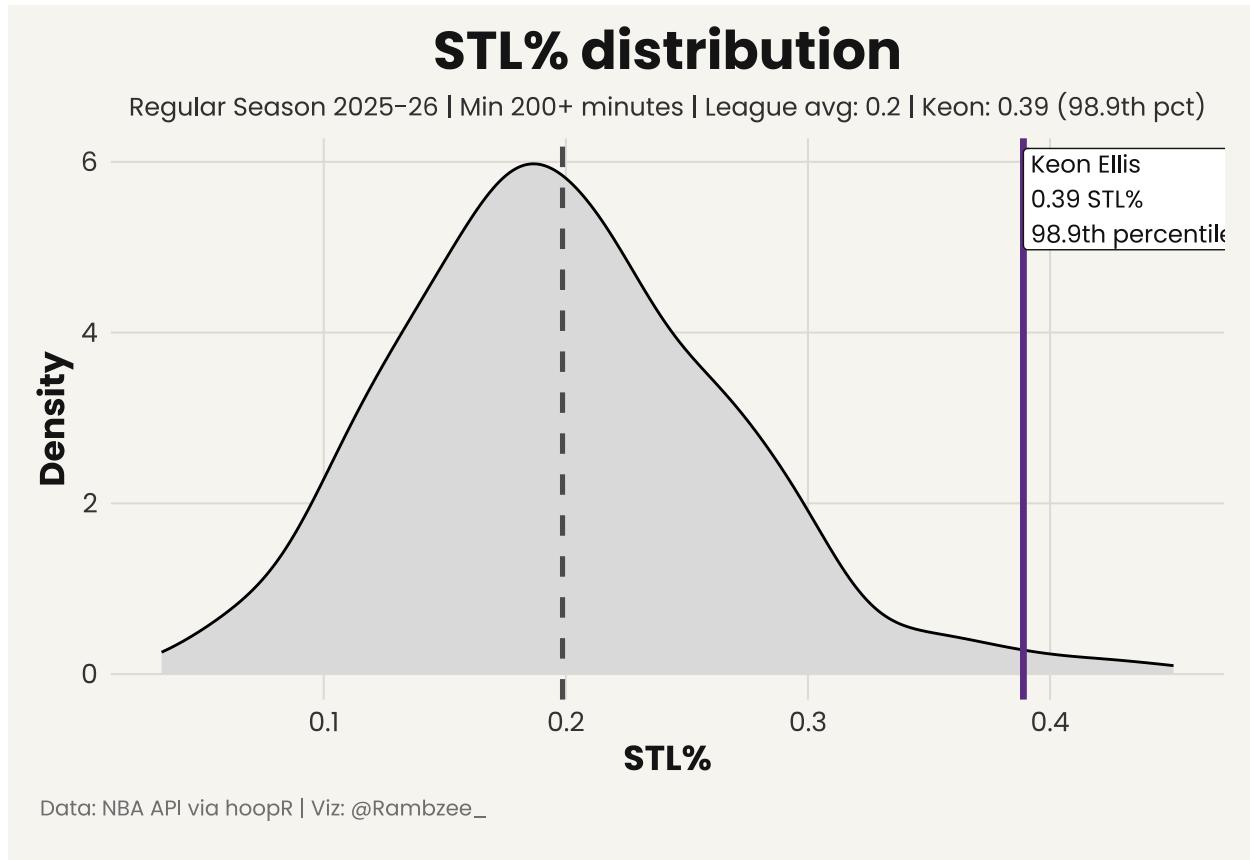
Data: NBA API via hoopR | Viz: @Rambzee_

STL per 36 minutes distribution

Regular Season 2025-26 | Min 200+ minutes | League avg: 1.26 | Keon: 2.72 (99.1th pct)



Data: NBA API via hoopR | Viz: @Rambzee_



League-wide distributions show Ellis in the 96th percentile in both steals per 36 minutes and steal percentage. Importantly, these events do not come at the expense of team structure. His STOP% climbed from 4.3% in 2024–25 to 5.3% in 2025–26, while Defensive DPM and RAPM remain consistently positive. He generates stops at an elite rate for a guard, even in lackluster defensive circumstances.

Beyond steals and stop creation, deflections provide the clearest signal of Ellis' defensive activity level without gambling. In 2025–26, Ellis is averaging 5.8 deflections per 36 minutes, ranking 7th in the NBA. In 2024–25, he averaged 5.2 deflections per 36, ranking 11th league-wide. These are top-tier marks and place Ellis firmly in the league's elite disruption tier.

Team Fit & Market Value

Ellis fits best in lineups featuring:

- Established creators
- Motion-based or read-and-react offenses
- Defensive schemes that value pressure and physicality

He is an ideal complementary guard for teams seeking to stabilize bench units or enhance lineups without altering offensive schemes.

Conversely, Ellis is not optimized for heliocentric systems that demand secondary shot creation or guard-led scoring bursts. His value lies in connectivity, efficiency, and defensive disruption.

Given league-wide demand for perimeter defense and versatile role players, Ellis profiles as a universally positive asset whose market value exceeds his traditional counting stats.