NBA Draft Analysis - Which NBA Team Selects the Best Players Relative to the Average Player at their Respective Draft Position?

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Table of Contents

Question

The NBA Draft is an annual event in the National Basketball
Association (NBA)...

▶ Teams select eligible players to join their rosters

▶ It is a pivotal moment for the league's future

Research Question: Which NBA team selects the best players
relative to the average player at their respective draft position?

Data

Information about the draft selections is from Basketball Reference and data from the NBA API...

- ▶ Period from 1996 until 2023
- ▶ We look at different player metrics
- ▶ Interactive tools to explore and compare player and team data

Player Analysis

- Compare player metric (relative to average selection) and the draft pick
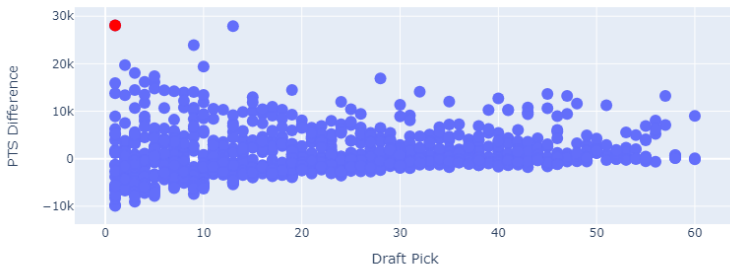- Example with LeBron James and total points scored

Figure: PTS Difference vs Draft Pick

Player Analysis

▶ Compare player metric (raw) and the draft pick for a given draft pick
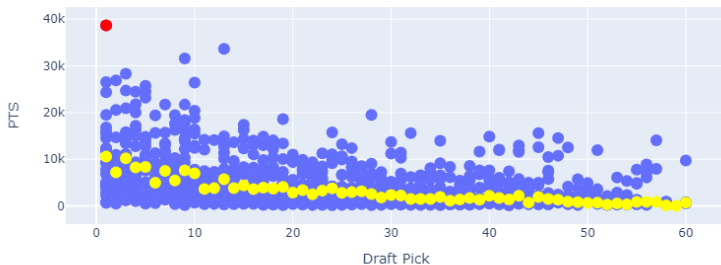
▶ Example with LeBron James and total points scored

Figure: PTS vs Draft Pick

Team Analysis

▶ Average performance metrics of all players selected by a team in the same draft year
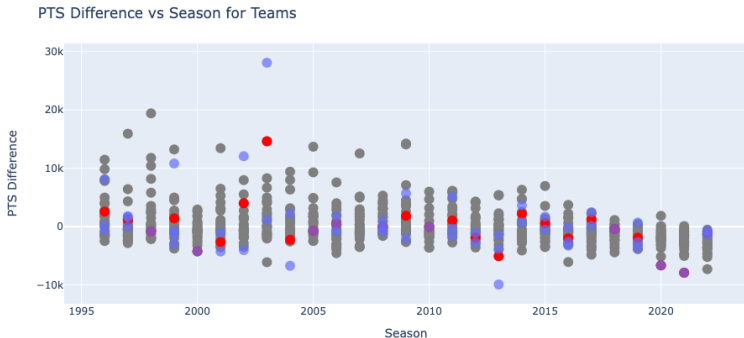
▶ Example with Cleveland Cavaliers and total points scored

PTS Difference vs Season for Teams

Figure: PTS Difference vs Teams over Time

Team Analysis

▶ Average differences for the selected statistic are plotted against the average draft position of each team
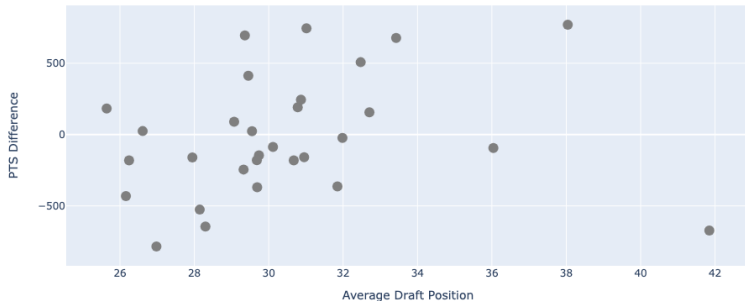
▶ Example with total points scored

Figure: PTS Difference vs Average Draft Position

Team Analysis

Table showing the top 5 teams ranked by a weighted average, reflecting aggregated team performance statistics.

Table: Top 5 Teams by Weighted Average Rank

Rank	Team	Weighted Average Rank
1	CLE	6.00
2	UTA	8.45
3	DEN	8.55
4	MIL	8.55
5	TOR	9.09

Conclusions

The best NBA team at drafting is the Cleveland Cavaliers, based on the standard parameters

- ▶ Top teams relatively constant if changes weights for aggregation
- ▶ High ranking of teams linked to individual player selections

Further Research Ideas

- Investigate the relationship between team success and draft performance
- Conduct ablation studies
- Break down the analysis on a positional basis
- Extend the time period
- Add and/or change the performance metrics