

“20-Point Lead is Nothing” in today’s NBA games.

## Unlocking the Truth: Analyzing the Significance of a 20-Point Lead in Contemporary NBA Games

### Introduction:

"20-point lead is nothing" - Victor Wembanyama said to ESPN after trailing by 27-points vs Phoenix Suns.

Leveraging sophisticated statistical analyses and drawing upon a rich dataset sourced from NBA.com, this study seeks to unveil the nuanced realities surrounding the perceived insubstantiality of a 20-point lead in modern NBA matchups.

### Dataset:

The data used to analyze this statement comes from NBA.com API.

Number of NBA regular season games analyzed were 3,484.

The data variables are:

GAME\_ID: Game identifier

TEAM\_ID: Team identifier

TEAM\_ABBREVIATION: Team Name abbreviation

PTS\_QTR1: Points scored in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter

PTS\_QTR2: Points scored in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter

PTS\_QTR3: Points scored in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter

PTS\_QTR4: Points scored in the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter

Q3MatchupDiff:  $PTS\_QTR3\_TeamA - PTS\_QTR3\_TeamB$  ; this variable indicates the lead of Team A vs Team B at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the game.

WL: This variable indicates if a team Won or Lost that game (“W” or “L”)

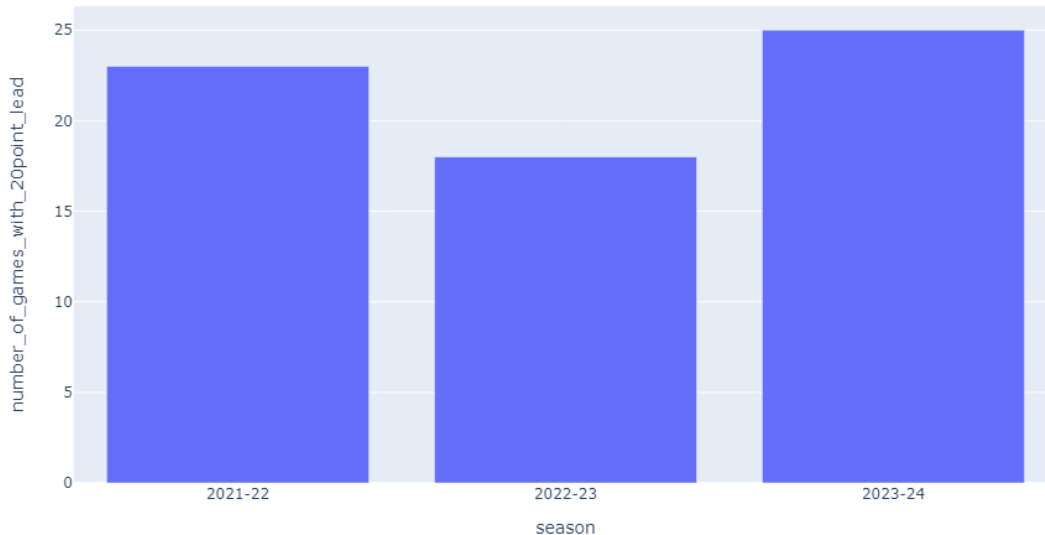
### Methodology:

To elucidate the veracity of Wembanyama's statement, a multi-faceted approach was employed. First, data spanning multiple NBA regular seasons was meticulously curated from NBA.com API, comprising an extensive array of game-related variables. Key among these variables was the newly constructed metric, Q3MatchupDiff, which encapsulates the point differential between competing teams at the conclusion of the third quarter. Subsequently, games featuring a 20-point deficit by the end of the third quarter were isolated, enabling focused analysis on the outcome of such encounters.

## Results and Conclusion:

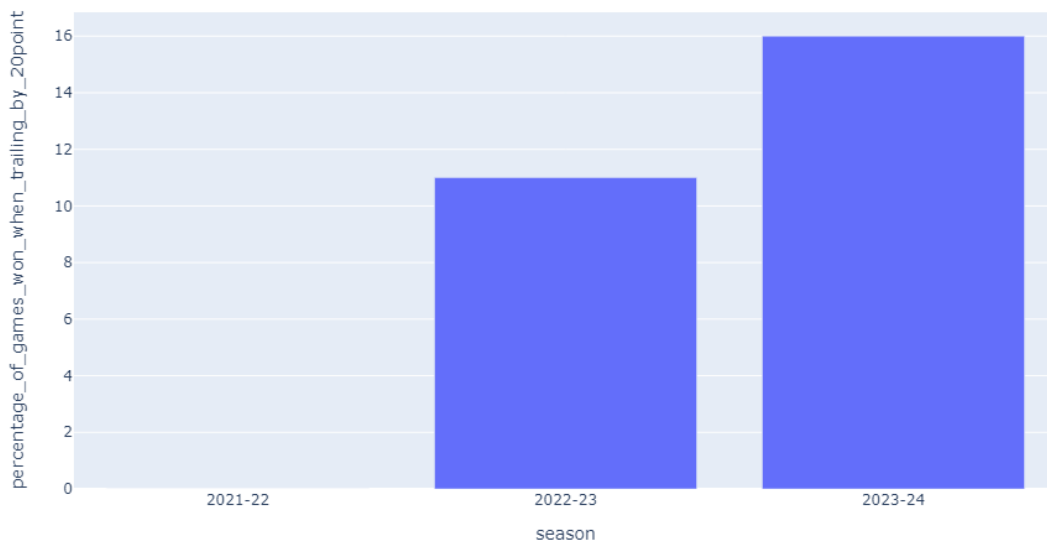
Analysis of the dataset revealed a compelling narrative. In the 2023-24 regular season alone, a total of 25 games witnessed teams with a 20-point deficit at the end of the third quarter of the game, 18 in the 2022-23 season, and 23 in the 2021-22 season (notice, the 2023-24 is not over yet). See figure 1.

Figure 1: Number of games with a 20-point lead by the end of third quarter by season



**In the 2023-24 regular season alone, 16% of the games witnessed teams overcoming a daunting +20-point deficit by the close of the third quarter. This figure represents a notable increase compared to previous seasons (11% 2022-23 season, and 0% 2021-22 season), indicative of a shifting paradigm within NBA gameplay dynamics. Such findings underscore the evolving nature of NBA competition, wherein the seemingly insurmountable can be conquered through strategic prowess and unwavering determination. See figure 2.**

Figure 2: Percentage of games won when trailing by a 20-point deficit by the end of third quarter by season



#### Recommendation:

Armed with insights gleaned from this analysis, teams and coaches are urged to adopt a balanced approach towards game management. While a 20-point lead offers a substantial advantage, complacency must be eschewed in favor of a mindset grounded in respect and continuous effort. Embracing the competitive parity inherent in contemporary NBA contests, teams are implored to remain vigilant and resilient, recognizing that victory is never assured until the final seconds elapse. As such, the maxim "respect your opponent and play until the clock runs out" emerges as a guiding principle for navigating the intricacies of modern NBA competition.

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