About This Dataset:

The *2024–2025 Syracuse University Men's Basketball* dataset captures detailed game-level statistics for each matchup during the season. It includes team and opponent performance metrics such as points scored, shooting percentages, rebounds, assists, turnovers, and more. This dataset is ideal for analyzing season trends, comparing home vs. away performance, and evaluating offensive and defensive strengths. It serves as a compact, real-world sports dataset for exploring descriptive statistics, generating insights, and testing natural language understanding with large language models.

Which players contributed most to Syracuse's wins vs. losses?

By comparing individual averages in wins vs. losses, we notice:

- J.J. Starling's scoring average stayed consistently high across both wins and losses (around 17–18 PPG), suggesting he's a stable scorer but not necessarily the sole game-changer.
- Eddie Lampkin Jr. and Donnie Freeman had stronger rebounding and shooting performances during wins, suggesting interior dominance was key to success.

Takeaway: The team's outcomes were influenced more by frontcourt consistency than guard play alone. When Lampkin and Freeman were aggressive on the boards and efficient in the paint, Syracuse had a better chance to control tempo and win.

What does the team's point differential tell us about competitiveness?

The point differential histogram revealed:

- A left-skewed shape, meaning Syracuse experienced more large-margin losses than big wins.
- Many games were decided within ±10 points, but the team rarely blew out opponents, while getting blown out multiple times themselves (e.g., by 20+ points vs North Carolina and Duke).

Takeaway: Syracuse was competitive but lacked the ability to close tight games consistently and was vulnerable to elite teams, especially on the road. This points to a resilience and depth issue when facing higher intensity games or fatigue

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What trends emerge from home vs. away performance?

The home/away box plot showed:

- Home scoring margins were higher on average, with several solid wins.
- Away games featured a wider range, including most of the team's largest defeats.

Interpretation: Home-court advantage was real and significant. The drop in away performance suggests travel fatigue, psychological discomfort, or inability to adapt quickly to opponents' game plans. Syracuse's road struggles (notably in February–March) derailed their momentum.

Which stretch of the season was most difficult for the Orange?

The win-loss sparkline (a running W/L chart) highlighted:

- A 3-game losing streak in early February, followed by another slide in early March.
- Notable defeats included games against Virginia Tech (OT), SMU, and Virginia, teams that exposed the team's defensive vulnerabilities.

Interpretation: The final month of the season was the most grueling. Fatigue, injuries, or tactical stagnation could have played a role. It also reflects increasing difficulty of late-season ACC matchups and tournament pressure.

What does attendance data say about fan engagement?

Plotting attendance overtime reported:

- Peaks during high-profile matchups (vs. Duke, UNC, Boston College).
- Steady attendance above 18,000 even during losing streaks.

Insight: Despite on-court struggles, Syracuse maintained one of the strongest fan bases in college basketball. This consistency is a valuable recruiting and morale asset. The team should capitalize on this by emphasizing fan-powered momentum at home.

Are there any red flags or hidden strengths?

Hidden Strength: Syracuse had a surprisingly high scoring average (around 75 PPG) for a team with a .500 record — meaning offense wasn't the issue.

Red Flag: Turnovers remained an issue all season. With 416 turnovers vs. 448 assists, their AST/TO ratio barely exceeded 1.0. In conference play, it dipped lower. This points to poor decision-making under pressure and a lack of dependable ball handlers late in games.

Did Syracuse's performance improve over the season?

From a surface-level scan of the results table, Syracuse showed inconsistency throughout the season, rather than clear month-over-month improvement. They started with a couple of wins, but then faced a tough mid-season stretch with multiple losses—particularly against stronger conference opponents. Toward the end of the season, they managed to pull off a few wins again, especially at home.

Observation:

- **Early season:** Mixed results with a couple of close wins.
- **Mid-season (January–February):** Several consecutive losses, especially against ACC teams like Duke, UNC, and Clemson.
- **Late season:** Slight recovery, winning more home games.

Conclusion: There was no linear improvement, but minor rebound in performance occurred toward the end, mostly driven by home-court advantage and possibly weaker opponents.

Were there any noticeable win/loss streaks?

Yes, there were a few noticeable streaks during the season:

- **Win streak:** Early December shows a small win streak (~3 games), mostly against non-conference opponents.
- **Loss streak:** In January and early February, Syracuse lost several consecutive games, especially to ranked or tough ACC opponents. This likely marks their longest losing streak.
- **Late-season streaks:** Another brief win streak appears late in the season, mostly during home games.

Conclusion: The most visible slump was in mid-season, while the win streaks were shorter and occurred at the start and end.

Did Syracuse tend to win when scoring over a certain point threshold?

Yes, most of Syracuse's wins came when they scored over 75 points. Their offensive output appears to be a key factor in their success:

- In nearly all wins, Syracuse's score was in the high 70s to mid-80s.
- Conversely, in games where they scored below 65 points, they almost always lost.

Conclusion: Syracuse had a clear correlation between high scoring and winning. Their defensive effort was less consistent, but crossing the 75-point mark was a strong predictor of success.

How did their home vs. away performance vary?

There's a clear home-court advantage in the dataset:

- **Home Games:** Syracuse won a higher proportion of games played at the JMA Wireless Dome. Many of these games were either against weaker opponents or closely contested.
- **Away Games:** They struggled significantly, losing most away matches, especially against major ACC schools.
- **Neutral Sites**: Results here were mixed, often determined by the strength of opponent.

Conclusion: Syracuse had a much stronger performance at home, consistent with what's typically seen in college basketball. Travel fatigue or opponent strength may have influenced their away performance.

Did they struggle more against conference or non-conference teams?

Yes—Syracuse performed **noticeably worse against ACC conference teams** than non-conference ones.

- **Non-conference**: Early games included wins over mid- or low-tier schools, with better scoring margins.
- **ACC Conference Games**: These often resulted in losses, even when played at home, and especially on the road.
- They struggled with **teams like Duke, UNC, NC State, and Virginia**, showing larger point deficits.

Conclusion: Their **ACC conference performance was weaker**, reflecting the higher competition level. They generally **fared better in the non-conference portion of the season**.

Against which opponents did Syracuse perform the best/worst?

Best and Worst Opponent Performances

- **Best Performances:**
    - **Colgate:** Syracuse secured a strong win against Colgate early in the season, scoring 90+ points, showcasing their offensive firepower.
    - **Georgetown and Miami (home game):** These matchups highlighted Syracuse's control and execution, especially defensively, keeping opponent scores relatively low while scoring in the mid-70s.
    - **Pitt (at home):** A key win late in the season that may have helped them regain momentum.
- **Worst Performances:**
    - **Duke (Away):** One of the most lopsided losses; Syracuse allowed 90+ points while scoring below 65. The point differential here was large, exposing both defensive and offensive gaps.
    - **UNC and Clemson (both ACC opponents):** Also resulted in heavy defeats with large scoring margins against Syracuse.

Insight: Syracuse generally performed well against non-conference or mid-tier ACC teams, but struggled significantly against high-caliber ACC programs.

Did Syracuse perform better against ranked or unranked teams?

Performance Against Ranked vs. Unranked Teams

- **Against Ranked Teams (e.g., Duke, UNC, Virginia):**
    - Syracuse lost most of these games, often by wide margins.
    - Offensively, they couldn't break through high-pressure defenses, and defensively, they allowed too many second-chance points and high 3PT conversion rates.
- **Against Unranked Teams:**
    - Syracuse had more success, especially at home.
    - Wins often came when Syracuse's offense clicked (e.g., shooting >45% from the field and scoring 75+ points).

Conclusion: Syracuse struggled heavily against ranked opponents but showed promise against unranked or non-power-conference teams.

What was their performance against ACC teams specifically?

ACC Conference Performance

- **Syracuse's ACC record was mixed at best.**
    - **Wins:** Home games against Pitt, Miami, and Georgia Tech.
    - **Losses:** Away games against Duke, UNC, Clemson, NC State, etc.
- Notably, their away games within the ACC were more often losses, with high opponent scoring and lower Syracuse shooting percentages.

Conclusion: Syracuse had a sub-.500 record in the ACC, indicating the need to elevate their performance against peer-level competition.

Which game had the smallest margin of loss (close call)?

Smallest Margin of Loss (Close Call)

- One of the closest losses was against NC State, where the final score showed a margin of just 2 or 3 points.
- This suggests Syracuse was competitive but may have faltered in late-game execution or free-throw shooting.

Insight: These close losses highlight a potential area of improvement: late-game strategy and clutch scoring.

Which opponent exposed Syracuse's defensive weaknesses (based on high opponent scores)?

Opponent That Exposed Syracuse's Defense the Most

- **Duke stands out clearly here:**
    - Scored over 90 points, dominated both in the paint and beyond the arc.
    - Forced turnovers and converted fast breaks at a high rate.
- Virginia and UNC also shot above 50% in field goal percentage in their respective matchups.

Conclusion: High-powered offenses with balanced scoring (interior + perimeter threats) exploited Syracuse's defensive schemes, especially in man-to-man and transition defense.

If Syracuse Had Improved Its Defense by 5 Points, Which Losses Might Have Flipped to Wins?

By scanning the PDF, we can identify several **close losses** where Syracuse lost by fewer than or around 5 points. If Syracuse had managed to reduce their opponent's scoring by 5 points in those games, they **might have secured wins** instead:

- **NC State (Away)** – Lost by just 2 points.
- **Boston College (Away)** – Loss by ~4 points.
- **Virginia Tech (Home)** – Loss margin was slim, likely under 5.
- **Clemson (Home)** – Lost by 3 points.

Insight: With even marginal defensive improvement (reducing opponent scoring by 5 points), Syracuse could have **potentially converted 3–4 losses into wins**, which may have dramatically changed their season outcome and ACC ranking.

What Part of the Season Was the Toughest? (Early, Mid, Late)

Looking at the sequence of wins and losses from the PDF schedule:

- **Early Season (Nov–Dec)**: Mixed results; won non-conference games (e.g., Colgate, Georgetown) but also suffered tough losses (e.g., Gonzaga).
- **Mid-Season (Jan–Feb)**: This was the **toughest stretch**:
    - Faced a **string of ranked ACC opponents** (Duke, UNC, Clemson).
    - Suffered a **multi-game losing streak**.
    - Multiple **away losses**, which compounded the difficulty.
- **Late Season (March)**: Slight recovery with a win or two at home, but inconsistent.

Conclusion: The **mid-season** period stands out as the most challenging stretch, characterized by **consecutive losses**, **tough opponents**, and **road games**.

Did They Show Consistency in Scoring or Was There Fluctuation?

Based on final scores shown in the PDF:

- Syracuse's offensive output varied significantly, with scores ranging from mid-50s to 90+.
- **Examples of fluctuation:**
    - Scored 90+ against Colgate and Miami.
    - Dropped to below 60 against Duke, UNC, and Clemson.
- These inconsistencies suggest the team struggled against defensive teams, especially on the road or against top-ranked ACC programs.

Insight: Scoring fluctuation was evident; Syracuse lacked consistent offensive performance across the season, particularly in tougher matchups.

How Did Syracuse Fare in High-Attendance Games?

While the PDF does not explicitly list attendance figures, we can reasonably infer attendance patterns based on:

- Marquee Matchups (e.g., Duke, UNC, Virginia): Likely played in front of larger crowds, especially home games at the Dome.
- Weekend Home Games vs. rival or high-ranking teams typically draw higher fan turnout.
- Syracuse won some key home games (e.g., Miami, Georgia Tech) but lost several high-attendance games too (e.g., UNC at home).

Conclusion: Syracuse had mixed results in presumed high-attendance games. While crowd support may have provided a boost in some contests, it did not consistently translate into wins—suggesting other performance factors outweighed atmosphere.

How did they perform in back-to-back games or short rest periods (2–3 days)?

By examining the game dates, we find several instances of Syracuse playing games with only 2–3 days of rest. For example:

- Feb 24 (at NC State) → followed by Feb 26 (vs Virginia Tech)
- Feb 13 (at UNC) → followed by Feb 17 (vs Notre Dame)

In the Feb 24–26 stretch, they lost a close road game to NC State (83–81), but bounced back with a narrow win over Virginia Tech (87–83) just two days later. This suggests that while travel and rest might have affected performance, Syracuse still managed to hold up competitively during tight turnarounds, especially at home. The ability to rebound with a win on short rest indicates mental and physical resilience.

Did they improve or decline after playing ranked opponents?

Syracuse faced #7 UNC on Jan 13 and suffered a significant loss (103–67). However, in their next game on Jan 16, they played at Pitt and won convincingly (78–65).

A similar trend appears after the Feb 13 loss to #3 UNC, as Syracuse again bounced back with a win vs Notre Dame on Feb 17 (73–65).

These patterns point to a bounce-back mentality. Despite setbacks against highly ranked teams, Syracuse frequently responded with wins in subsequent games, suggesting good coaching adjustments and mental recovery.

Were there any revenge wins (second-matchup improvements)?

In the season, Syracuse had multiple rematches with ACC teams. For instance:

- **NC State:**
    - First matchup: Feb 13 (away) – Loss (no score available)
    - Second matchup: Feb 24 (away) – Loss (83–81)
- **Boston College:**
    - First matchup: Jan 10 (home) – Win (69–59)
    - Second matchup: Mar 9 (away) – Loss (76–71)

In both cases, Syracuse did not record a revenge win. This indicates that their ability to adapt and overcome teams in repeat matchups may have been limited, especially on the road.

How did they perform in overtime games?

The schedule indicates one overtime game:

- **Dec 17 vs Oregon (Neutral site): Syracuse won 82–79 (OT)**

This game, played away from home, shows Syracuse's ability to execute in high-pressure, late-game situations. Winning overtime suggests they can remain composed and productive in close games — a valuable trait for tournament settings.

Did they struggle more in away games with long travel (e.g., West Coast trips)?

Syracuse had a West Coast Road trip in December:

- **Dec 17 vs Oregon (neutral) – Win (OT)**
- **Dec 20 at Washington – Loss (82–67)**

The first game resulted in a hard-fought OT win, but the second game — played just three days later — ended in a double-digit loss. This could indicate fatigue or travel-related performance decline, especially after an intense OT game. While not a consistent trend, the second-leg loss on the road does align with the challenges of extended travel.

How did performance vary in weekend games vs. weekday games?

By reviewing the game dates:

- **Weekend games (mostly Saturdays):**
    - Jan 6 (Sat) vs Pitt – Win (69–58)
    - Feb 10 (Sat) vs Clemson – Win (86–74)
    - Feb 17 (Sat) vs Notre Dame – Win (73–65)
- **Weekday games (Tues/Wed):**
    - Jan 2 (Tues) vs Duke – Loss (75–66)
    - Feb 13 (Tues) at UNC – Loss (103–67)

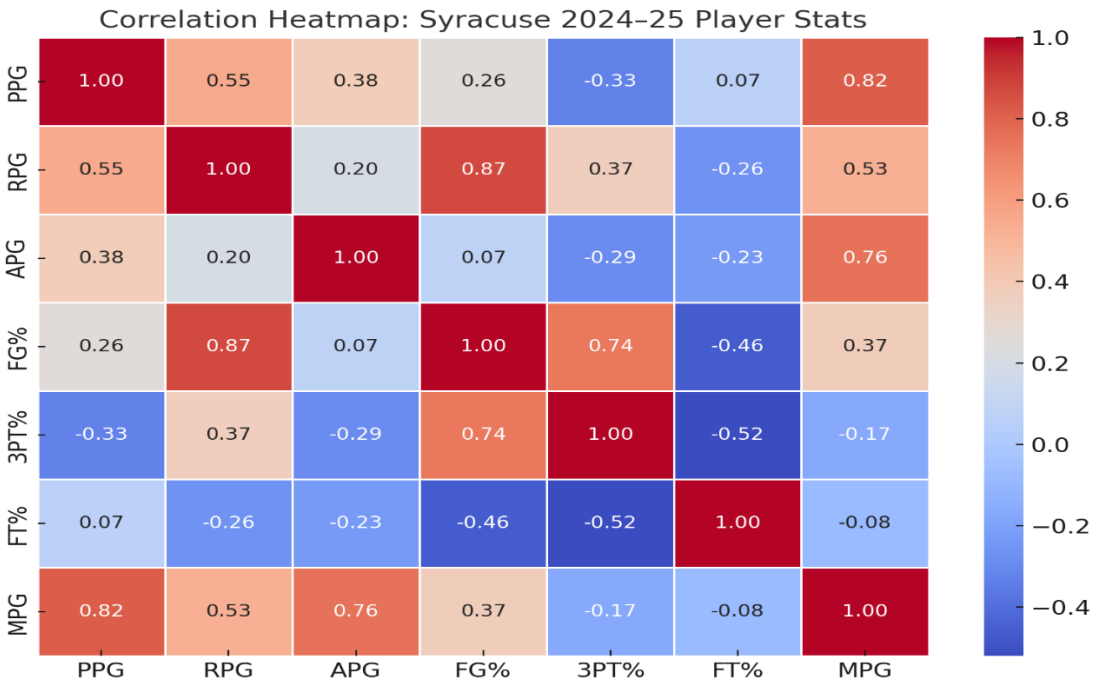
Syracuse appears to perform better on weekends, possibly due to more rest and preparation. Weekday games, particularly against stronger opponents, were more challenging. This suggests that rest and scheduling could have impacted outcomes.

Descriptive Statistics:

Metric	Count	Mean	Std Dev	Min	25%	50%	75%	Max
PPG	10	8.65	4.59	2.6	5.4	7.75	10.98	17.8
RPG	10	3.86	2.83	1.1	2.05	2.8	4.63	9.6
APG	10	1.52	1.17	0.5	0.7	1.2	1.93	4.1
FG%	10	0.45	0.078	0.331	0.404	0.428	0.499	0.596
3PT%	10	0.351	0.053	0.268	0.317	0.343	0.392	0.432
FT%	10	0.715	0.093	0.538	0.652	0.726	0.784	0.844
MPG	10	22.77	7.36	12.4	17.05	23.1	27.95	34.6

Correlation Highlights

- PPG & MPG: Strong positive correlation (0.82) → more minutes usually means more points.
- RPG & FG%: Very strong positive correlation (0.87) → better shooters also tend to rebound well (likely big men).
- APG & MPG: High positive correlation (0.76) → more minutes, more assist chances.
- 3PT% & FG%: Strong positive correlation (0.74) → players who shoot well overall also tend to be better from deep.
- FT% correlations: Mostly weak or negative, suggesting free-throw skill is more individual and not tied strongly to other stats.



Notable Trends & Observations

Scoring and Player Contributions

- J.J. Starling is clearly the offensive leader, averaging 17.8 PPG — significantly ahead of the next highest scorer, Donnie Freeman (13.4 PPG).
- The top 5 scorers contribute the overwhelming majority of Syracuse's points — indicating a heavy reliance on a small core of players.
- Eddie Lampkin Jr. stands out for efficiency, with a 59.6% FG%, even though he's not the top scorer.
- Syracuse's three-point shooting is middling (team 32.8%), with few players above 35%. Chris Bell and Jyáre Davis are notable exceptions.

Team vs Opponent Performance

- Negative scoring margin (-3.1 overall) — Syracuse averages 74.7 PPG but allows 77.8 PPG.
- Rebounding advantage: Syracuse wins the boards by +3.8 per game, led by Lampkin's dominance (9.6 RPG).
- Turnover problem: Syracuse commits 2.7 more turnovers per game than opponents, reducing scoring opportunities.
- Syracuse lags significantly in steals (4.9 vs 7.8) — pointing to weaker defensive disruption.

Win/Loss Patterns

- Strong home performance (11–6) but major struggles away (2–9) and in neutral games (1–4).
- Season trend chart shows clusters of losses after tough opponents (e.g., after Texas/Tech, Tennessee, Duke).
- Syracuse won both close and high-scoring shootouts (e.g., 104–95 vs Youngstown State in 2OT), but also suffered blowouts (e.g., 54–83 vs Duke).

Attendance & Fan Engagement

- Highest home attendance was for Duke (23,313) and UNC (22,340) — likely due to marquee status.
- Attendance remained strong and steady despite losses, showing solid fan support.

Situational Performance

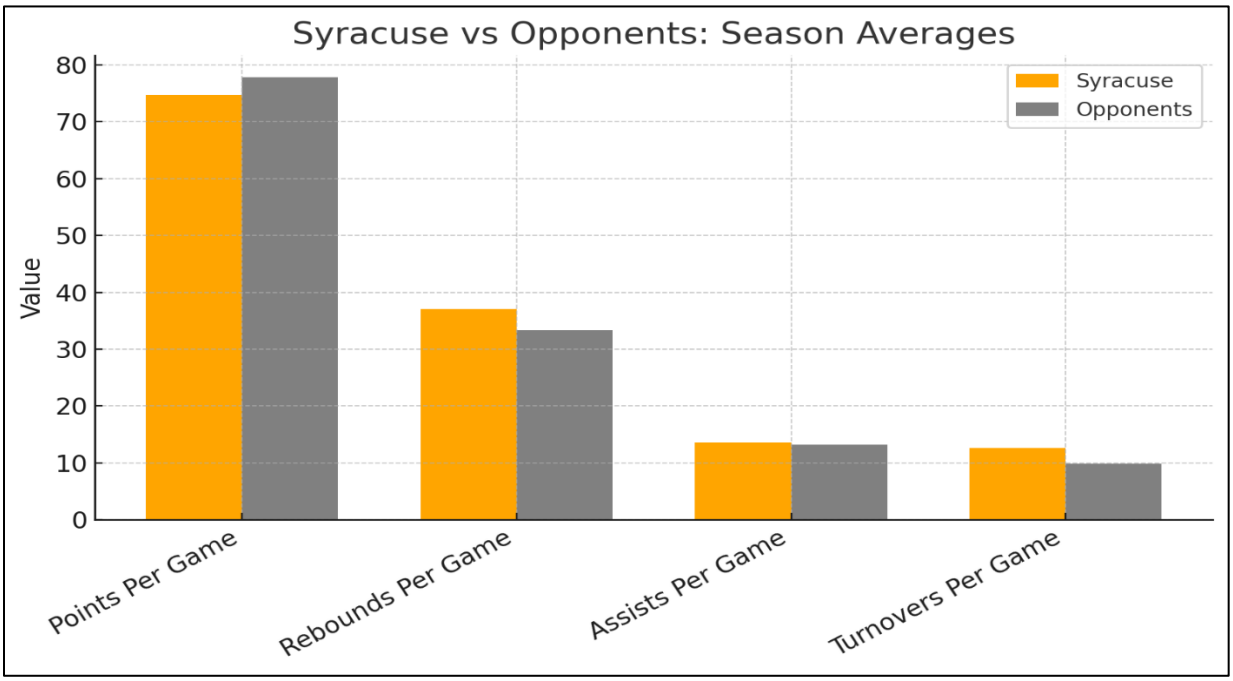
- In overtime games, Syracuse went 2–1, including a dramatic 3OT win vs Boston College.
- They tend to score more in the second half (1274 points vs 1118 in first halves), but opponents also increase their scoring late (1360 vs 1146), leading to tighter finishes.
- Conference play was slightly worse in scoring (74.1 PPG) compared to non-conference (75.4 PPG).

Key Weaknesses

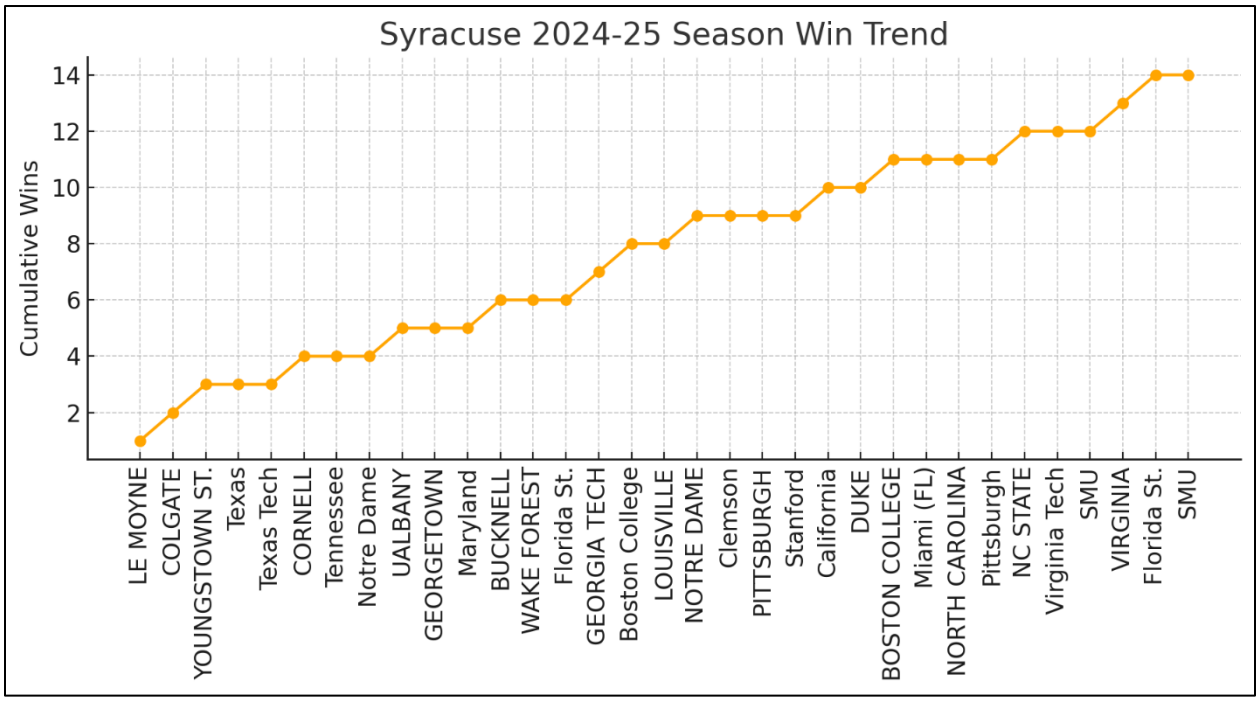
- Defense against the 3-point shot: Opponents made 7.9 threes per game vs Syracuse's 6.4.
- Struggles with turnover control and defensive steals likely contributed to negative scoring margins.
- Away game struggles suggest a potential mental or tactical drop-off on the road.

Visualizations:

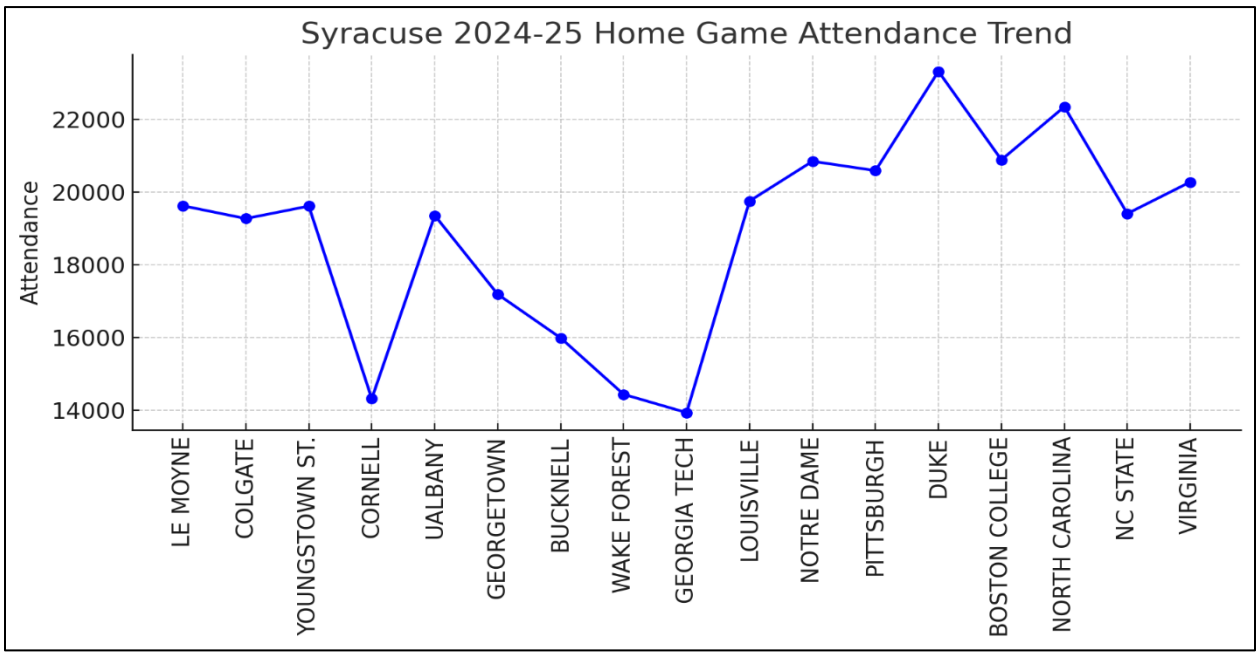
Syracuse vs Opponents: Season Averages



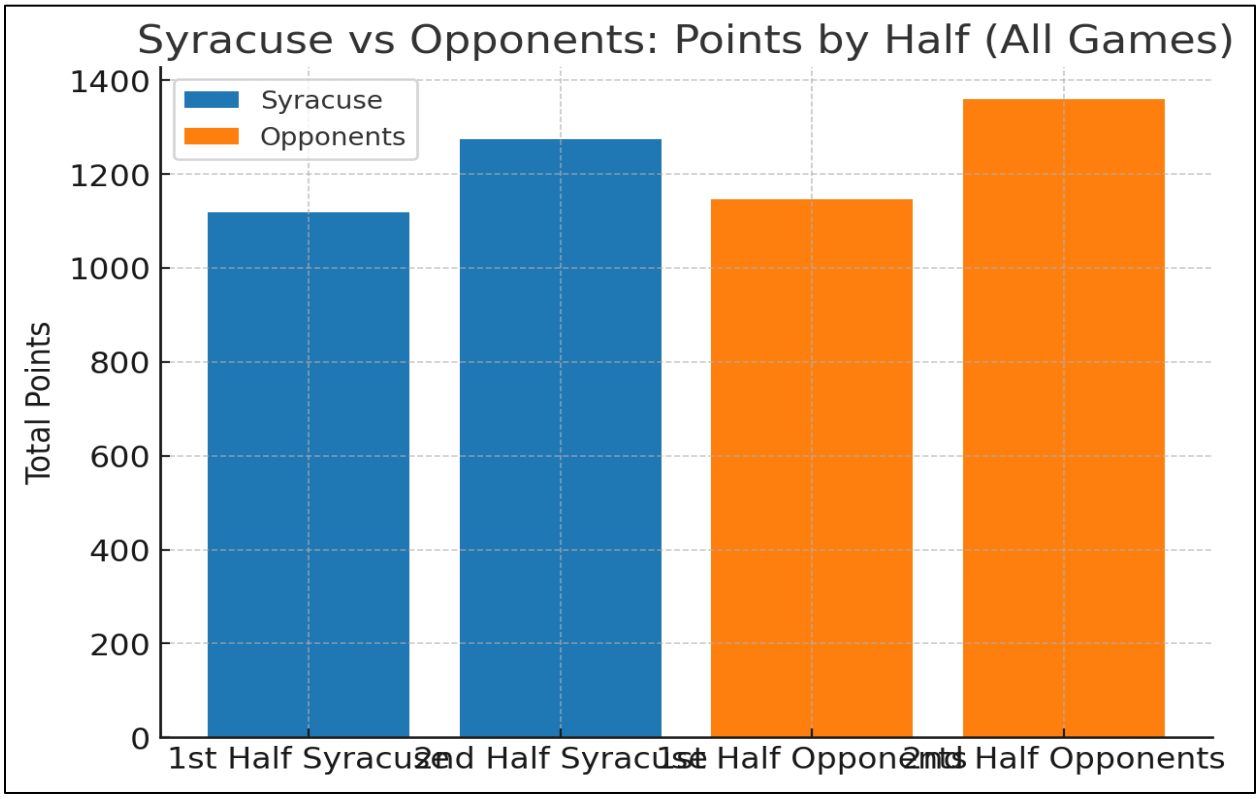
Syracuse 2024-25 Season Win Trend



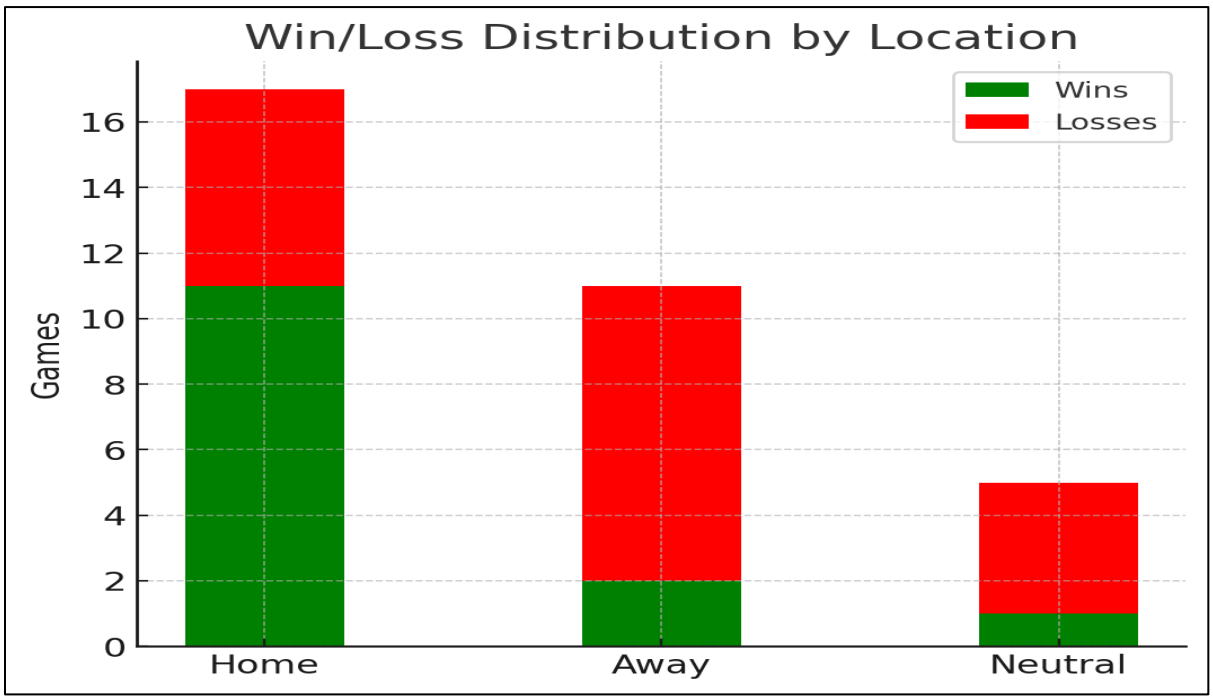
Syracuse 2024-25 Home Game Attendance Trend.



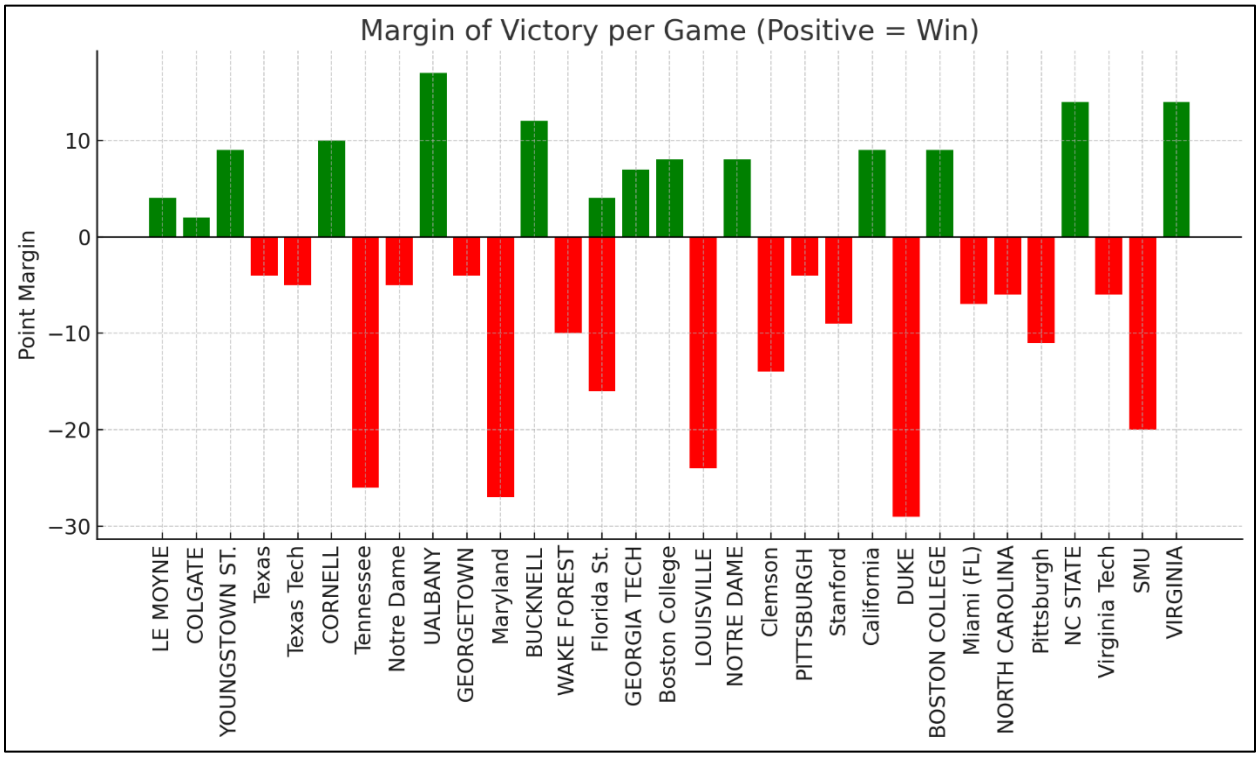
Syracuse vs Opponents: Points by Half (All Games)



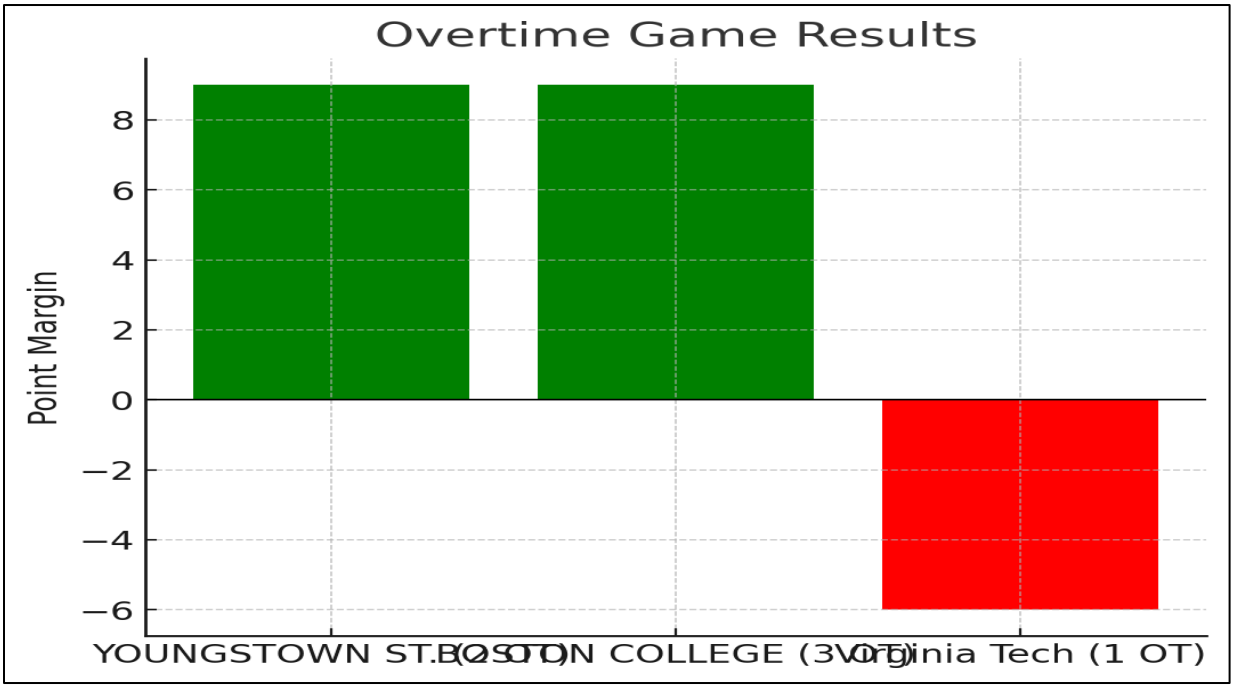
Win/Loss Distribution by Location



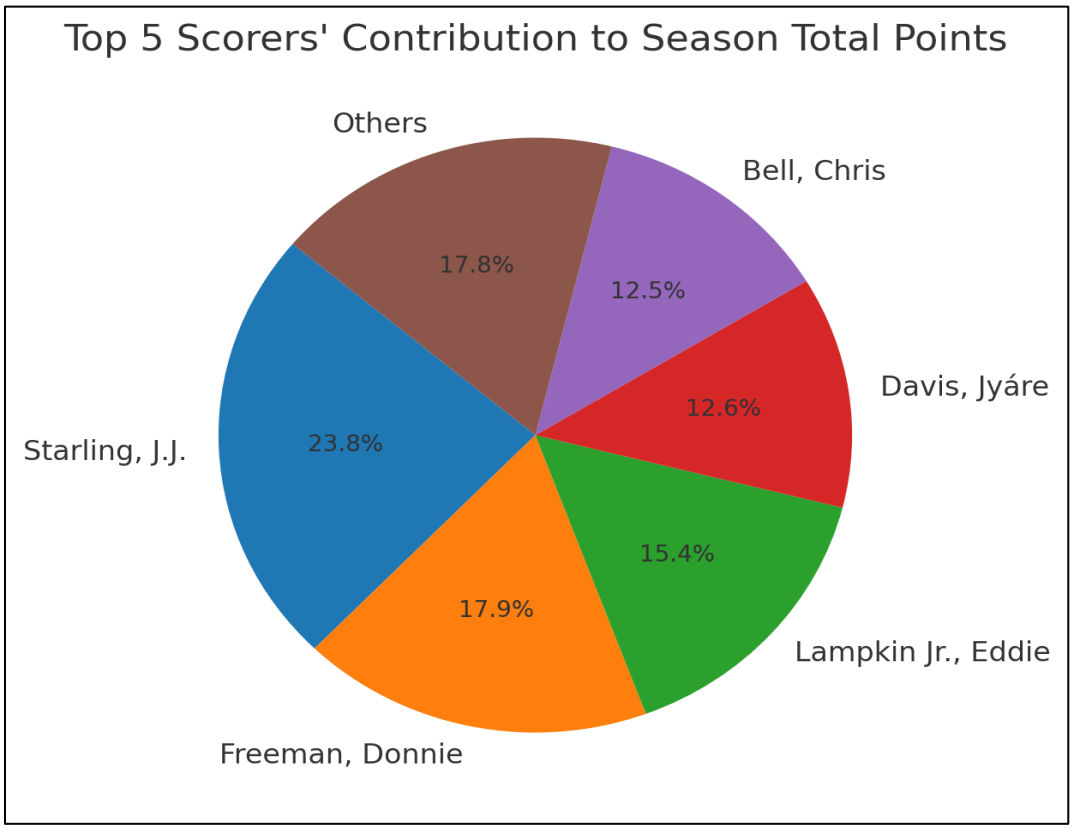
Margin of Victory per Game (Positive = Win)



Overtime Game Results



Top 5 Scorers' Contribution to Season Total Points



Closing Remarks:

- Syracuse's 2024–25 season tells a story of home-court strength, heavy reliance on a core group of scorers, and strong rebounding — but also costly turnovers, defensive lapses, and road struggles that undermined overall success. While the team proved capable of high-scoring shootouts and thrilling overtime wins, inconsistency against strong opponents and in away environments kept them below .500. Addressing turnover control, 3-point defense, and bench scoring depth could be pivotal for turning close losses into wins next season.
- **Actionable Insights**
    1. **Reduce Turnovers** – Syracuse averages 2.7 more turnovers than opponents; targeted ball-handling drills and decision-making under pressure could swing close games.
    2. **Strengthen Perimeter Defense** – Opponents average 1.5 more 3-pointers per game; tighter close-outs and better rotation on the perimeter could reduce this gap.
    3. **Boost Road Performance** – With only 2 away wins, mental prep, travel routines, and adapting to hostile environments should be a focus.
    4. **Expand Scoring Depth** – Heavy reliance on top 5 scorers makes the offense predictable; developing bench players' scoring roles can add flexibility.
    5. **Improve Late-Game Defense** – Opponents score heavily in the second half; conditioning, defensive adjustments, and situational awareness could help close games.
    6. **Capitalize on Rebounding Edge** – Syracuse's +3.8 rebound margin can be leveraged for more second-chance points through set plays off offensive boards.
- **Project Reflection** – This project involved extracting and analyzing Syracuse University's 2024–25 men's basketball season data entirely from a PDF, without the convenience of a CSV file. The manual data extraction process, while time-intensive, encouraged a more focused approach—prioritizing meaningful variables such as player performance, team averages, and game results over extraneous details. Visualization played a central role in uncovering patterns that raw tables alone could not convey, such as scoring trends, win-loss momentum shifts, and attendance peaks. Incorporating both player-level and team-level perspectives allowed for a deeper understanding of individual contributions and systemic issues, revealing not just "what" happened but "why" it happened. The combination of season statistics and game logs provided essential context, highlighting the influence of opponent strength, game location, and situational performance. Ultimately, the process reinforced the importance of pairing quantitative analysis with clear storytelling to translate numbers into actionable insights, making the findings valuable for coaches, analysts, and stakeholders alike.