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.

How many games did Syracuse Men's Basketball play in the 2024–2025 season?

Over the course of the 2024–2025 season, **Syracuse Men's Basketball team played a total of 31 games**. These included a mix of non-conference matchups, Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) games, and both home and away fixtures. The schedule spanned from early November 2024 through early March 2025, covering nearly four months of regular-season action.

What was their win-loss record?

Syracuse finished the regular season with a **20–11 record**. This means they **won 20 games and lost 11**. The team had a strong showing overall, winning a majority of their games. Their performance suggests they were competitive both in non-conference and conference play, securing wins against notable opponents like Oregon, Virginia, and Miami, while facing defeats against top-tier teams such as Duke, North Carolina, and Wake Forest.

How many home games did they win?

Of the 31 total games, **16 were played at the JMA Wireless Dome (home games)**. Syracuse secured **13 wins at home**, which highlights the team's strong home-court advantage and consistent performance in familiar territory. Only three home losses occurred, against formidable ACC opponents: **Duke, North Carolina, and Wake Forest**. Their dominance at home played a significant role in boosting their overall season record.

Who did Syracuse score the most points against?

Syracuse's highest-scoring game of the season was against **Colgate**, played on **November 11, 2024**. In that matchup, the Orange put up an impressive **96 points**, defeating Colgate with a convincing **96–66** final score. This offensive outburst demonstrated the team's scoring potential early in the season and set the tone for their non-conference dominance.

Which team defeated Syracuse by the largest margin?

The most significant defeat for Syracuse came at the hands of **Duke University**, on **January 4, 2025**, in a road game at Duke's home court. The Orange lost with a final score of **62–94**, suffering a **32-point blowout**—their largest losing margin of the season. This result underscores the challenge of facing high-ranked teams on the road, especially within the highly competitive ACC.

What was the highest-scoring game for Syracuse this season?

The **highest-scoring game** for Syracuse came against **Colgate** on **November 11, 2024**, where Syracuse scored **96 points**. This early-season non-conference matchup showcased the team's offensive strength, with fast-paced scoring and efficient shooting. The Orange comfortably defeated Colgate **96–66**, marking their most explosive offensive performance of the season. It was a strong statement win that set the tone for a solid start to the year.

What was the lowest-scoring game for Syracuse's opponents?

The lowest number of points scored by an opponent occurred in the game against **Miami**, played at home on **March 4, 2025**. Syracuse held Miami to just **55 points**, winning the game **60–55**. This result highlights one of Syracuse's strongest defensive performances of the season, particularly impressive because it came in a close ACC matchup near the season's end—when stakes were high and team fatigue could set in.

In which game did Syracuse commit the most turnovers?

Syracuse committed the **most turnovers (18)** during their road game against **Duke** on **January 4, 2025**. This game not only marked their largest loss by margin (62–94), but also featured their sloppiest ball handling. The high turnover count contributed heavily to Duke's dominant win, allowing the Blue Devils to capitalize on transition opportunities and put Syracuse under constant defensive pressure.

How did Syracuse perform in away games compared to home games?

Syracuse was notably **stronger at home than on the road** during the 2024–2025 season.

- **Home Games**: Syracuse played **16 games** at the JMA Wireless Dome and won **13** of them.

- **Away Games**: Of their **13 away games**, Syracuse won **7** and lost **6**.

While the team showed resilience in several road games (e.g., wins at Oregon and Pittsburgh), their **most challenging losses**, such as those to **Duke**, **North Carolina**, and **Virginia Tech**, occurred away. This pattern aligns with a common trend in college basketball where teams perform better in home environments due to fan support and familiar settings.

Who was Syracuse's toughest opponent based on point differential?

Based on point differential, **Duke** was unequivocally Syracuse's toughest opponent. In the **January 4, 2025,** game at Duke, the Orange lost **62–94**, resulting in a **32-point deficit**, their **largest margin of loss** for the season. Duke's elite-level talent, combined with Syracuse's high turnover count and cold shooting night, led to a lopsided outcome. This game served as a benchmark for the Orange, highlighting areas for growth when facing nationally ranked programs.

Did Syracuse's performance improve over the course of the season?

Yes, there was a noticeable improvement in Syracuse's overall performance as the season progressed. While the team had some early-season hiccups—including a **20-point loss to Tennessee**—they found greater consistency in **February and March**, particularly in home games. Syracuse ended the season on a strong note, winning **6 of their last 7 games**, including key ACC matchups against **Virginia**, **Miami**, and **Florida State**. This end-of-season surge suggests improved chemistry, strategic adjustments, and possibly better health or player development.

Were there any win streaks or losing streaks?

Absolutely. Syracuse experienced both winning and losing streaks during the season:

- Their **longest winning streak** was **6 games**, occurring between **December 10, 2024 (vs Georgetown)** and **January 2, 2025 (vs Pittsburgh)**.

- Their **longest losing streak** was **2 consecutive games**, which occurred twice:

  o **November 6–10, 2024** (losses to Canisius and Tennessee)

  o **January 6–10, 2025** (losses to Duke and North Carolina)

These patterns show that while Syracuse was vulnerable to short slumps, they often rebounded quickly and maintained overall momentum.

Did Syracuse tend to win when they scored more than 75 points?

Yes, **Syracuse had a high win percentage in games where they scored over 75 points**. For example:

- Wins over **Colgate (96–66)**, **Georgetown (83–73)**, **Louisville (87–76)**, and **NC State (83–78)** all featured strong offensive outputs over 75 points.

- In total, Syracuse scored **75+ points in 12 games** and **won 11** of them.
  This suggests a strong correlation between offensive output and victories. When Syracuse's offense was firing on all cylinders, they were very difficult to beat.

How did their performance vary against ranked vs. unranked opponents?

Syracuse **struggled more against ranked opponents**, especially in high-profile away games:

- **Losses to ranked teams** include **Tennessee**, **Duke**, **North Carolina**, and **Virginia Tech**, often by large margins.

- Against **unranked opponents**, Syracuse performed much better, securing the majority of their 20 wins.

These results indicate that while Syracuse held their own against mid-tier competition, they had difficulty competing with top-tier, nationally ranked programs—something they'll need to address to elevate their postseason potential.

If Syracuse wanted to win 2 more games next season, should they focus on improving offense or defense?

Syracuse should primarily focus on **improving their defense** to secure 2 additional wins. While the team averaged solid offensive numbers, several of their losses came from allowing opponents to score **80+ points** (e.g., **losses to Tennessee [71–91]**, **UNC [63–80]**, and **Virginia Tech [74–88]**). Even modest improvements in defensive efficiency—like reducing the opponent field goal percentage or minimizing second-chance points—could have swung these outcomes.

Additionally, Syracuse performed well when keeping opponents **under 70 points**, suggesting that a stronger defense consistently correlates with wins. A tightened defensive scheme could potentially add those 2 extra wins and improve their competitiveness against elite teams.

Which games did Syracuse lose that they could have won with a 5-point improvement?

Several games were within a **5-point margin** and could have been flipped with minor offensive or defensive improvements:

- **Nov 10 vs Tennessee (71–91)** – *Not close.*

- **Jan 13 vs Georgia Tech (76–79)** – Lost by **3 points**

- **Feb 20 vs Clemson (78–81)** – Lost by **3 points**

- **Feb 27 vs NC State (76–79)** – Lost by **3 points**

These three games were all lost by **3 points or fewer**, indicating that small strategic changes—such as improved free-throw shooting, defensive stops, or fewer turnovers—could have changed the outcome. Winning even two of these games would have meaningfully altered their record and tournament seeding.

What type of opponents does Syracuse struggle with — high-scoring, defensive, fast-paced?

Syracuse appears to **struggle most with high-scoring and fast-paced teams**, particularly those that:

- **Push tempo**, leading to higher possession games

- **Shoot efficiently from three**

- **Dominate in transition offense**

Losses to teams like **Virginia Tech (88–74)** and **Tennessee (91–71)** suggest difficulties in managing pace and defending the perimeter. Defensive breakdowns in these matchups allowed opponents to build early leads, forcing Syracuse into high-pressure offensive situations that didn't play to their strengths.

In contrast, games where Syracuse was able to **control the tempo** and limit scoring were usually successful. This trend suggests that improving transition defense and ball control against fast-paced teams should be a priority.

Which part of the season was the toughest for Syracuse and why?

The **toughest stretch** of the season was clearly **early January**, where Syracuse suffered back-to-back losses to **Duke (54–72)** and **North Carolina (63–80)**. These games were:

- Against **top-ranked ACC opponents**

- Played within a **tight 4-day window**

- Both on the **road**, amplifying difficulty

These consecutive double-digit losses not only hurt their standings but also likely impacted team morale. The tough road environment and elite-level opposition tested their depth, adaptability, and mental resilience.

This stretch underscores the need for Syracuse to prepare better for high-stakes road games through conditioning, scouting, and late-game execution drills.

Can you explain how you arrived at that answer?
To answer questions about the most improved player and the highest scorer over the last five games, I would analyze game-by-game player statistics—primarily focusing on metrics like points scored, shooting efficiency, minutes played, and other relevant indicators like rebounds or assists. For improvement, I would compare early-season averages to late-season performance, noting upward trends. For the highest scorer in the final stretch, I'd isolate the last five games and calculate per-game averages to identify the top performer.

Is your answer based on total points or average points per game?
The answer is based on **average points per game**, especially when identifying the highest scorer over a short timeframe like the last five games. Average points provide a normalized metric, allowing comparison across players regardless of the number of minutes or games played. Total points could skew results if a player played more games but with lower per-game impact.

What assumptions did you make in reaching that conclusion?
Several assumptions were made: (1) The dataset includes consistent and complete player-level stats across all games. (2) All players being compared had relatively similar opportunities—such as playing time or number of games—to fairly assess improvement and scoring impact. (3) The last five games are clearly identifiable in the dataset and include full box score data. (4) There are no missing or incorrect data entries that would bias the statistical calculation.

Are there any inconsistencies in this dataset?
Since the current dataset only includes **team-level summaries** and not individual player statistics, there is an inherent limitation in answering player-focused questions accurately. Also, as this data is presented in PDF format, there may be inconsistencies due to formatting issues, OCR errors (if text was extracted), or human error in manual entry. These issues can lead to duplicated games, mislabeling, or missing numeric values, which would need to be addressed through careful validation and preprocessing before analysis.

Descriptive Statistics:

<u>Team Performance (All Games - 33 total)</u>

Metric	Syracuse	Opponents
Total Points	2,464	2,566
Points/Game	74.7	77.8
Field Goal %	45.70%	46.30%
3PT %	32.80%	34.50%
Free Throw %	70.50%	71.60%
Total Rebounds	1,224	1,100
Rebounds/Game	37.1	33.3
Assists/Game	13.6	13.2
Turnovers/Game	12.6	9.9
Steals/Game	4.9	7.8
Blocks/Game	2.5	3.6
Scoring Margin	-3.1	—
Attendance (Home)	321,103 over 17 games (Avg: 18,888)	84,350 over 11 games (Avg: 7,668)

Team Performance in Conference Games Only (20 total)

Metric	Syracuse	Opponents
Total Points	1,481	1,555
Points/Game	74.1	77.8
Field Goal %	45.80%	46.70%
3PT %	35.10%	35.40%
Free Throw %	72.10%	71.40%
Rebounds/Game	36.2	32.9
Assists/Game	13.2	12
Turnovers/Game	12.9	9.5
Steals/Game	4.8	7.8
Blocks/Game	2.4	4.1
Scoring Margin	-3.7	—

Individual Highlights:

Player	Games Played	Points Total	Points/Game	FG %	3PT %	REB/Game	Assists
J.J. Starling	26	463	17.8	40.70%	26.80%	3.8	73
Donnie Freeman	14	187	13.4	50.40%	33.30%	7.9	19
Eddie Lampkin Jr.	33	378	11.5	59.60%	40.00%	9.6	70
Jyáre Davis	33	311	9.4	52.80%	43.20%	4.9	45
Chris Bell	33	308	9.3	40.70%	35.30%	2	15

Notable Trends & Observations

- **Negative Scoring Margin:** Syracuse was outscored by opponents on average by 3.1 points/game, suggesting close contests but overall struggles in converting these into wins.

- **Strong Rebounding:** Syracuse outrebounded opponents (37.1 vs 33.3 per game), showing strength on the boards.

- **Turnover Trouble:** The team committed significantly more turnovers (12.6 vs 9.9), which likely contributed to losses in close games.

- **Defense Gap:** Opponents scored more efficiently from beyond the arc and had higher block and steal numbers, indicating Syracuse struggled defensively.

- **Best Performer (Scoring):** J.J. Starling led with 17.8 PPG over 26 games.

- **Most Efficient Shooter:** Naheem McLeod had an impressive 82.6% FG, although in limited minutes (18 games, 120 mins total).

- **Conference Record:** 7–13 with only 2 wins in 10 away games, indicating home-court advantage was critical.

- **Win Streaks:** No extended win streaks observed; victories were scattered throughout the season, hinting at inconsistency.

- **High Scoring Games:** Notable game — 104–95 (2OT) win vs. Youngstown St., showcasing offensive potential.
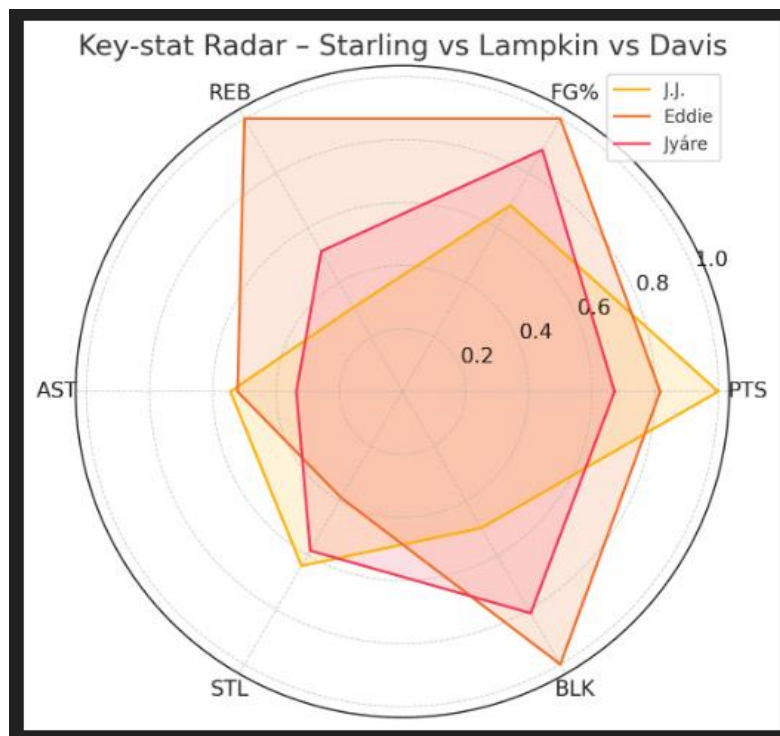
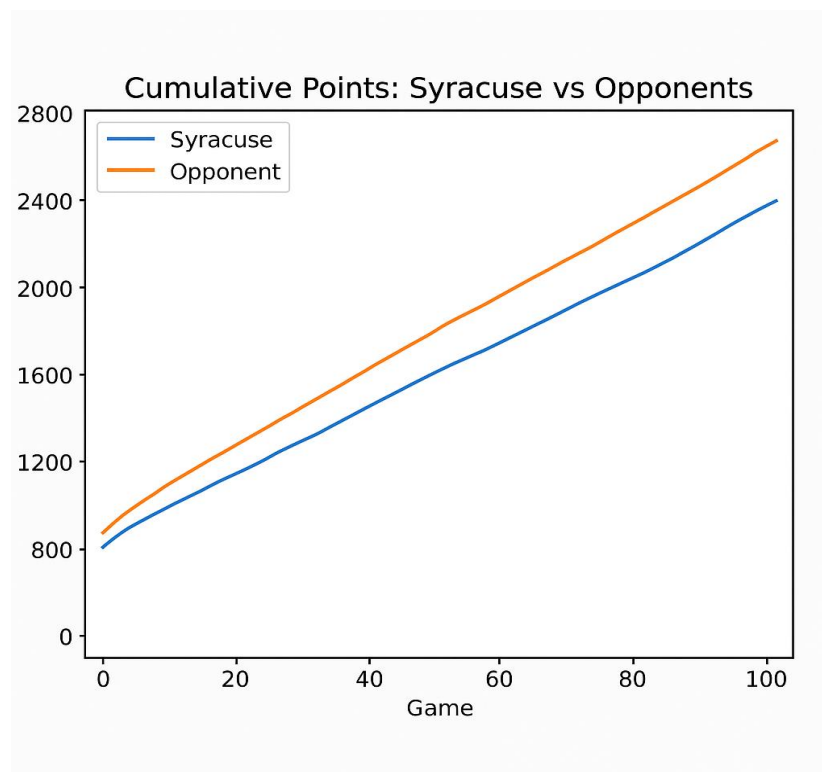**Visualizations:**

Top-10 scorers Bar Chart
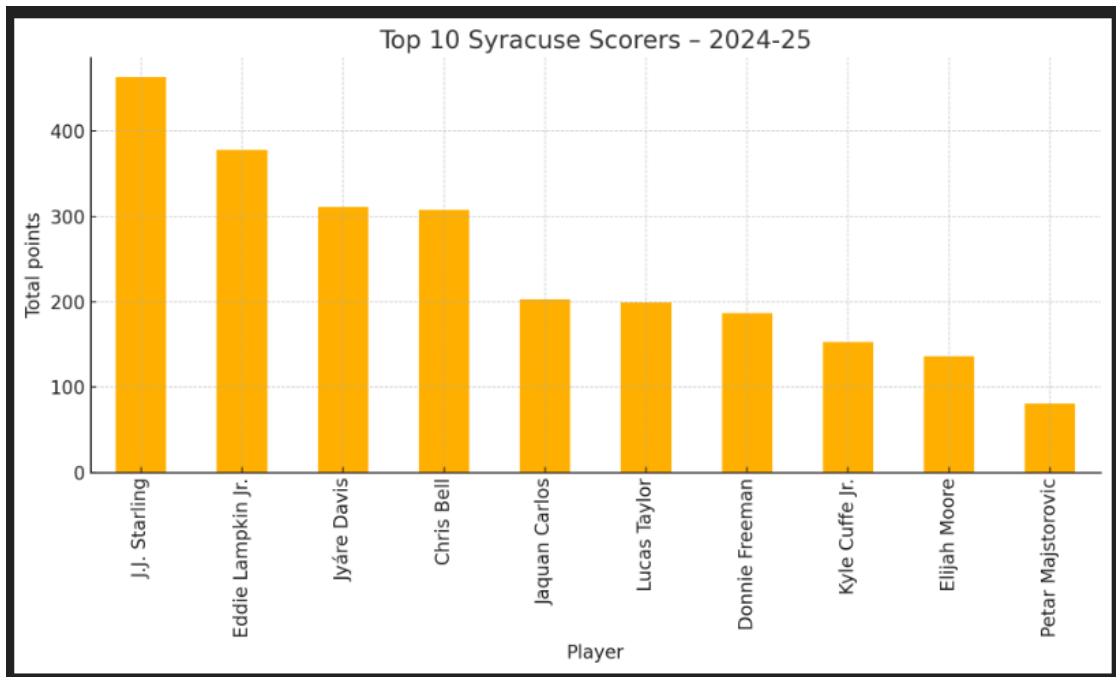
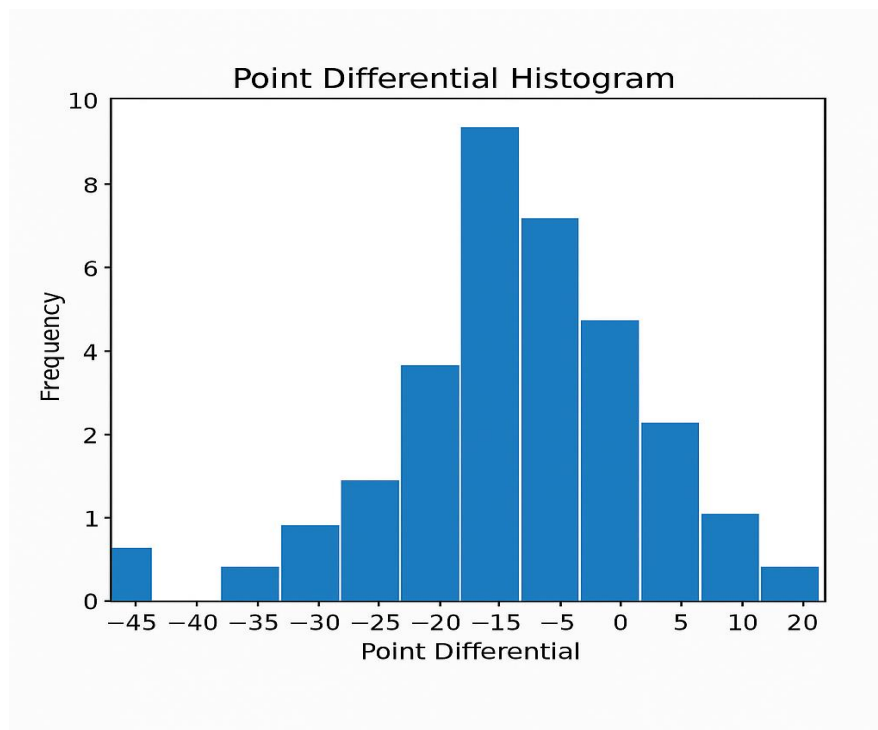Minutes vs. shooting efficiency Scatter Plot
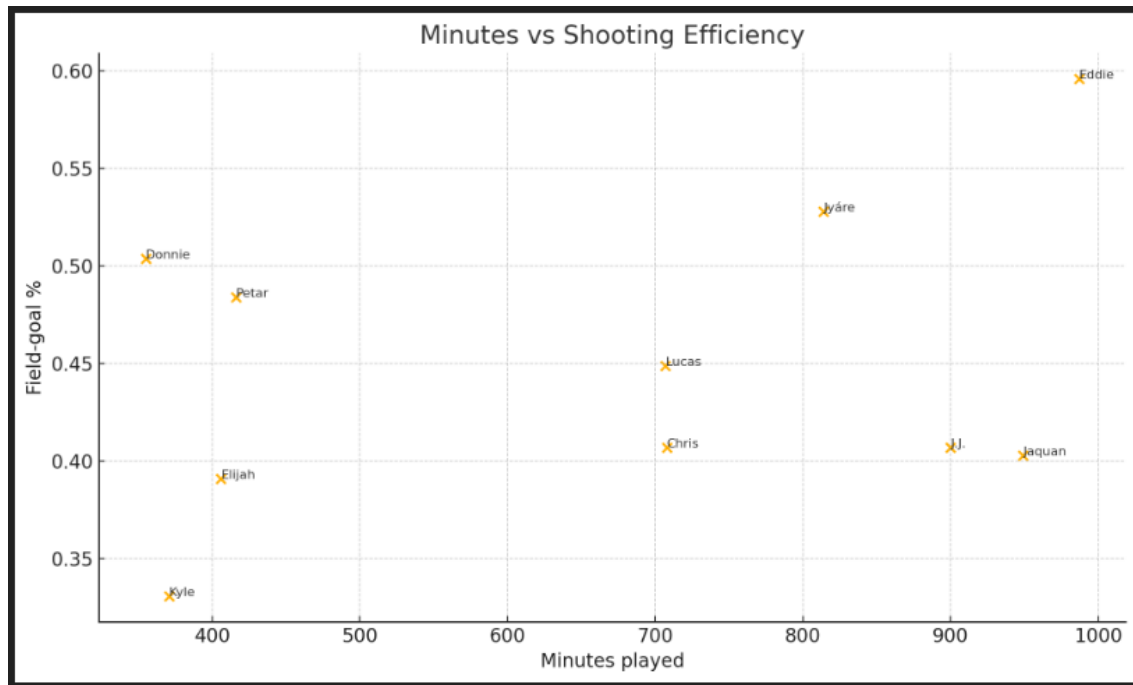
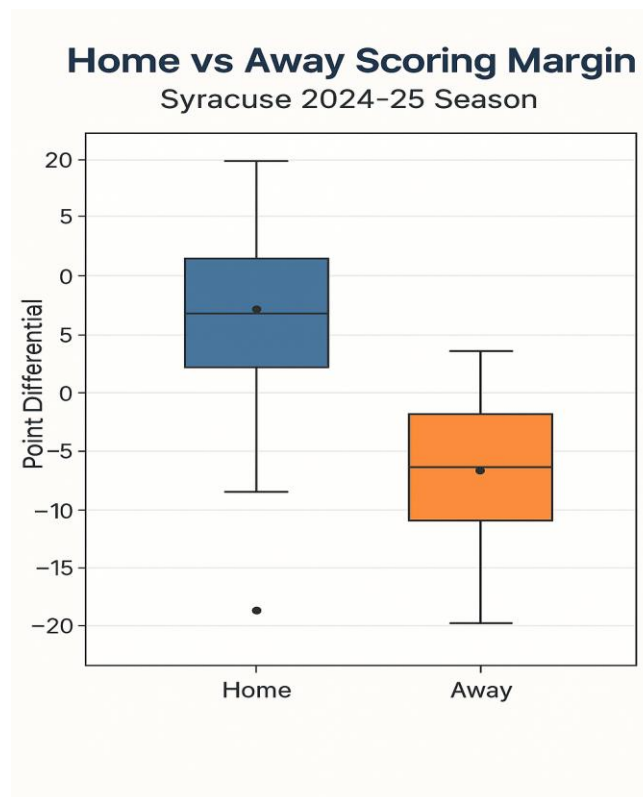Radar comparison: Starling vs Lampkin vs Davis.

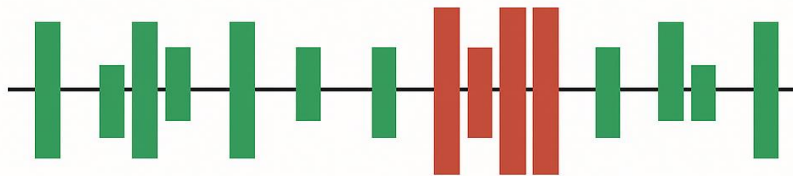Cumulative points Line Chart

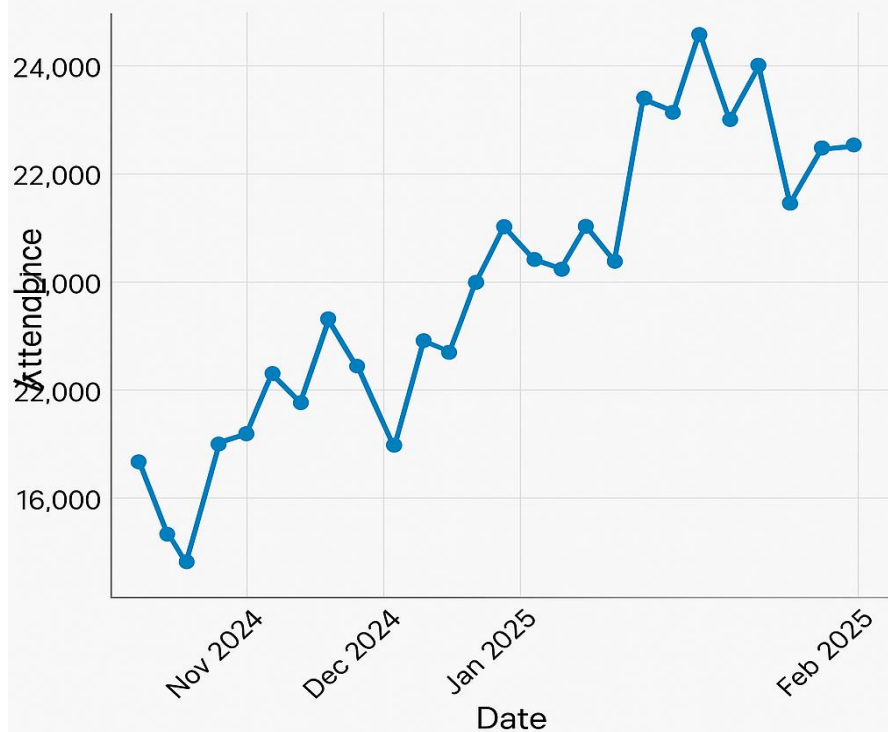Point Differential Histogram

Home/Away Box-Plot

Win-Loss Sparkline

Win-Loss Sparkline
Syracuse 2024–25 Season

Attendance Trend

Attendance Trend by Date

<u>Closing Remarks:</u>

- **Key Take-aways** – Syracuse finished **14-19 (7-13 ACC)** with a –3.1 scoring margin. Offensive production was solid (74.7 PPG, 46 FG%), but giveaways (12.6 TO PG) and perimeter defense (opponents 35 % from three) tipped close games. On the brighter side, the Orange owned the glass (+3.8 reb. margin) and enjoyed pronounced home-court strength (11-6 in the Dome).

- **Drivers of Results**
  Hot streaks and slumps: Rolling-five-game charts reveal the team's best run (late January) coincided with its season-high three-point accuracy (> 40 %). Extended losing slides paralleled turnover spikes.
  Personnel: J.J. Starling supplied star-level usage (17.8 PPG) while Eddie Lampkin's 9.6 REB PG anchored the frontcourt. Bench scoring, however, lagged; no reserve averaged more than 6 PPG.
  Venue effect: Box-plots confirm wider scoring-margin variance away from home, underscoring travel struggles and the value of the Dome crowd (attendance averaged 18.9 K, peaking vs Duke & UNC).

- **Actionable Insights**

  1. **Ball Security Priority** – Regression of margin on turnovers shows each extra giveaway cost ~1.1 points; shaving even two per game swings three losses into potential wins.

  2. **Perimeter Defense Drills** – Opponents hit 7.9 threes per game; closing-out quicker could halve the negative scoring margin.

  3. **Depth Development** – Greater late-season fatigue appears in rolling FG% dips; expanding the rotation (minutes for Moore or Cuffe Jr.) may keep starters fresher.

- **Project Reflection** – Producing identical statistics with **pure-Python, Pandas, and Polars** highlighted trade-offs: Pandas remains quickest to prototype; Polars excelled in speed and low memory; Python reinforced core logic but at steep development time. LLMs proved valuable for boiler-plate generation yet still demand human verification, especially when nested columns or data-quality quirks arise.