

THE 3 POINT SHOT

Data Analysis by Sean Gillen

All data from basketball-reference.com

Adventurelytics

“The 3-point shot is boring and repetitive. Every team plays the exact same way.”

- Colin Cowherd

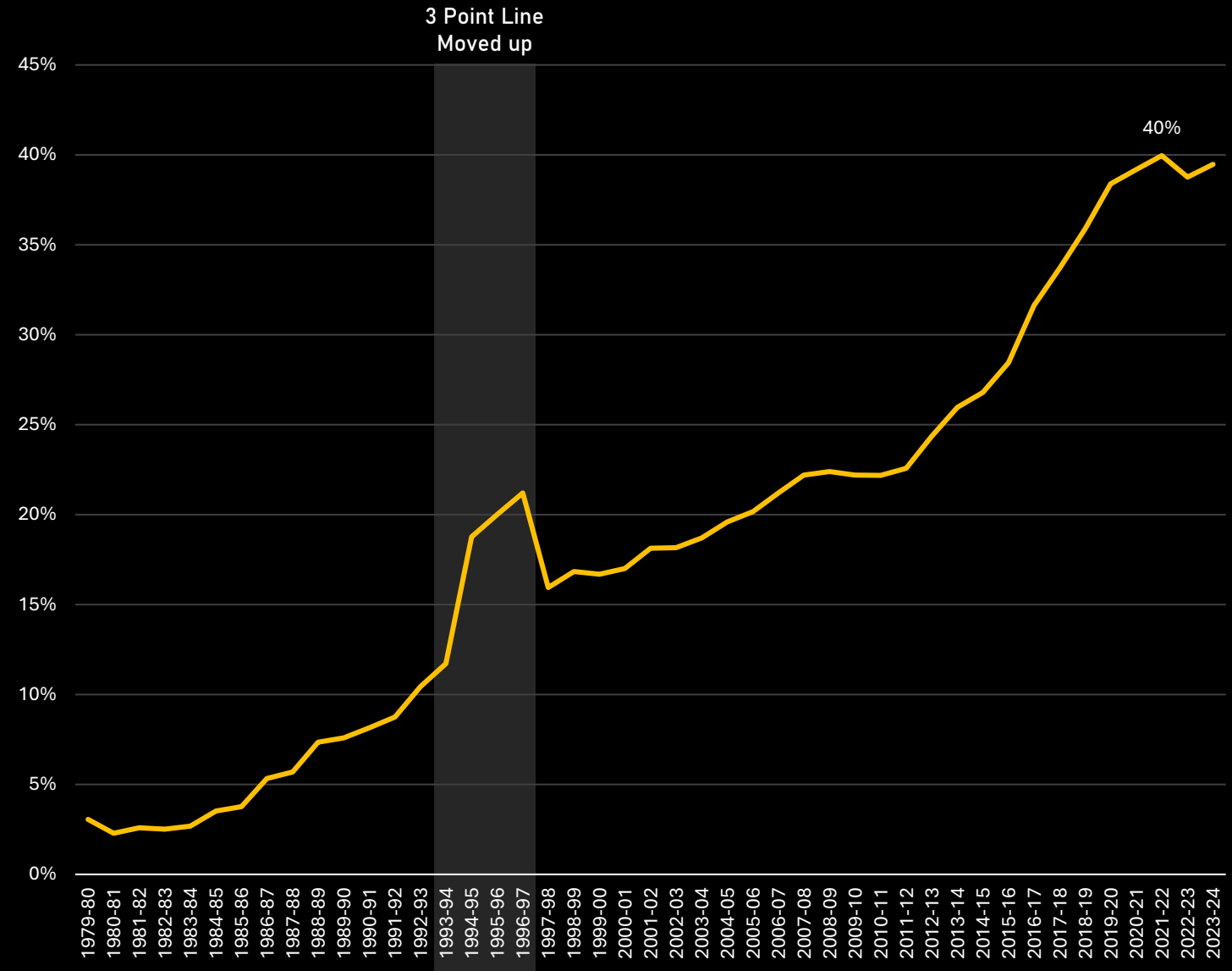
December 18, 2024

History of the 3-point Shot

- Implemented in the NBA for the 1979-80 season.
- It was originally set at 23 ft 9 in.
- The 3-point line has been moved twice.
 - 1994-95 to 22 ft
 - 1997-98 back to 23 ft 9 in

How much is the 3-point shot apart of the offense?

- In the early days of the 3-point shot, it was rarely utilized.
- In the 1979-80 season, 7% of the San Diego Clippers offense was 3-point shots. They had the highest percentage.
- For comparison, In the 2023-24 season, 47% of the Boston Celtics offense was 3-point shots. They had the highest percentage.
- In the 2023-24 season, 39% of the total league offense was 3-point shots.



Total 3 Point Attempts (All time)

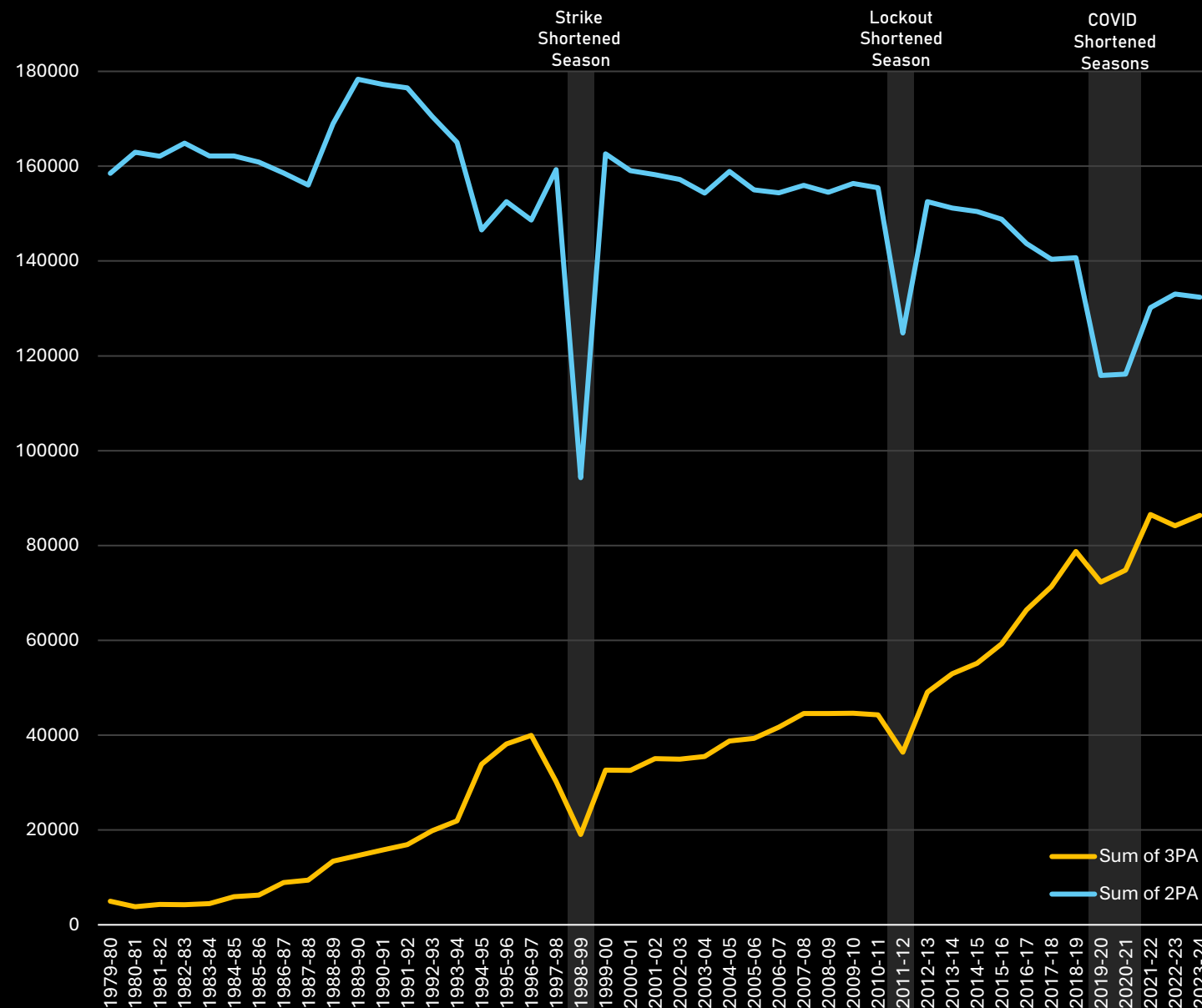
- 10 year change is 57%
- 20 year change is 123%
- All time change is 1,626%



3-point Attempts vs. 2-point Attempts

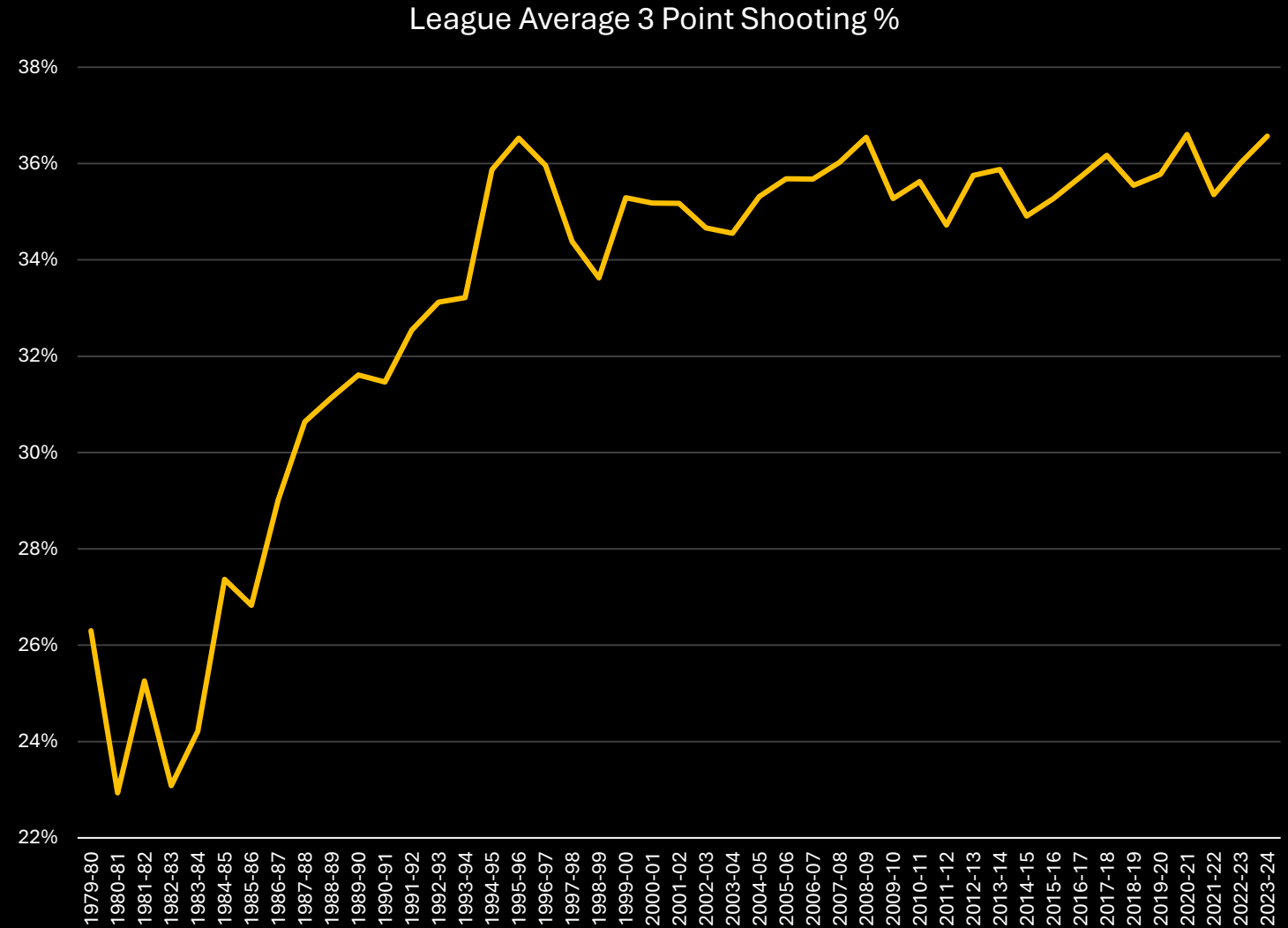
• While the 3-point shot is up all time, the 2-point shot is down 17% since the 1979-80 season.

• The three pointer hasn't passed the threshold to being the dominant shot choice yet, but it is gaining ground.



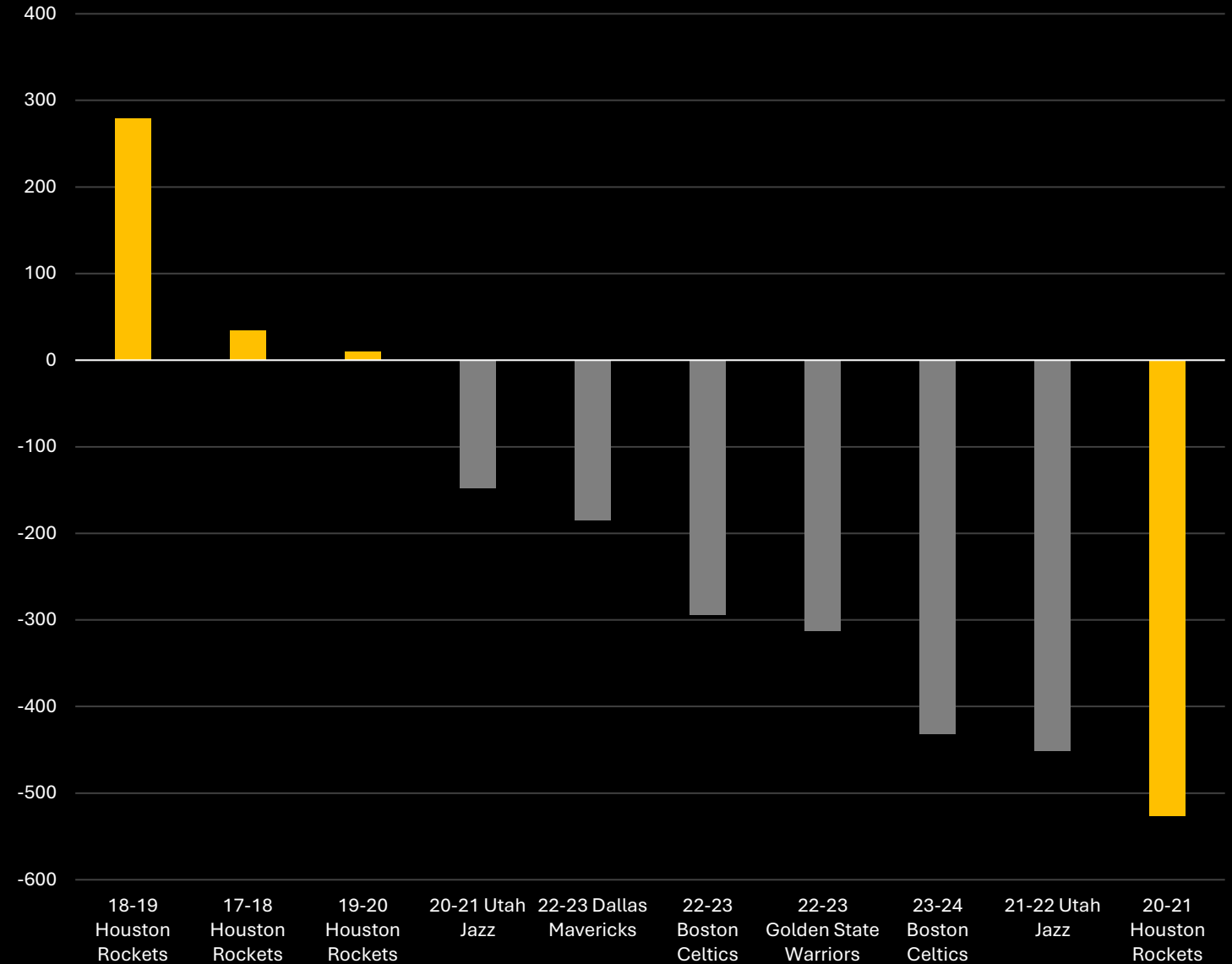
Stagnant Shooting

- Unlike 3 Point attempts, 3-point Shooting % has stayed stagnant
- From 1994-95 to 2023-24 seasons, shooting percentage has fluctuated only between 34% - 37%.
- 3-point shooting percentage hasn't seen a major improvement since 1995-96.



Changing of the Guard

- There are only 3 teams in NBA history that have shot more 3-pointers
- The Mike D'Antoni led Rockets (2017-2020) are the only teams in history to Shoot More 3-pointers in a season than 2-pointers.
- The top ten teams in 2pt/3pt Differential are all from the past 5 years



Conclusions

- While the 3-point shot has risen in its use substantially since its introduction, it is still less than half of a modern team's offense.
- 3-point attempts are on the rise, and could overtake 2-point shots, if trends continue.
- Stagnant 3-point completion percentage with a high use of attempts, could be the contributing factor to the criticism the 3-point shot has been receiving.