

Predicting Block Breaker Game Wins

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Abstract

A block breaker game in the style of the classic game Breakout was simulated using an automated player. An example of the game in action can be found [here](#). Because the game is simulated to represent level difficulty to a human player, the auto player is tuned to a given accuracy, generally between 30% and 40%. Through the data generated from thousands of complete simulations, I hope to understand the conditions for a player to win or lose.

1 Introduction

What are the rules for the game?

The game environment is surrounded by a top, bottom, left, and right wall and includes a paddle, a ball, and blocks. The player controls the horizontal axis of the paddle. Not all blocks are able to be destroyed. The game starts when the player launches the ball into motion. The ball reflects from the paddle, the blocks, and the walls. When a block reflects the ball, it takes damage and may be destroyed. Once all the blocks able to be destroyed are destroyed, the game is considered won. A player loses the game if they fail to reflect the ball with the paddle.

Why is this problem interesting?

Video games can represent very complex environments. Even a few elements interacting through the physics engine can create situations that are extremely difficult to predict and control. In games that depend on dynamic elements, such as the physics engine, there is no formula to predict exactly what will happen. An example would be striking a pool ball and trying to predict all the exact reflections and end positions for every other ball. If the game can be broken down into some basic measurements and basic goals, then tests can be run to produce data. That data is something tangible that can be used to start understanding the behaviour of the game, so it can be predicted and controlled.

Motivation

Characteristics of a good game are drama and depth. If a game has drama, then the player will have a fun, memorable experience. If the game has depth, the player will be able to get better at the game in numerous ways. These characteristics are only good when implemented in a balanced way that gives the player the most fun, memorable experience. For example, drama should engage the player but not be punishing, and depth should exist at different skill levels so it is not only engaging to a select group. To achieve this through manual playtesting is tedious if not ineffective. The motivation of this project is to learn how use statistics from gameplays to understand the elements that control the likeliness a player is be able to win a level.

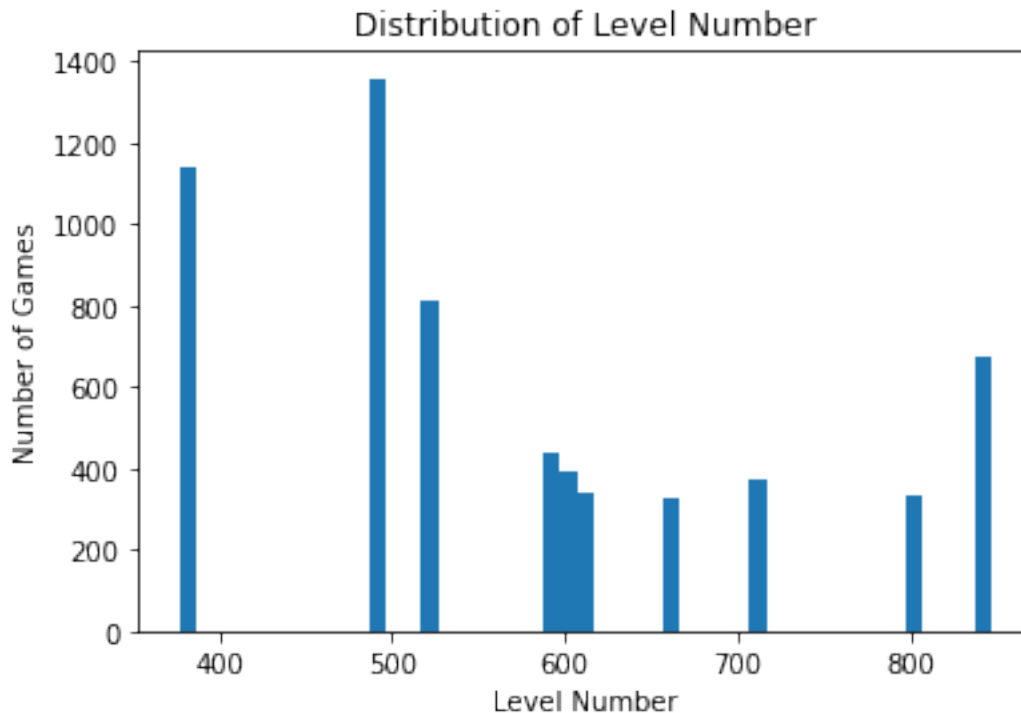
2 Dataset

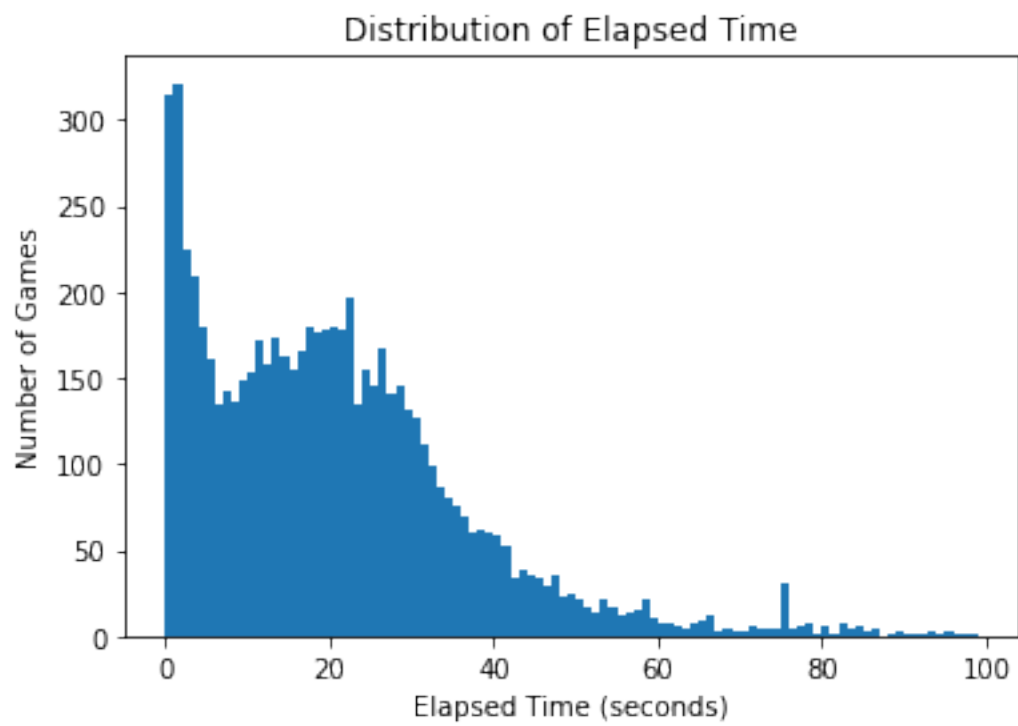
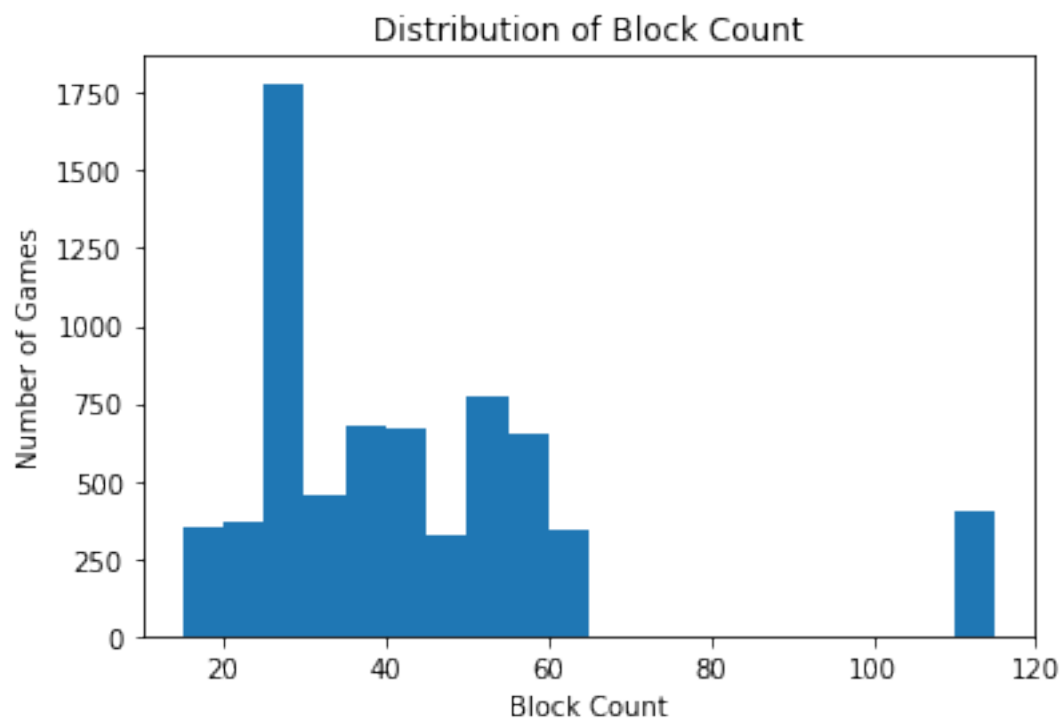
The "Arcade Game Stats" dataset was found amongst the Kaggle datasets and can be found here [1]. The data was obtained from thousands of gameplay simulations using a robot for player input. The data contains 3266 games where the robot won and 3548 games where the robot lost. To account for a human player, the robot was assigned an accuracy that sets how well the robot performs. The output of the data is 0 for a loss and 1 for a win. The input features are as follows:

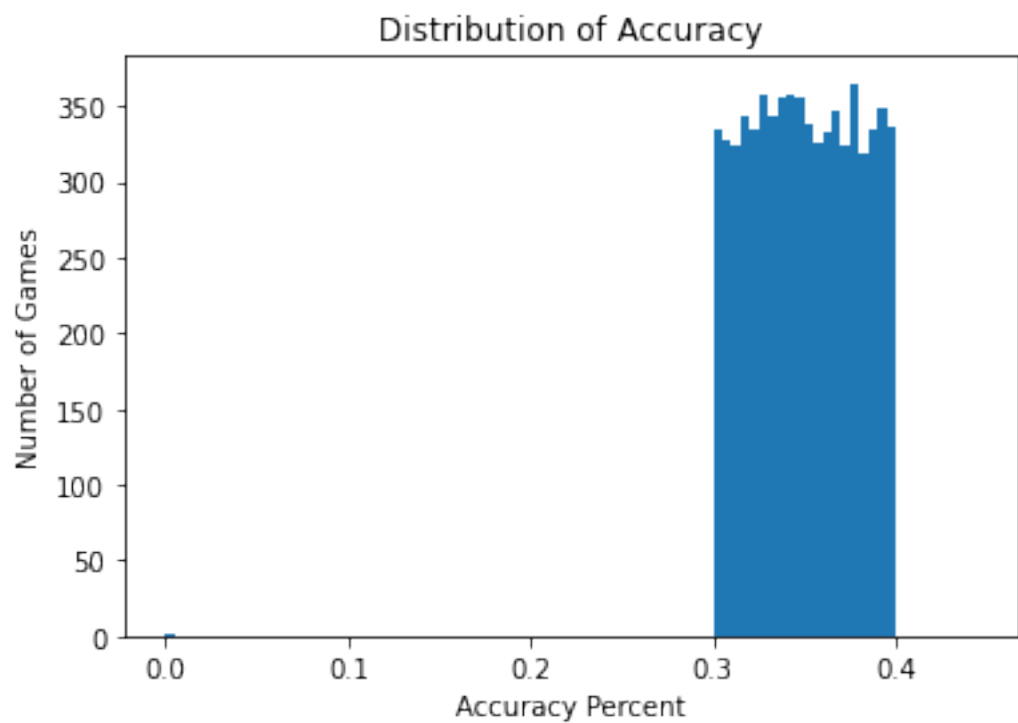
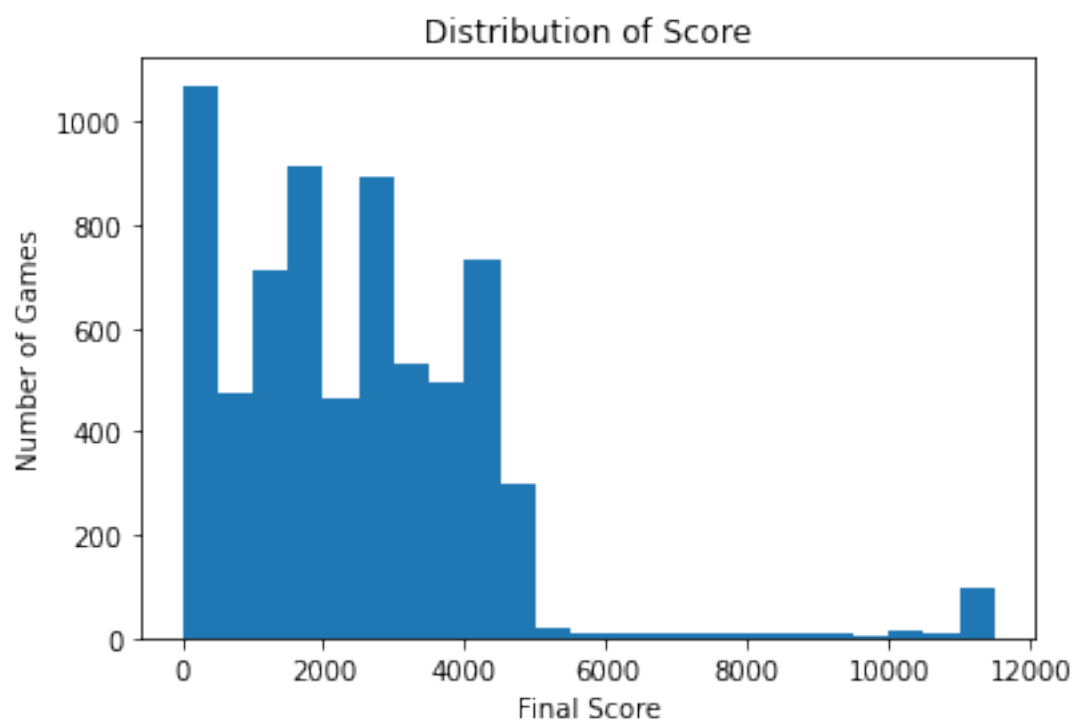
1. Level Number
2. Number of Blocks
3. Elapsed Time
4. Score
5. Accuracy

2.1 Data Visualization

Level number appears to be grouped into several clusters between about 400 and 800. Number of blocks looks like it is normally distributed. Elapsed time is skewed to the right. Score looks like it is normally distributed. Accuracy is evenly distributed within its range.



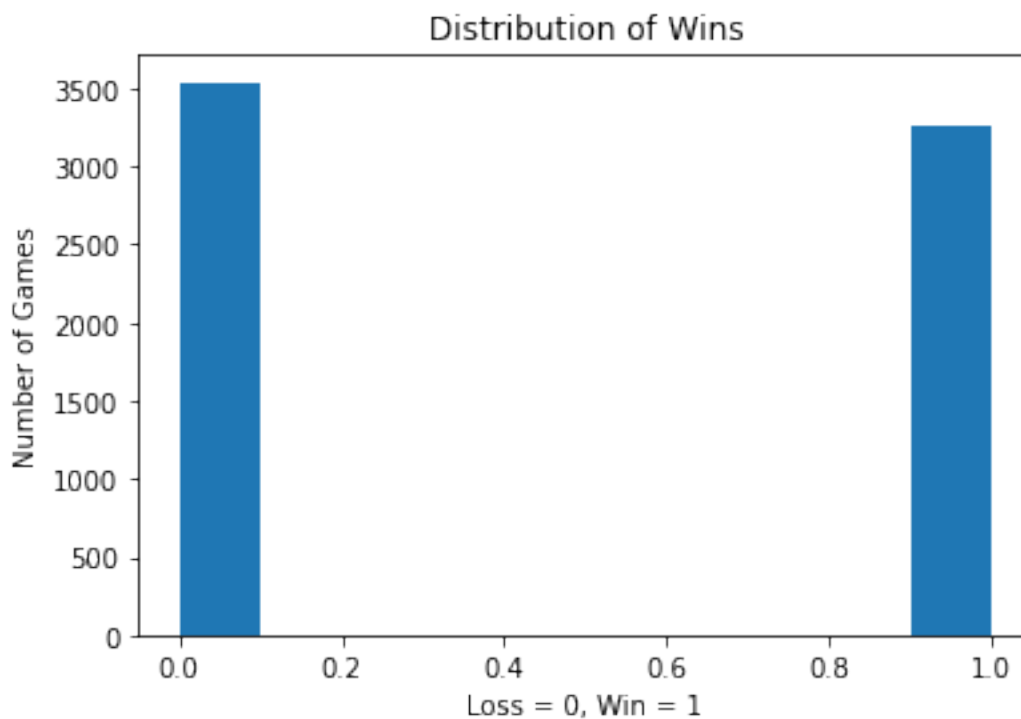




	Level	NumBlocks	ElapsedTime	Score	Accuracy	IsWin
count	6799.000000	6799.000000	6.799000e+03	6799.000000	6799.000000	6799.000000
mean	597.859979	42.430946	4.684771e+07	2386.115605	0.349926	0.479776
std	160.211059	20.815046	1.727022e+09	1918.080282	0.029051	0.499628
min	378.000000	18.000000	3.350642e-01	0.000000	0.000000	0.000000
25%	492.000000	28.000000	8.118599e+00	1150.000000	0.325401	0.000000
50%	596.000000	39.000000	1.865289e+01	2100.000000	0.349511	0.000000
75%	715.000000	50.000000	2.910713e+01	3550.000000	0.375015	1.000000
max	849.000000	112.000000	6.370349e+10	11900.000000	0.399999	1.000000

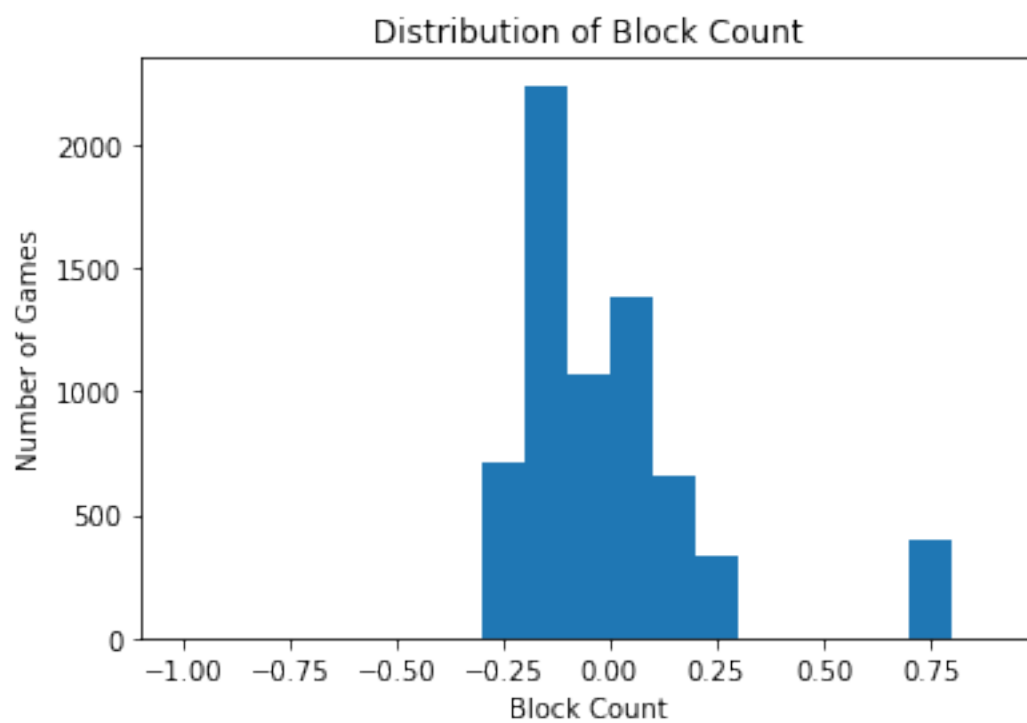
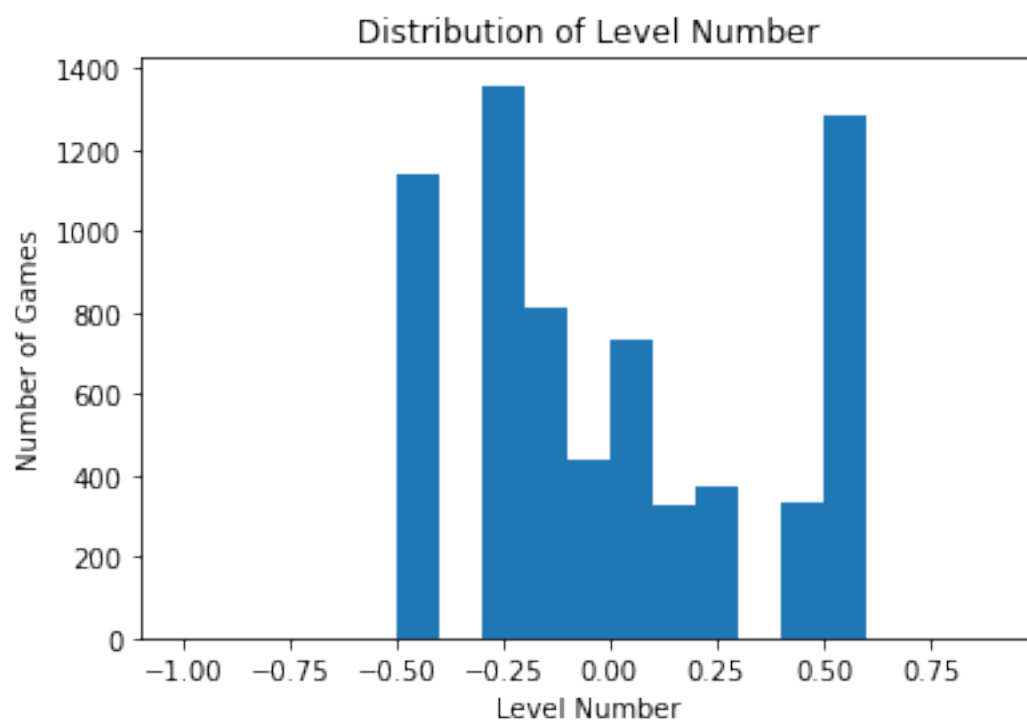
2.2 Distribution of Output

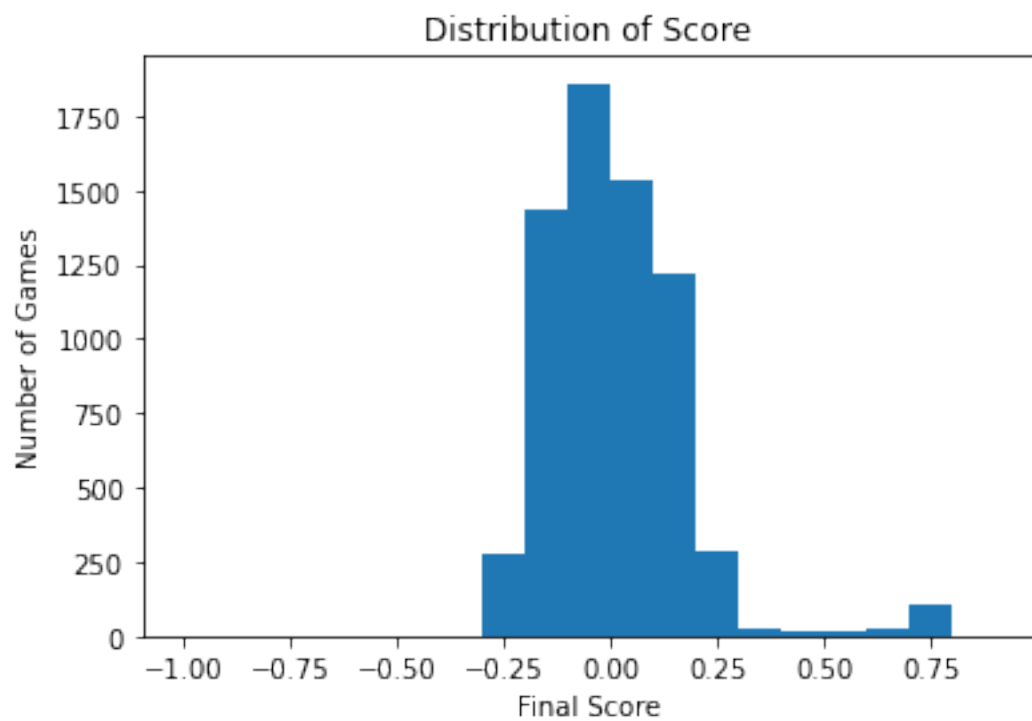
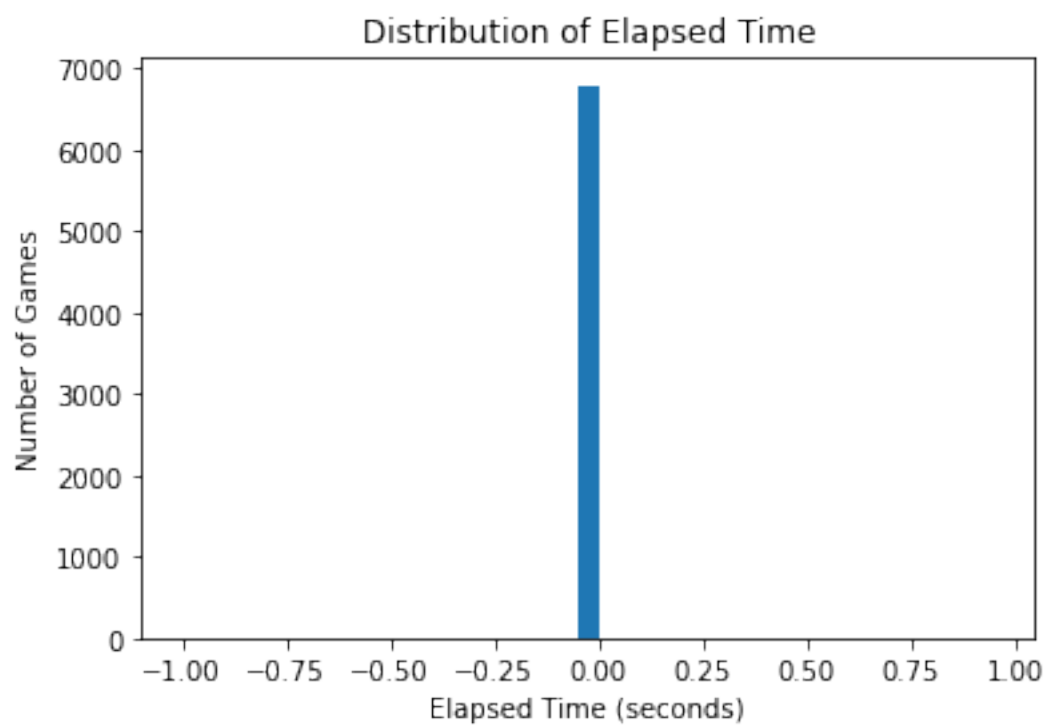
The number of wins and losses are almost perfectly balanced. There is an appropriate sample size for each sample.

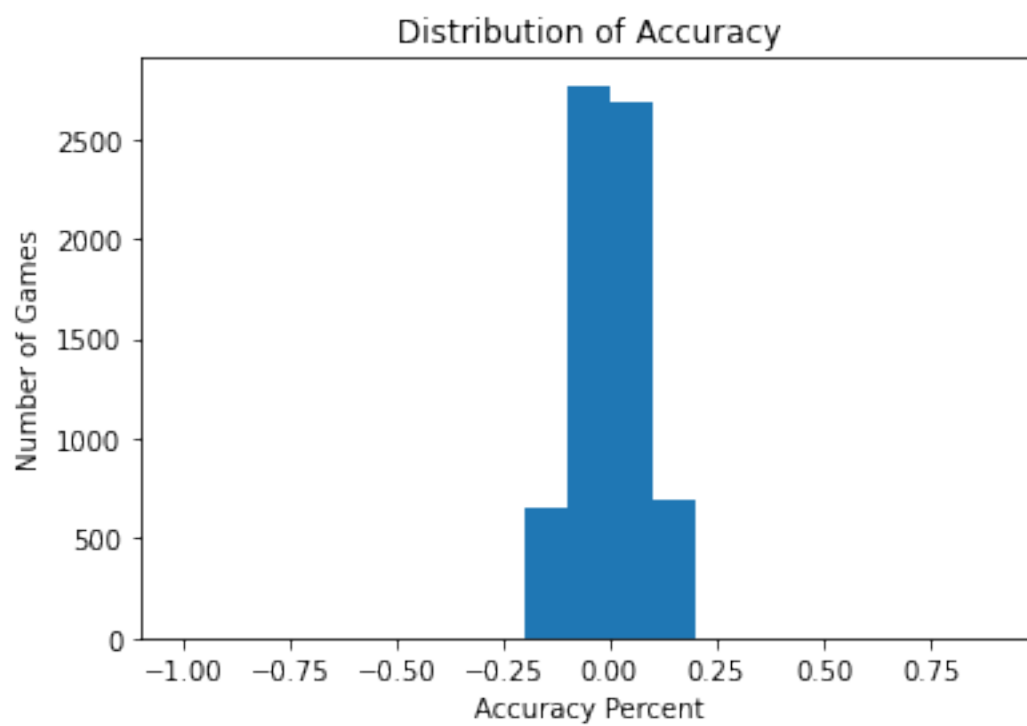


3 Data Normalization

The normalization technique I chose was mean normalization. The only column I removed from the original data was the date column.







References

[1] Vance, T. D. (2019, September 10). Arcade game stats. Kaggle. Retrieved February 21, 2022, from <https://www.kaggle.com/depmountaineer/arcade-game-stats>