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Which NBA stats pay the big bucks?

On average, the salary in the NBA has only been increasing in recent years, and currently stands at $6.4 million per season. Though $6.4 million is the average, it is far from being the median. The highest paid player in 2017-2018 season, Stephen Curry, made a whopping $35 million, with his contract guaranteeing an increase to $46 million by 2022. On the other hand, the lowest paid player with a contract is only earning about $1 million. So there is obviously a wide range in salaries among NBA players, with the average being much closer to the lower end, but it is my goal to find out **what exactly players do that allows them to earn more money in the NBA than others.**

Even within the league, players are trying to get even more money by performing as well as they possibly can. But every once in awhile, we find that a player is being paid more than WE THINK they deserve to be paid. Although **we** may think this, it may just be that we are looking at the wrong stats that allow a player to be paid more. My goal is to find **which stat category has the strongest correlation with amount earned for the season.** The stats that I will be looking at will include points-per-game, rebounds-per-game, assists-per-game, minutes played, and Win Shares, an aggregate statistic calculated to yield how many wins in a season that a player has contributed to the team. So basically, if you removed the player from the team, they would have lost that amount of games without them. This list of stat categories may change as I proceed with the project.

My client will be any player in the NBA who wants to make the most amount of money that he can, and any NBA General Manager who is deciding how much the team should spend

on a player when deciding what contract to give him. The player, if he desires to make more money, will be able to narrow down which aspect of his game that he can improve upon to yield the highest returns in salary. The GM will be able to use this information in multiple ways; 1.) once he knows the contributions that the player will likely make (from previous years), he will have a ballpark value for how much he is worth, and 2.) If there are multiple players on the market who are asking for the same salary, he will know which player will give him the biggest “bang for his buck”.

The data that I will use will come from the website ‘basketball-reference.com’. There is a data set that I can extract as a CSV file that provides me with all of the players’ current stats for the 2017-2018 season, and there is a separate data set that will provide me with the salaries for each player. I will merge these two tables together, and deal with the repeat values (because of players that played on multiple teams during the season) by making a subset of these players, and only using their first entry, as that is their total for the year. As two side projects, I would like to find an average “dollar-per-point” value or something similar, and I would also like to see if the stat category with the strongest correlation has changed throughout the years, and how/why it might have changed.