# Variables Influencing Points Scored Per Game By UVA Basketball

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#### **Introduction and Research Question:**

What are the most significant in-game factors that contribute towards points scored and thus win percentage per season in the NCAA?

College basketball is, by nature, a hard sport to predict, so we wanted to face the challenge of correctly predicting points scored per game by a team by using various in-game factors. Moreover, our interest in this space was piqued by several articles including "How Much Do Statistics Matter In Determining Success In Sports?" *Forbes* and "Analytics in College Hoops: A New Type of March Madness", *Michigan State University*. Our dataset encompasses statistics of every NCAA basketball game from 2011 to 2019, but we decided to narrow our focus to UVA. Common metrics in college basketball, and those that we will be testing, relate to three pointers, field goals, rebounds, turnovers, and steals. We will complete exploratory data analysis to decide which in-game factors to focus on, and then we will create and test our hypothesized model to help answer our research question.

#### **Data Summary**

The data was collected from the kaggle database and was compiled by Nate Duncan, a reputable NBA sports researcher and analyst. The dataset consists of NCAA Regular Season Basketball Games, and includes every team and game dating back to 2011. Duncan created the dataset, and sourced the the data off the game logs from the website *sports-reference.com*. The dataset can be viewed here: <a href="www.kaggle.com/nateduncan/2011current-ncaa-basketball-games/data">www.kaggle.com/nateduncan/2011current-ncaa-basketball-games/data</a>. While Duncan did not state the purpose of why he created this, it is likely that the dataset is used to analyze the past performance of teams and predicting their chances in the NCAA tournament. Each observation represents a single game and lists the statistics of that game, such as the date it occured, if the team won, how many points were scored, etc. Since our research question narrowed the focus to just UVA, the data was subsetted UVA games only. The "site" variable was re-coded to account for dummy variables, since the values home, away, and neutral are qualitative. They were divided into DumHome (Home - 1, Away - 0) and DumNeutral (Neutral - 1, Away - 0). Furthermore, four dummy variables were added to the dataset in SAS that record whether UVA had more blocks, steals, and rebounds, and fewer turnovers than their opponent.

Below is a data "dictionary" that includes the name of each variables, a brief description, and whether the variable was quantitative or categorical:

Name of Variable	Description	Type (categorical or quantitative)
pts	Number of points scored in the game by UVA	Quantitative

Site	Determines if the game was played home, away, or at a neutral location	Categorical
opp_pts	Number of points scored by opponent in the game	Quantitative
fg	Number of field goals scored in game	Quantitative
fga	Number of field goals attempted in the game	Quantitative
fg_per	Field goal percentage	Quantitative
3p	Number of three point shots made	Quantitative
3pa	Three point shots attempted	Quantitative
3p_per	Percentage of three point shots made	Quantitative
ft	Free throws made	Quantitative
fta	Free throws attempted	Quantitative
ft_per	Free throw percentage	Quantitative
orb	Offensive rebounds	Quantitative
trb	Total rebounds	Quantitative
ast	Number of Assists	Quantitative
stl	Number of steals	Quantitative
blk	Number of blocks	quantitative
tov	Number of turnovers	Quantitative
pf	Number of personal fouls	Quantitative
opp_fg	Opponent field goals scored	Quantitative

opp_fga	Opponent field goals attempted	Quantitative
opp_fg_ per	Opponent field goal percentage	Quantitative
opp_3p	Opponent three point shots scored	Quantitative
opp_3pa	Opponent three point shots attempted	Quantitative
opp_3p_per	Opponent three point percentage	Quantitative
opp_ft	Opponent free throws scored	Quantitative
opp_fta	Opponent free throws attempted	Quantitative
opp_ft_per	Opponent three throw percentage	Quantitative
opp_orb	Opponent offensive rebound	quantitative
opp_trb	Opponent total rebounds	quantitative
opp_ast	Opponent assists	quantitative
opp_stl	Opponent steals	quantitative
opp_blk	Opponent blocks	quantitative
opp_tov	Opponent turnovers	quantitative
opp_pf	Opponent personal fouls.	quantitative

### **Advantages and Disadvantages**

#### Advantages:

This dataset possesses a large number of metrics recorded over 8 seasons of college basketball. Every game has the same metrics recorded which allows for easy comparison and standardization. The depth of the statistics recorded will allow for a thorough analysis and multiple linear regression of the data. Furthermore, since the data is sourced directly from in-game logs, it is unbiased and suitable for statistical analysis.

# Disadvantages:

A disadvantage that arises when considering our data is that, with only analyzing UVA basketball, it would be difficult to extrapolate our findings to the ACC or the NCAA as a whole. Teams across the NCAA have varying styles of play, so using analysis of UVA, a team with a very unique playing style, to estimate other win percentages across the NCAA would probably

not be feasible. Also, since every year brings a different UVA team, without a viable way of separating our analysis by year, we are considering that every UVA team functions similarly despite the fact that players come and go every year. Nevertheless, this disadvantage is mitigated by the tenure of UVA coach Tony Bennett during the entire time span of the dataset, who in fact is known to establish his style of play year after year.

# **Exploratory Data Analysis**

After examining scatter plots for quantitative variables (*Appendix: Appendix: Figures 1-4*) and plots of means for qualitative variables (*Appendix: Figures 5-10*) and their corresponding relationship with points scored, we have identified the nature of each:

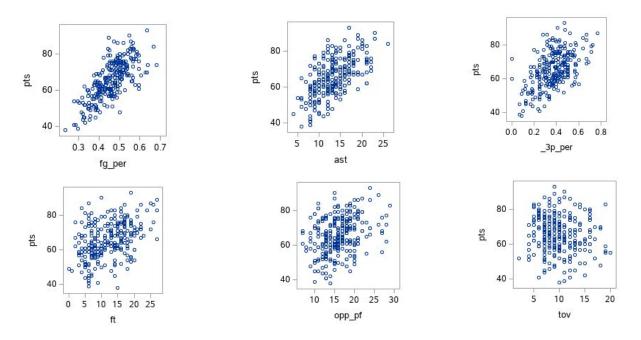
Positive Linear	Negative Linear	Concave Down Curvilinear	No Relationship Observed
	Turnovers, Opponent Total Rebounds, Opponent Blocks	Free Throws, Opponent Personal Fouls	3-point attempts, Free Throw Percent, Offensive Rebounds, Total Rebounds, Steals, Blocks, Personal Fouls, Opponent Field Goals, Opponent Field Goals Attempted, Opponent Field Goal Percent, Opponent 3-pointers, Opponent 3-point Percent, Opponent Free Throws, Opponent Free Throw Attempts, Opponent Offensive Rebounds, Opponent Assists, Opponent Steals, Opponent Turnovers

We then selected six quantitative and three qualitative variables that appear to have the strongest relationship with points scored.

#### *Quantitative:*

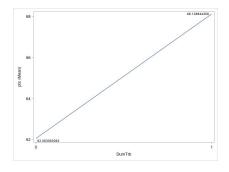
- 1. Field Goal Percentage As UVA's field goal percentage increases, the total points scored in that game also appears to increase linearly in a positive relationship.
- 2. Assists As the number of assists recorded by UVA increases, the total points scored in that game also appears to increase linearly in a positive relationship.
- 3. 3-Point percentage As UVA's three point percentage increases, the total points scored in that game also appears to increase linearly in a positive relationship.
- 4. Free throws made As UVA makes more free throws, their total points scored increases in a concave down curvilinear fashion.
- 5. Opponent Personal Fouls As UVA's opponent records more personal fouls, their total points scored increases in a concave down curvilinear fashion.
- 6. Turnovers As UVA's number of turnovers decrease, the total points scored in that game also appears to increase linearly in a negative relationship.

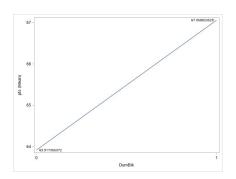
The corresponding scatter plots can be seen below:

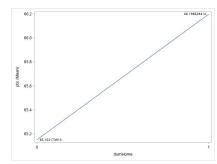


#### Qualitative:

- 1. DumTrb UVA tends to score more points on average where they out-rebound their opponent.
- 2. DumBlk UVA tends to score more points on average where they record more blocks than their opponent.
- 3. DumHome- UVA tends to score more points on average when they are at home rather than away.

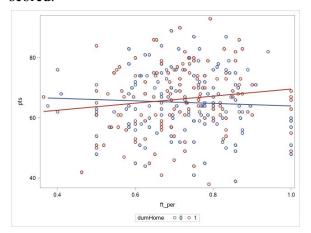


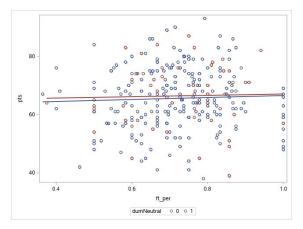




#### Interaction:

We also explored the interaction between free throw percentage (quantitative) and site (home vs away and neutral vs away) in order to determine whether this interaction has an impact on points scored.





These plots indicate that the ft\_per and dumHome have a clear interaction, while ft\_per and dumNeutral do not interact. This is indicated by the intersection pictured in the first graph while the second graph has lines that are nearly parallel and do not intersect.

#### **Exploratory Proposed Model**

$$E(y) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_{fgPer} + \beta_2 x_{ast} + \beta_3 x_{3pPer} + \beta_4 x_{ft} + \beta_5 (x_{ft}^2) + \beta_6 x_{ftPer} + \beta_7 x_{oppPf} + \beta_8 (x_{oppPf}^2) + \beta_9 x_{tov} + \beta_{10} x_{DumHome} + \beta_{11} x_{DumTrb} + \beta_{12} x_{DumBlk} + \beta_{13} x_{dumHome} x_{ftPer}$$

# **Initial Analysis**

A rejection region of p-value > 0.05 will be used throughout the analysis process. We will begin with all the variables of interest determined from EDA, and use a combination of Global F-tests, Nested F-tests, and T-tests to find which are most suitable for multiple linear regression.

# Stage 1 - Quantitative and Higher Order Quantitative Terms

$$E(y) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_{fgPer} + \beta_2 x_{ast} + \beta_3 x_{3pPer} + \beta_4 x_{ft} + \beta_5 (x_{ft}^2) + \beta_6 x_{ftPer} + \beta_7 x_{oppPf} + \beta_8 (x_{oppPf}^2) + \beta_9 x_{tov}$$

We first conducted a test on overall significance using the Global F-test:

$$H_0$$
:  $\beta_1 = \beta_2 = \beta_3 = \beta_4 = \beta_5 = \beta_6 = \beta_7 = \beta_8 = \beta_9 = 0$ 

 $H_a$ : At least one of  $\beta_1$ ,  $\beta_2$ ,  $\beta_3$ ,  $\beta_4$ ,  $\beta_5$ ,  $\beta_6$ ,  $\beta_7$ ,  $\beta_8$ ,  $\beta_9 \neq 0$ 

Test statistic: F = 104.99

p-value: < 0.0001

Output: Appendix: Figure 11

Since the p-value for the model that included all quantitative predictors is less than the significance level (0.05 > 0.0001), we reject the null hypothesis. Mean Squared Error, MSE, for this model was 24.64 and the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> value was 77.42%, which indicates that the predictors in this model explain about 77.42% of the variation in points scored. Therefore the overall model appears to be statistically significant in predicting UVA's number of points scored per game. In running this test, we were also able to obtain relevant t-test values for each predictor, including the curvilinear terms. As a result, both oppPf<sup>2</sup> and ft<sup>2</sup> did not display significance at the 0.05 alpha level. Therefore, these terms can be dropped from the model. Although ftPer also did not display significance individually, it will be retained at this point as we will test its interaction in a later stage.

End Stage 1 Model:

$$E(y) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_{fgPer} + \beta_2 x_{ast} + \beta_3 x_{3pPer} + \beta_4 x_{ftPer} + \beta_5 x_{tov} + \beta_6 x_{ft} + \beta_7 x_{oppPf}$$

#### Stage 2 - Adding qualitative variables

$$E(y) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_{fgPer} + \beta_2 x_{ast} + \beta_3 x_{3pPer} + \beta_4 x_{ftPer} + \beta_5 x_{tov} + \beta_6 x_{ft} + \beta_7 x_{oppPf} + \beta_8 x_{dumHome} + \beta_9 x_{dumTrb} + \beta_{10} x_{dumBlk}$$

In order to determine the significance of adding the qualitative variables to the model, first a Global F-test will be performed to determine the overall significance of the model.

Global F-test:

$$H_0$$
:  $\beta_1 = \beta_2 = \beta_3 = \beta_4 = \beta_5 = \beta_6 = \beta_7 = \beta_8 = \beta_9 = \beta_{10} = 0$ 

 $H_a$ : at least one of  $\beta_1$ ,  $\beta_2$ ,  $\beta_3$ ,  $\beta_4$ ,  $\beta_5$ ,  $\beta_6$ ,  $\beta_7$ ,  $\beta_8$ ,  $\beta_9$ ,  $\beta_{10} \neq 0$ 

Test statistic: F = 95.07

p-value: < 0.0001

Output: Appendix: Figure 12

Since the p-value for the model is less than the significance level (0.05 > 0.0001), we reject the null hypothesis. Mean Squared Error, MSE, for this model was 24.55 and the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> value was 77.51%, which indicates that the predictors in this model explain about 77.51% of the variation in points scored. This is slightly higher than the Stage 1 Model.

Next, to test the contribution of just the added qualitative terms, a nested F-test will be used. We will compare the reduced model from the end of Stage 1 and the complete model from the beginning of Stage 2, shown above. If the Mean Squared Error from the complete model is significantly less than that of the reduced model, it will be used as a more accurate predictor of points scored per game.

Nested F-test:

 $H_0$ :  $\beta_8 = \beta_9 = \beta_{10} = 0$ 

 $H_a$ : at least one of  $\beta_7$ ,  $\beta_8$ ,  $\beta_9 \neq 0$ 

Test statistic: F = 1.53

p-value: 0.2061

Output: Appendix: Figure 12

Since the p-value for the alternative model is greater than the significance level (0.05 < 0.2061), we fail to reject the null hypothesis, therefore the alternative, complete model which holds the qualitative terms is not significant in predicting UVA's number of points scored per game. As a result, the dummy variables for blocks and total rebounds are not included in the model. However, we will retain the dummy variable for home vs away, dumHome, as we plan to use it in an interaction term in the next stage.

End Stage 2 Model:

$$E(y) = \beta_{0} + \beta_{1}x_{fgPer} + \beta_{2}x_{ast} + \beta_{3}x_{3pPer} + \beta_{4}x_{ftPer} + \beta_{5}x_{tov} + \beta_{6}x_{ft} + \beta_{7}x_{oppPf} + \beta_{8}x_{tov} + \beta_{9}x_{dumHome}$$

# Stage 3 - Adding Interaction terms

$$E(y) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_{fgPer} + \beta_2 x_{ast} + \beta_3 x_{3pPer} + \beta_4 x_{ftPer} + \beta_5 x_{tov} + \beta_6 x_{ft} + \beta_7 x_{oppPf} + \beta_8 x_{tov} + \beta_9 x_{dumHome} + \beta_{10} x_{dumHome} x_{ftPer}$$

We first conducted a test on overall significance using the Global F-test:

$$H_0$$
:  $\beta_1 = \beta_2 = \beta_3 = \beta_4 = \beta_5 = \beta_6 = \beta_7 = \beta_8 = \beta_9 = \beta_{10} = 0$ 

 $H_a$ : At least one of  $\beta_1$ ,  $\beta_2$ ,  $\beta_3$ ,  $\beta_4$ ,  $\beta_5$ ,  $\beta_6$ ,  $\beta_7$ ,  $\beta_8$ ,  $\beta_9$ ,  $\beta_{10} \neq 0$ 

Test statistic: F = 104.37

p-value: < 0.0001

Output: Appendix: Figure 13

Since the p-value for the model that included all quantitative predictors is less than the significance level (0.05 > 0.0001), we reject the null hypothesis. Mean Squared Error, MSE, for this model was 24.76 and the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> value was 77.31%, which indicates that the predictors in this model explain about 77.31% of the variation in points scored. Therefore the overall model appears to be statistically significant in predicting UVA's number of points scored per game. In

running this test, we were also able to obtain relevant t-test values for each predictor, including the interaction term. The interaction between dumHome and Free Throw percent did not display significance at the 0.05 alpha level. Therefore, this term, dumHome, and ft\_per can be dropped from the model, as the significance of the last two were shown to not be sufficient above. Furthermore, in looking at the individual t-values, oppPf, which has been retained in the model throughout the process, is not a significant predictor at the 0.05 alpha level and will be dropped before forming the final model.

## **Final Proposed Model**

$$E(y) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_{fgPer} + \beta_2 x_{ast} + \beta_3 x_{3pPer} + \beta_4 x_{ft} + \beta_5 x_{tov}$$

Global F-test:

$$H_0$$
:  $\beta_1 = \beta_2 = \beta_3 = \beta_4 = \beta_5 = 0$ 

 $H_a$ : At least one of  $\beta_1,\,\beta_2,\,\beta_3,\,\beta_4,\,\beta_5\neq 0$ 

Test statistic: 188.93 P-value: < 0.0001

Output: Appendix: Figure 14

Since the p-value for the model is less than the significance level (0.05 > 0.0001), we reject the null hypothesis, therefore the overall model is significant in predicting UVA's number of points scored per game.

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
End Stage Model	Mean Points Scored = $\beta_0$ + $\beta_1 x_{fgPer}$ + $\beta_2 x_{ast}$ + $\beta_3 x_{3pPer}$ + $\beta_4 x_{ft}$ + $\beta_5 x_{ftPer}$ + $\beta_6 x_{tov}$ + $\beta_7 x_{oppPf}$	Mean Points Scored = $\beta_0$ + $\beta_1 x_{fgPer}$ + $\beta_2 x_{ast}$ + $\beta_3 x_{3pPer}$ + $\beta_4 x_{ft}$ + $\beta_5 x_{ftPer}$ + $\beta_6 x_{tov}$ + $\beta_7 x_{dumHome}$ + $\beta_8 x_{oppPf}$	Mean Points Scored = $\beta_0$ + $\beta_1 x_{fgPer} + \beta_2 x_{ast} + \beta_3 x_{3pPer} + \beta_4 x_{ft} + \beta_5 x_{tov}$
Model Utility	Global F-Test, Significant	Global F-Test, Significant	Global F-Test, Significant
MSE	24.55	24.76	24.57
Adj R-Squared	77.51%	77.31%	77.49%

We chose this model since all the variables are significant in predicting the number of points UVA scores per game, as opposed to the earlier models which had several variables and interactions that did not contribute towards the model.

# **Appendix**

#### SAS Code:

```
filename newdata '/folders/myfolders/DATA/gamesUVA.csv';
 proc import datafile=newdata
           dbms=csv
          out=mydata.gamesUVA
replace;
      getnames=yes;
run;
*proc contents allows you to ensure your data uploaded as desired;
proc contents data=mydata.gamesUVA;
run:
* setting dummy variables;
data mydata.gamesUVAl ; *create a new data set saved to your library;
    set mydata.gamesUVA; *set with the original table ;
     if trb > opp_trb then DumTrb = 1;
    DumStl = 0;
if stl > opp_stl then DumStl = 1;
    DumBlk = 0;
if blk > opp_blk then DumBlk = 1;
    DumTov = 0;
if tov < opp_tov then DumTov = 1;</pre>
run;
* EDA, multiple scatter plots were made since they would not all fit on the same page; proc sgscatter data=mydata.gamesUVA1; plot pts * (opp_pts fg fga fg_per _3p _3pa _3p_per);
run;
proc sgscatter data=mydata.gamesUVA1;
plot pts * (ft fta ft_per orb trb ast stl blk tov);
run;
proc sgscatter data=mydata.gamesUVA1;
plot pts * (pf opp_fg opp_fga opp_fg_per opp_3p opp_3pa opp_3p_per opp_ft opp_fta);
proc sgscatter data=mydata.gamesUVA1;
plot pts * (opp_ft_per opp_orb opp_trb opp_ast opp_stl opp_blk opp_tov opp_pf);
run;
* for dummy variables;
proc sgplot data = mydata.gamesUVAl;
vline dumTrb/ response = pts stat=mean datalabel;
run;
proc sgplot data = mydata.gamesUVA1;
vline dumStl/ response = pts stat=mean datalabel;
run;
```

```
proc sgplot data = mydata.gamesUVA1;
vline dumBlk/ response = pts stat=mean datalabel;
run;
proc sgplot data = mydata.gamesUVA1;
vline dumTov/ response = pts stat=mean datalabel;
* creating interactions;
data mydata.gamesUVA2; *create a new data set saved to your library;
    set mydata.gamesUVA1; *set with the original table ;
    dumHome = 0;
if site = "Home" then dumHome = 1;
    dumNeutral = 0;
    if site = "Neutral" then dumNeutral = 1;
    homeFt = dumHome * ft_per;
neutralFt = dumNeutral * ft_per;
    ftsqr = ft * ft;
                       * higher order variable;
data mydata.gamesUVA2 ; *create a new data set saved to your library;
   set mydata.gamesUVA2; *set with the original table ;
   oppPfsqr = opp_pf * opp_pf; * higher order variable;
* line plot of means for dummy site variables;
proc sgplot data = mydata.gamesUVA2;
vline dumHome/ response = pts stat=mean datalabel;
proc sgplot data = mydata.gamesUVA2;
vline dumNeutral/ response = pts stat=mean datalabel;
* plotting interactions;
proc sgplot data = mydata.gamesUVA2;
vline fg / group = dumHome response = pts stat=mean datalabel;
* interaction of home vs. away;
proc sgplot data=mydata.gamesUVA2;
scatter y=pts x=ft_per/group=dumHome;
reg y=pts x=ft_per/group=dumHome;
run;
* interaction of neutral vs. away;
proc sgplot data=mydata.gamesUVA2;
scatter y=pts x=ft_per/group=dumNeutral;
reg y=pts x=ft per/group=dumNeutral;
run:
* EDA Model;
* first stage, just quantitative variables;
proc reg data=mydata.gamesUVA2 plots=none;
model pts = fg_per ast _3p_per ft ftsqr ft_per opp_pf oppPfsqr tov;
run;
```

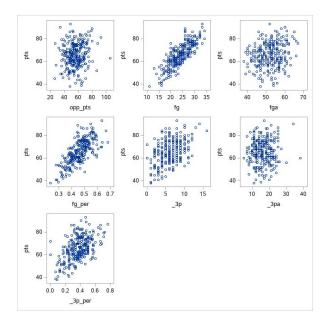
```
* second stage, qualitative variables;
proc reg data=mydata.gamesUVA2 plots=none;
model pts = fg_per ast _3p_per ft ft_per opp_pf tov dumHome dumTrb dumBlk;

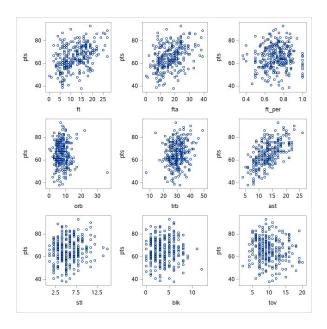
run;

* nested f-test;
proc reg data=mydata.gamesUVA2 plots=none;
model pts = fg_per ast _3p_per ft ft_per opp_pf tov dumHome dumTrb dumBlk;
test dumHome, dumTrb, dumBlk;
run;

* third stage, interaction terms;
proc reg data=mydata.gamesUVA2 plots=none;
model pts = fg_per ast _3p_per ft ft_per opp_pf tov dumHome homeFt;
run;

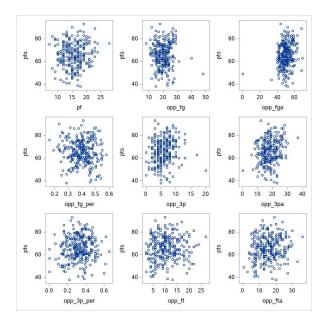
* final model;
proc reg data=mydata.gamesUVA2 plots=none;
model pts = fg_per ast _3p_per ft tov;
run;
```

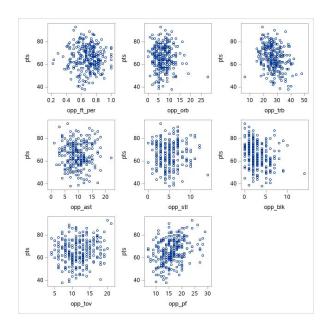




Appendix: Figure 1

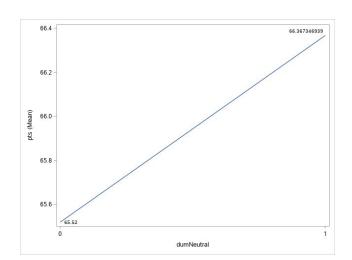
Appendix: Figure 2

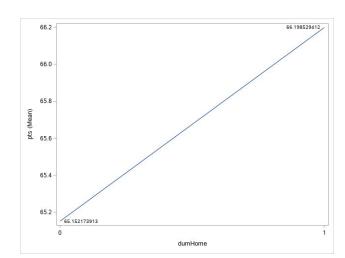




Appendix: Figure 3

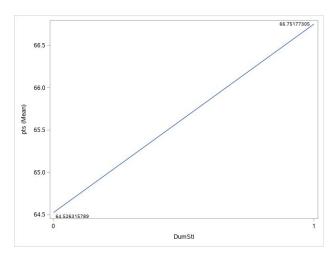
Appendix: Figure 4

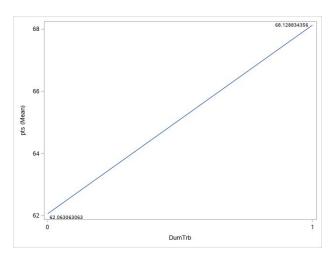




Appendix: Figure 5

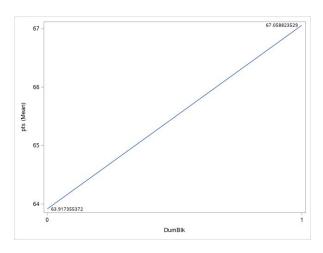
Appendix: Figure 6

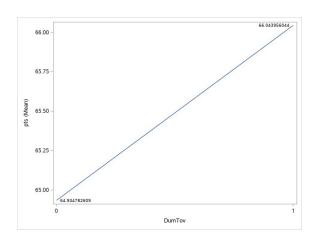




Appendix: Figure 7

Appendix: Figure 8





Appendix: Figure 9

Appendix: Figure 10



Appendix: Figure 11



Appendix: Figure 12



	Number of Observations Read 275									
	Number of Observations Used						274			
	Numbe	r of O	bserva	ations	with	Missir	ng Valu	ies	1	
			Ana	alysis	of Va	riance				
Source DF S		Sum o		Mean Square		F Value		Pr > F		
Model		5	5	232	11	4642.2	5690	18	38.93	<.0001
Error		268	658	5.1534	15	24.5	7147			
Correcte	d Total	273	3	2979	96					
	Root MSE		4.9569		R-Square		0.7790			
	Dependent Mean		an 65.6715		Adj R-Sq		0.7749			
	Coeff Var			7.5481						
			Para	ameter	Esti	mates				
Vari	iable			rameter S stimate		Standard Error		lue	Pr>	-  t
Inte	rcept	1	18.3	18.30357		1.96577		9.31	<.00	001
fg_I	per	1	70.64309		5	5.21224 1		3.55	<.00	001
ast		1	0.62489		0	.09930	1 6	6.29	<.00	001
_3p	_per	1	11.30358		2	2.54922		1.43	<.00	001
ft		1	0.70915		0	0.05326 1		3.31	<.00	001
tov		1	-0.62222		0	0.09178		3.78	<.00	001

Appendix: Figure 13 Appendix: Figure 14

#### Works Cited

Nate Duncan. "NCAA Regular Season Basketball Games." *Kaggle*, 6 Jan. 2019, www.kaggle.com/nateduncan/2011current-ncaa-basketball-games/data. "Sports Reference: Sports Stats, Fast, Easy, and up-to-Date." *Sports*, www.sports-reference.com/.

"Nate Duncan - MIT Sloan Analytics Conference." *MIT Sloan Sports Analytics Conference*, www.sloansportsconference.com/people/nate-duncan/.