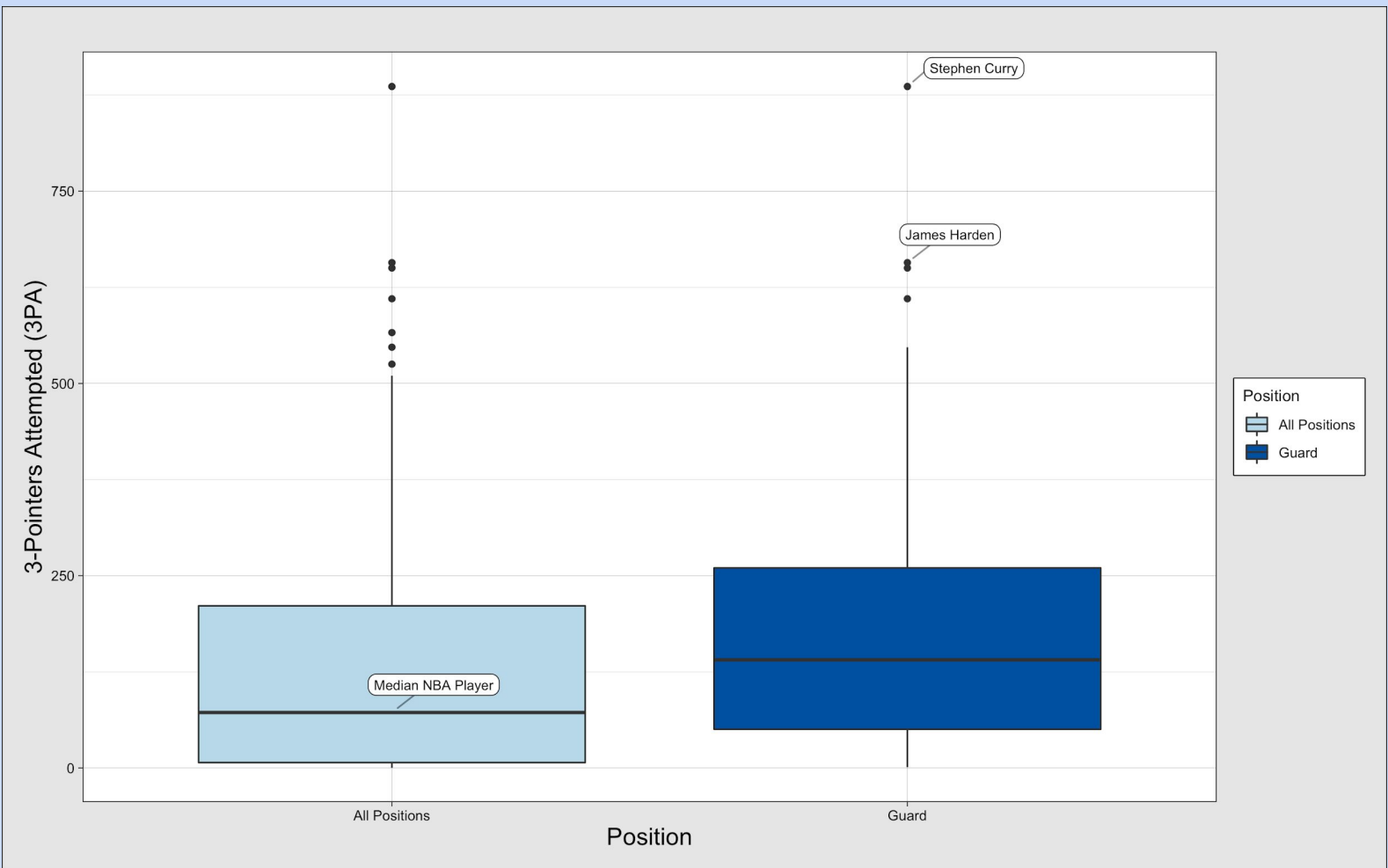


Did Stephen Curry Deserve to Win Unanimous MVP in 2016?

Introduction

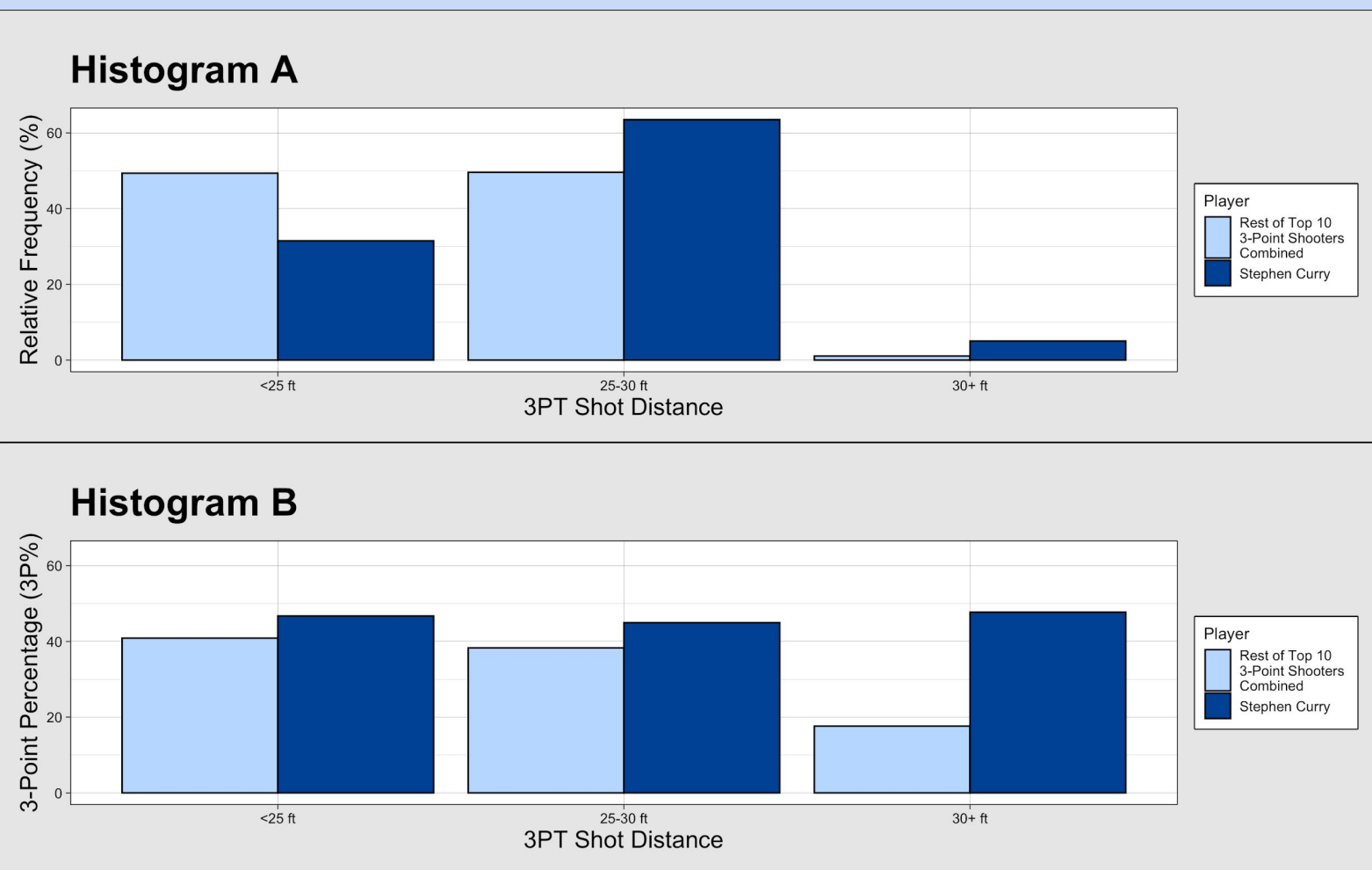
During the 2015-16 NBA Regular Season, Golden State Warriors guard **Stephen Curry became the first ever unanimous MVP**, receiving a perfect total of 131 first-place votes. He led the Warriors to the best regular season record in NBA history with 73 wins, all the while accumulating unprecedented accolades and separating himself considerably from the rest of the league. Disregarding team performance, **this project analyzes whether or not his individual statistics warrant a unanimous MVP title.** All data was scraped from NBA.com, ESPN.com, NBA.com, and Basketball-Reference.com.

3-Point Attempts by Position



Curry's **886 3PA** measured **4.78 standard deviations** higher than the average guard (173 3PA) and ranked **1st all-time** for a single season. Not only did he total 229 more 3PA than James Harden (2nd in 3PA) but he also attempted **over 12 times more than the median NBA player** (72 3PA).

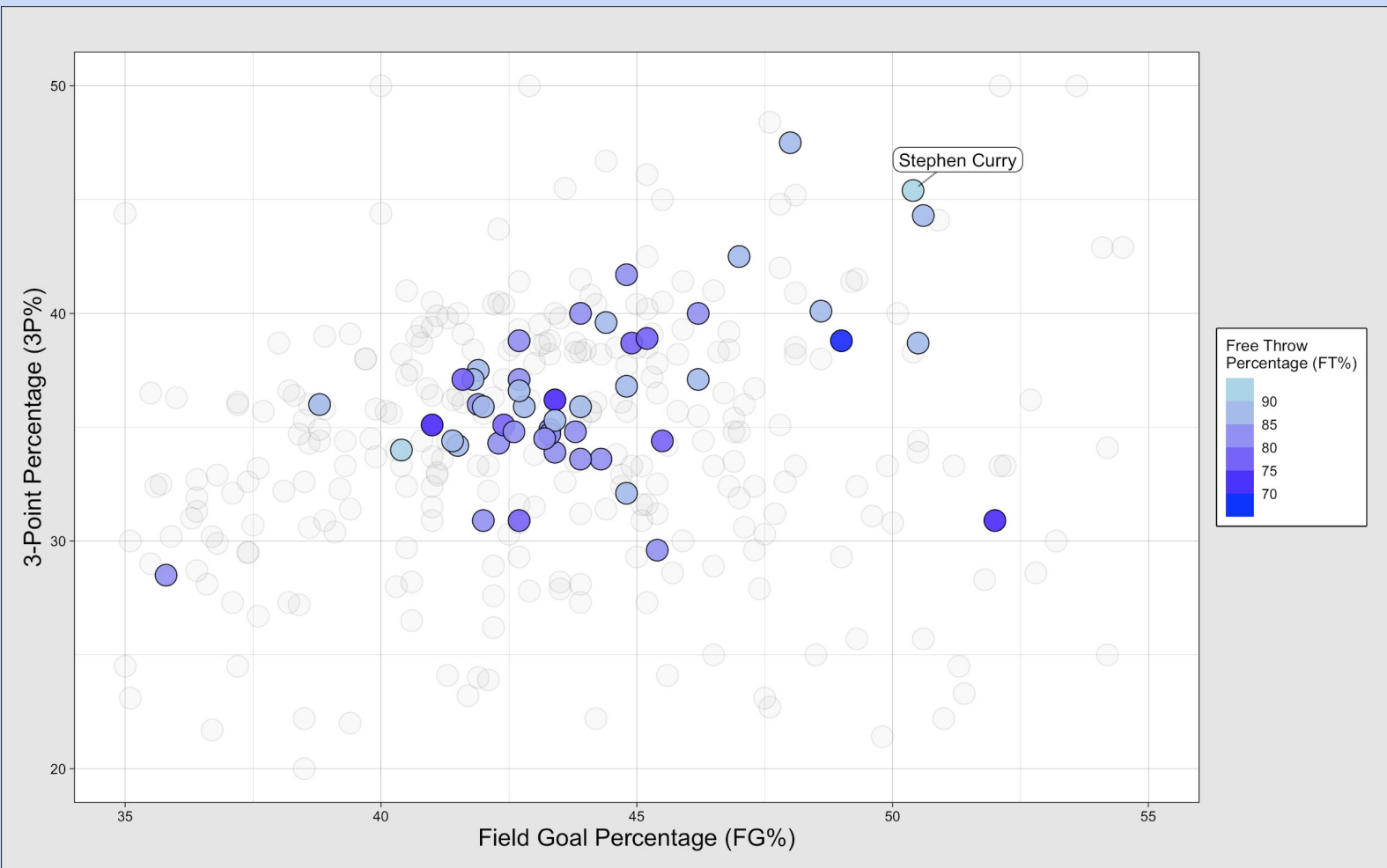
Curry vs Top 10 by 3PT Shot Distance



Curry attempted **63.5% of his 3s from 25-30 feet**, opposed to just 49.6% for the rest of the top 10 shooters combined, ranked by total 3PM (Histogram A).

He outshot the rest of the top 10 in **overall 3P% (45.4%)** by 6 percentage points as well as in each range by over 5 percentage points (Histogram B).

Field Goal Percentage by 3-Point Percentage



The colored data points reflect qualified players who made at least 300 field goals, 82 3-pointers, and 125 free throws, and the grey data points reflect players who failed to meet the statistical minimums above. Field goals are defined as any 2-PT or 3-PT shot attempt, excluding free throws.

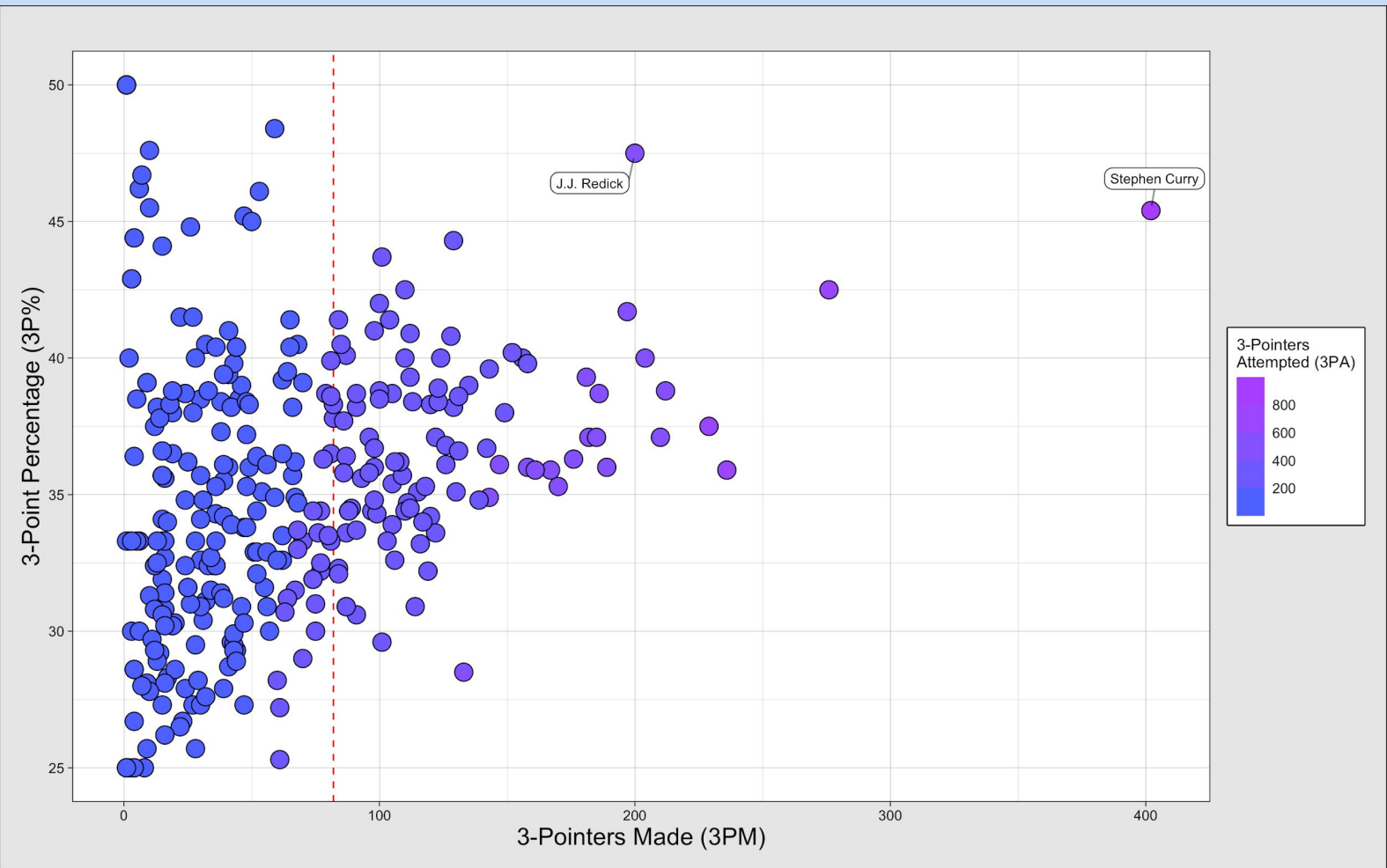
Among qualified players, Curry ranked **4th in FG%**, **2nd in 3P%**, and **1st in FT%**, becoming the **highest scorer (30.1 PPG)** ever to join the **50-40-90 club** (7 players total), consisting of players who shot at least 50% on field goals, 40% on 3-pointers, and 90% from the free-throw line in a single season.



Conclusion

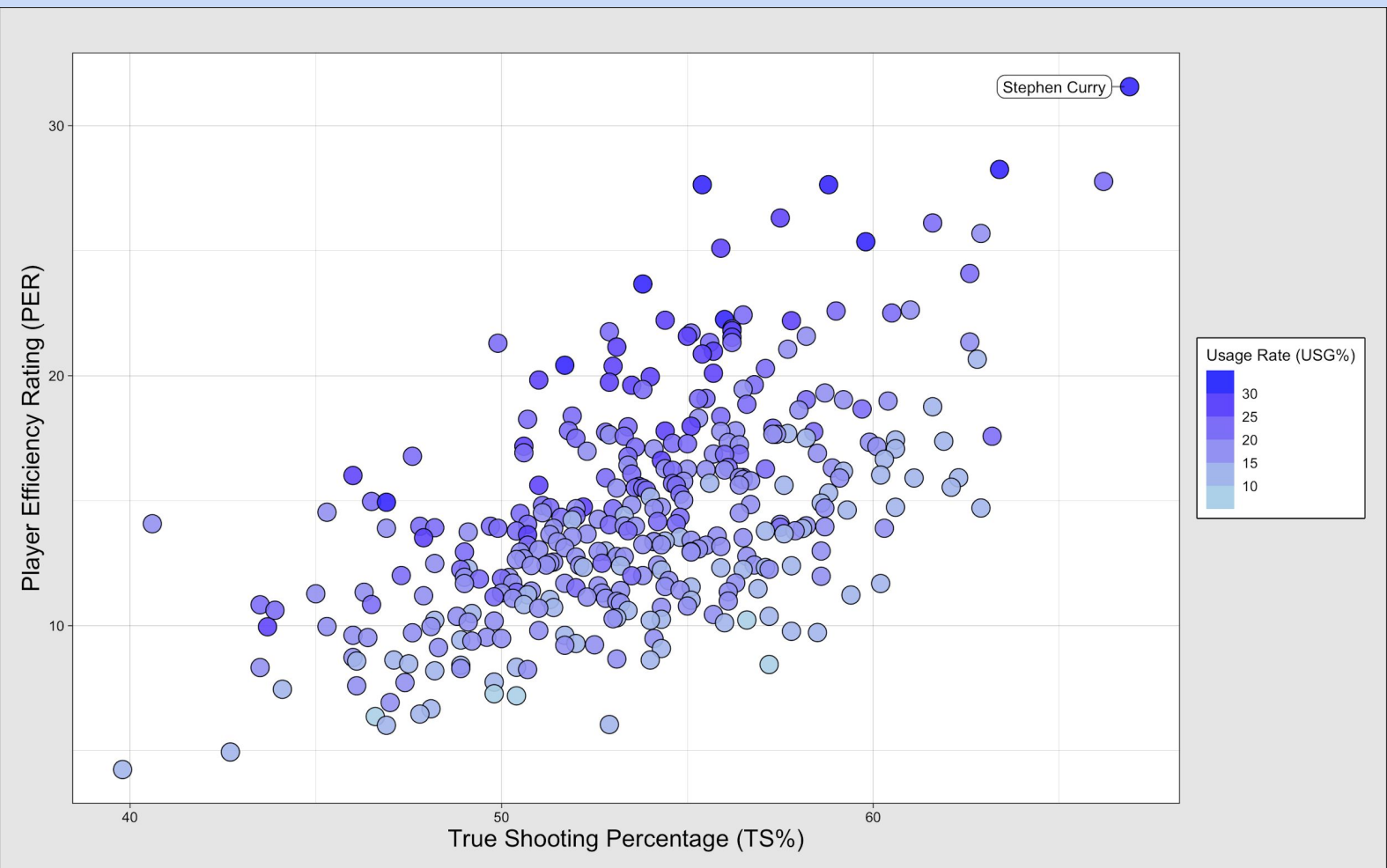
Based on individual statistics, Stephen Curry won unanimous MVP for two main reasons: **volume and efficiency.** No other player, in 2016 or in NBA history, compares to his 3-point volume and range, and his overall efficiency is unmatched. Evidently, Curry drastically stood out from a statistical perspective, **justifying his unanimous MVP title.**

3-Point Makes by 3-Point Percentage



Curry made a total of **402 3-pointers**, shattering the previous single-season record of 286, which he set in 2015, and measuring **6.68 standard deviations higher than the average NBA player.** Typically, increased volume leads to decreased efficiency, but, among qualified players (those with at least 82 3PM, indicated by the red dashed line), his 3P% **ranked 2nd** only to J.J. Redick, who made less than half of Curry's 3-point total.

True Shooting Percentage by Player Efficiency Rating



TS% weights and combines 2-point, 3-point, and free throw percentages into a single statistic that more accurately reflects a player's shooting percentage.

PER aggregates offensive and defensive statistics into one metric that measures a player's per-minute productivity, relative to the rest of the league.

USG% estimates the percentage of a team's plays that are used by a player resulting in either a field goal attempt, free throws, or a turnover.

Curry is the **only player in NBA history to rank 1st in both TS% and PER** in the same season, which he accomplished while holding the 4th-highest USG% (32.6%). His **PER of 31.46 ranks 1st all-time** among all guards, and his **TS% of 66.9%** was the **highest by a point guard** since 1996.