

HAS SPORTS BETTING RUINED THE NBA?

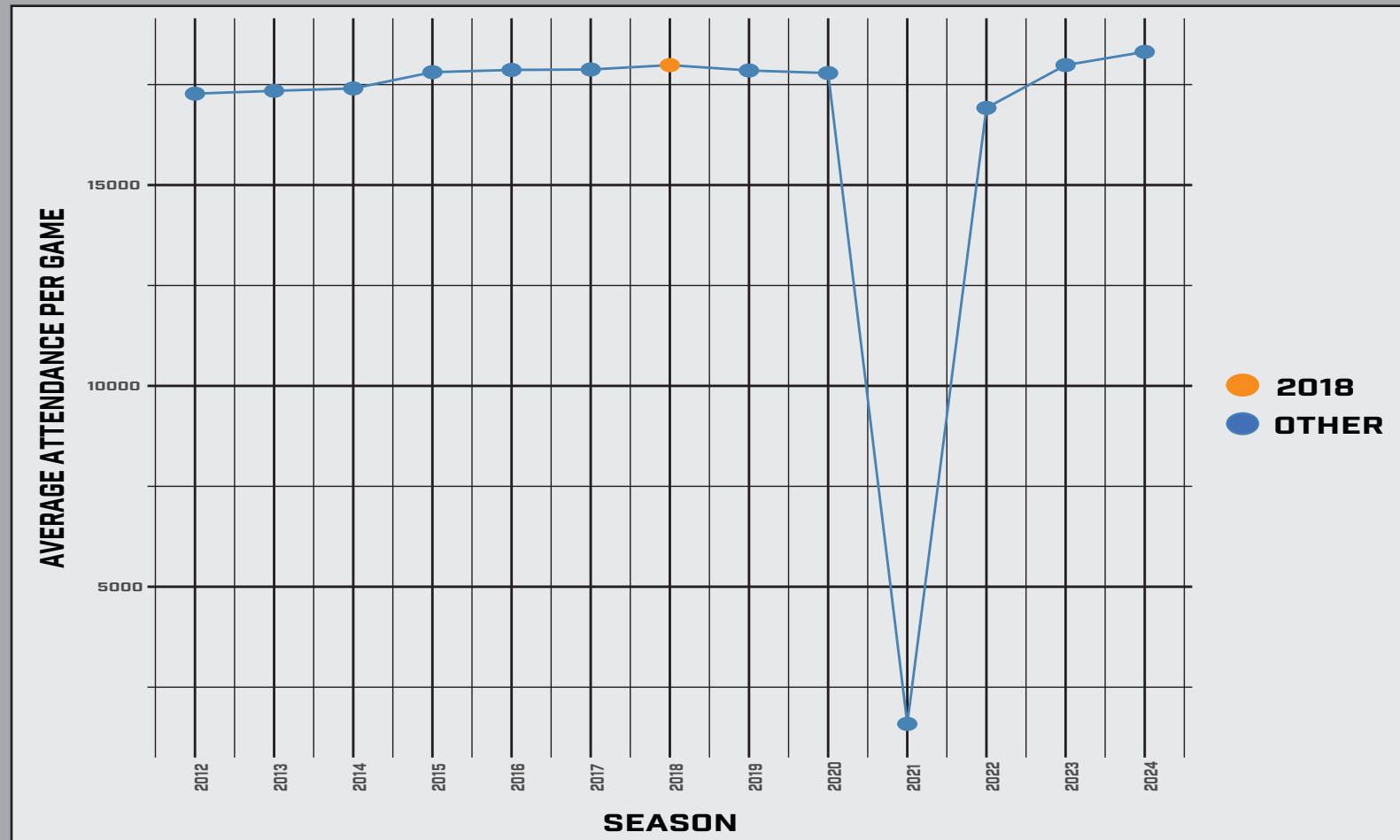
IN 2018, THE UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT LEGALIZED SPORTS BETTING, ALLOWING STATES TO REGULATE IT AS THEY SEE FIT.

SINCE THEN, NBA FANS HAVE SPECULATED THAT THE GAME HAS BEEN RUINED AS REFEREES PRIORITIZE FINANCIAL GAINS OVER QUALITY GAMES.

BUT WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?

ATTENDANCE : AVERAGE GAME ATTENDANCE BEFORE AND AFTER 2018

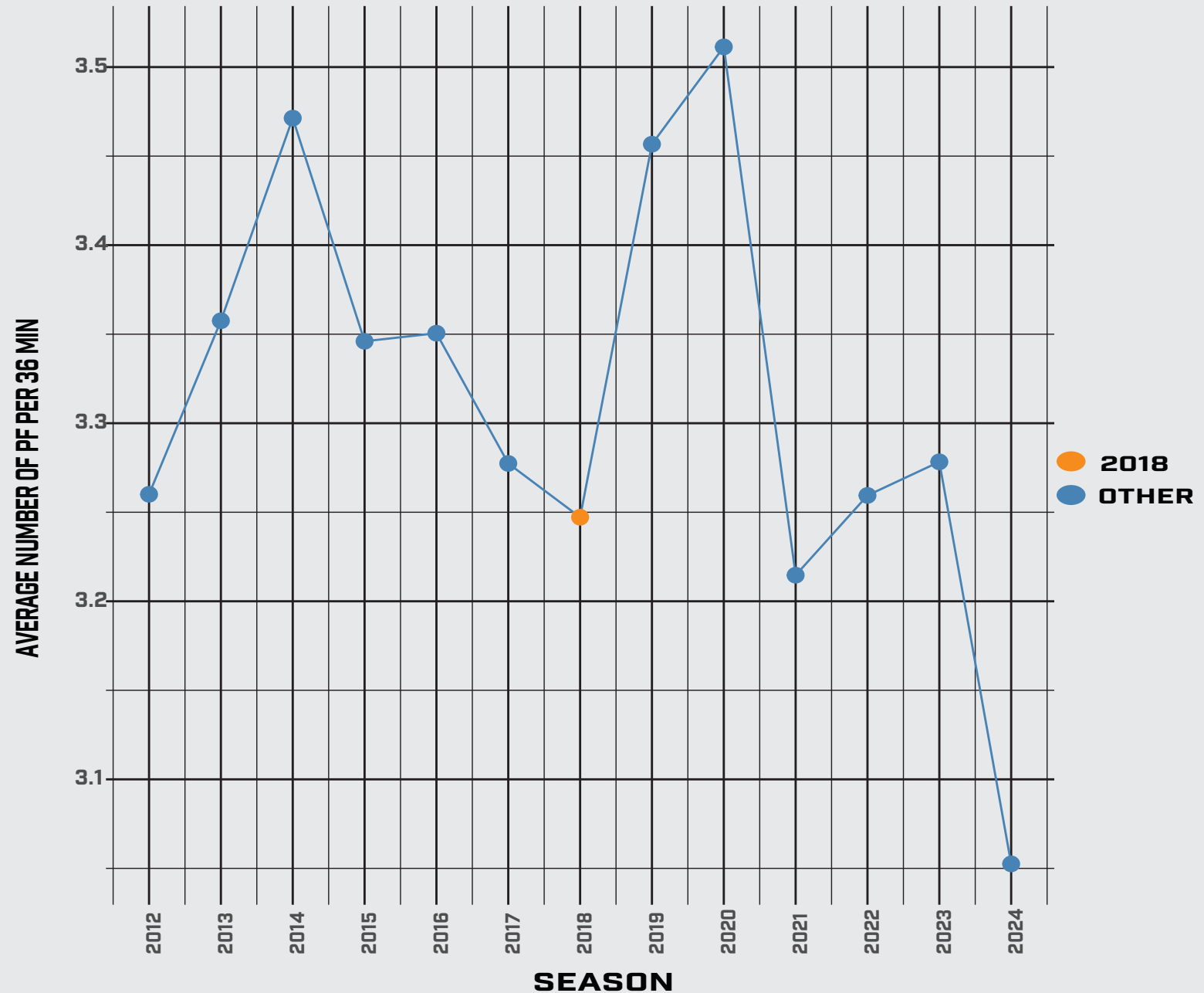
GAME ATTENDANCE ACROSS THE LEAGUE INITIALLY SAW A SLIGHT DIP THE FIRST COUPLE OF YEARS AFTER LEGALIZATION. HOWEVER, IT'S BEEN ON A STEADY INCLINE SINCE THE "BUBBLE YEAR" WHERE PART OF THE 2021 SEASON WAS HELD IN A QUARANTINE BUBBLE WITHOUT A LIVE AUDIENCE.



PERSONAL FOUL RATE : AVERAGE NUMBER OF PERSONAL FOULS CALLED PER 36MIN

GENERALLY, A GAME WITH A LOT OF STOPPAGES IS BORING TO WATCH BECAUSE IT DISRUPTS GAME PLAY.

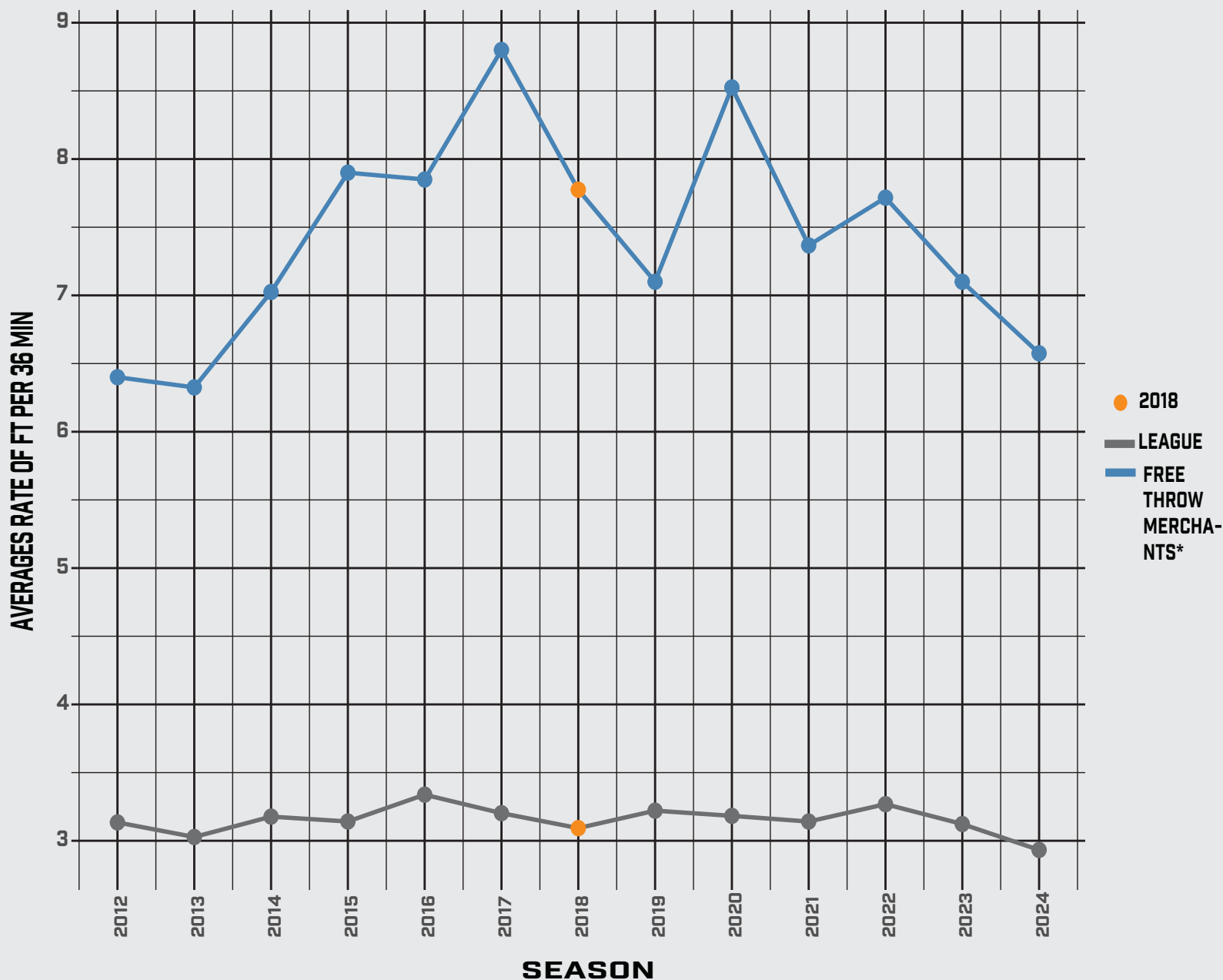
STOPPAGES CAUSED BY PERSONAL FOUL (PF) CALLS WE'RE ON THE DECLINE PRIOR TO 2018. AFTER AN INITIAL SHARP INCREASE THEY CONTINTUED THEIR DECLINING TREND.



FREE THROW RATE : AVERAGE RATE OF FREE THROWS PER 36 MIN

STOPPAGES CAUSED BY FREE THROW ATTEMPTS HAVE BEEN STEADY IN THE LEAGUE OVERALL WITH A SLIGHT DECLINE THE PAST COUPLE OF YEARS.

FREE THROW MERCHANTS HAVE ALSO SEEN A RECENT DECLINE.

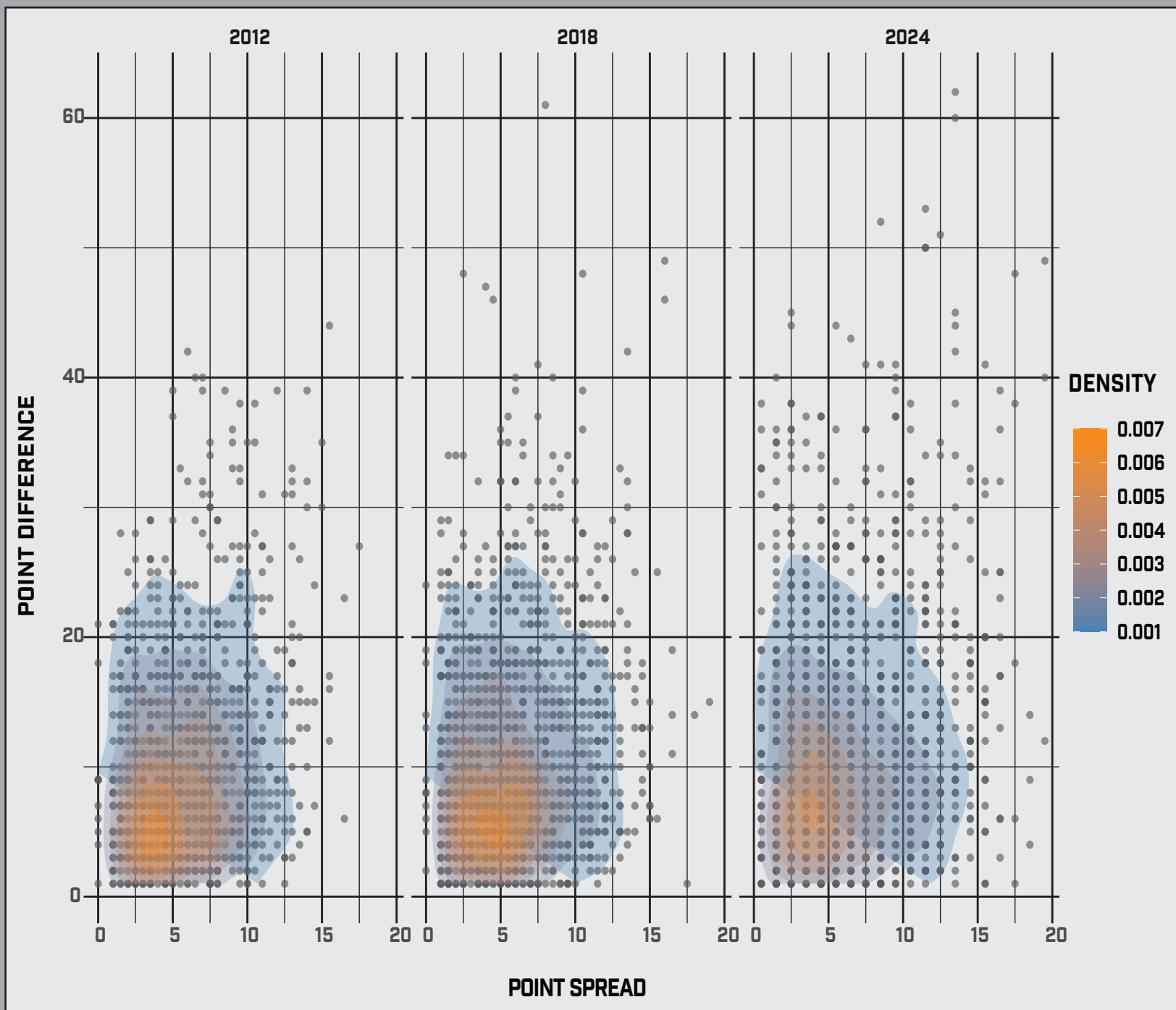


*FREE THROW MERCHANTS ARE PLAYERS WHO'S GAME RELIES HEAVILY ON FREE THROWS TO SCORE POINTS. THEY SPECIALIZE IN DRAWING SHOOTING FOULS SO THEY CAN GET TO THE LINE. THEIR ABILITY TO SCORE THEREFORE COULD BE SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACTED BY A REFEE'S ABILITY TO ENFORCE RULES, CONSISTENCY AND ULTERIOR MOTIVES. THIS GRAPH USED LEBRON JAMES, JAMES HARDEN, JIMMY BUTLER, AND RUSSEL WESTBROOK AS FREE THROW MERCHANTS GIVEN THEIR HIGH NUMBER OF FREE THROW ATTEMPTS AND PERCENTAGE BETWEEN 2012 AND 2024





CLOSE GAMES AND BETTING SPREADS : CORRELATION BETWEEN POINT DIFFERENCE AND SPREAD

POINT SPREADS LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD IN SPORTS BETTING BY INDICATING HOW MUCH A TEAM MUST WIN BY IN ORDER FOR THE BET TO PAYOUT.

IN 2012 AND 2018 GAMES FINISHED "CLOSE TO THE SPREAD" WITH MORE COMPETITIVE GAMES. WHILE GAMES IN 2024 HAD HIGHER POINT DIFFERENTIALS ACROSS ALL SPREADS.



IMPLICATIONS

-  SINCE THE LEGALIZATION OF SPORTS BETTING. THE NBA HAS SEEN AN INCREASE IN ATTENDANCE. POSSIBLY DUE TO THE INCREASED FAN ENGAGEMENT
-  THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN LESS STOPPAGES IN THE GAME OVERALL. MEANING MORE ACTION AND A MORE WATCHABLE GAME
-  UNFORTUNATELY FOR FREE THROW MERCHANTS. LESS STOPPAGES CAUSED BY SHOOTING FOULS MEANS LESS ATTEMPTS TO SCORE. IF THEY ARE TRYING TO DRIVE A SPECIFIC BETTING OUTCOME. REFEREES CAN BE INFLUENCING THEIR GAME.
-  2024 SAW GAMES WITH WIDER POINT DIFFERENTIALS ACROSS ALL POINT SPREADS INDICATING A POTENTIAL DECREASE SPREAD ACCURACY. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF FACTORS THAT CAN CAUSE THIS INCLUDING CHANGE IN PLAY STRATEGIES IN ORDER TO COVER SPREADS BY TEAMS. WIDER SKILL VARIANCES IN THE LEAGUE. RULE CHANGES. AND MORE.

SOURCES - [HTTPS://WWW.KAGGLE.COM/DATASETS/CVIAXMIWNPTR/NBA-BETTING-DATA-OCTOBER-2007-TO-JUNE-2024](https://www.kaggle.com/datasets/cviaxmiwnptr/nba-betting-data-october-2007-to-june-2024),
[HTTPS://WWW.KAGGLE.COM/DATASETS/SUMITRODATTA/NBA-ABA-BAA-STATS](https://www.kaggle.com/datasets/sumitrodattnba/aba-baa-stats),
[HTTPS://WWW.KAGGLE.COM/DATASETS/SALIKHUSSAINI49/NBA-DATASET](https://www.kaggle.com/datasets/salikhussaini49/nba-dataset),
BALL DRAWING PNG DESIGNED BY FROM [HTTPS://PNGTREE.COM/FREEPNG/VECTOR-BASKETBALL-ICON_4187184.HTML?SQL=DOWNREF&ID=BEF](https://pngtree.com/freepng/vector-basketball-icon_4187184.html?sql=downref&id=BEF)

INFOGRAPHIC BY JORDYN PARKER

SPECIAL THANKS TO MY HUSBAND IAN PARKER FOR THE NBA CONSULTING. I'M SORRY THE DATA DID NOT CONCLUSIVELY SUPPORT YOUR THEORY <3