

Bam Has a Three-Point Problem

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Introduction

The Miami Heat have many issues in the 2024-25 season, but one of them has fallen out of vogue with a certain disgruntled star taking the majority of the headlines. It's not as flashy, but it's very noticeable when one tortured soul tunes into a Miami Heat game. Bam Adebayo is shooting too many threes. I thought this was the complete issue, but the threes are just a piece of an offensive decline Bam is experiencing. As a Miami Heat fan, this one is going to sting.

Patient Zero

While this year has been the ugly one, the root of this issue began last season. Starting March 13, 2024, Bam finished the year with a 17-game stretch that has carried into this season. He shot 28 threes and made 14 of them across these seventeen games, after shooting just 14 threes in the previous 54 games. He had a three-point attempt rate of about 13%, which would have comfortably been a career high if maintained over an entire season. He also shot 3-for-9 from deep in the olympics, two of which came in a big game against South Sudan. In hindsight, this period of brief success might have been the poison that infected his shot selection this season.

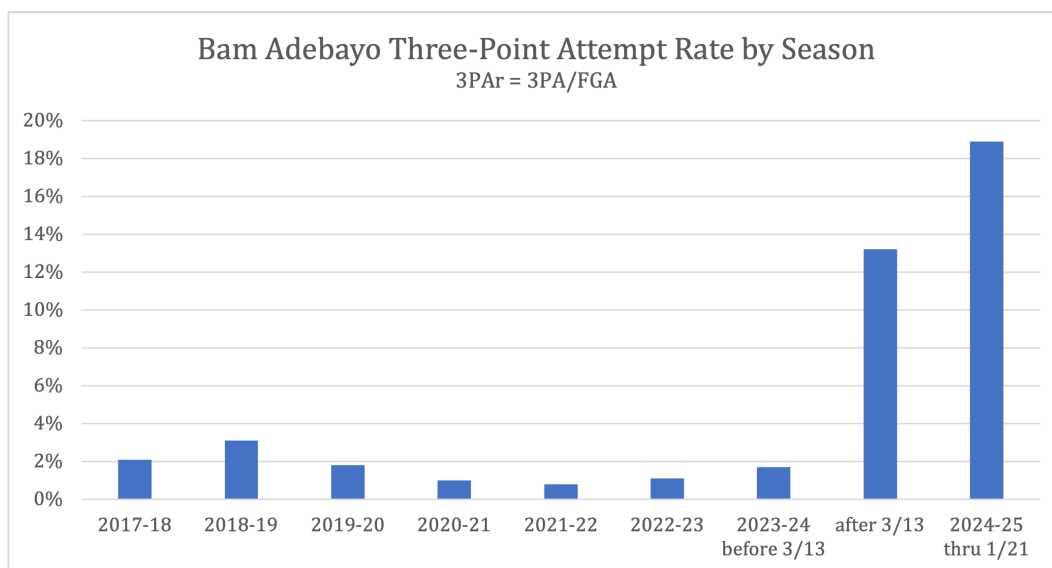
Diagnosis

Before it becomes overblown, Bam still offers tremendous versatility on both ends of the floor. He did not suddenly turn into Antoine Walker, but Bam's offensive advanced stats indicate a step back.

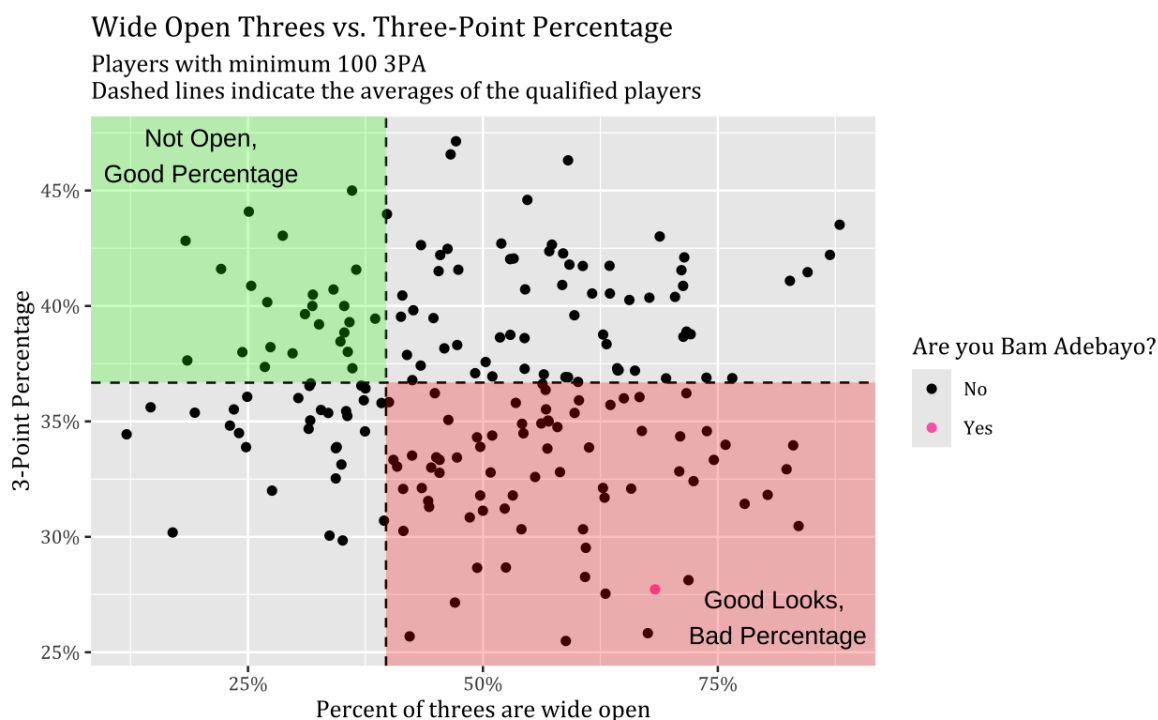
Not the same guy	PER	OBPM	WS/48
Last 5 All-Star Years	20.9	1.4	0.164
2024-25	17.2	-0.4*	0.111

*Bam's lowest OBPM since 2018-19

The issue is not that Bam shoots too many threes on a scale relative to the rest of the NBA; his 2024-25 three-point attempt rate is 55% lower than the league average. The issue is that Bam is shooting far more threes for HIS standards.



Currently, nearly twenty percent of Bam's field goal attempts are from downtown. He is now shooting over two threes a night in an attempt to regularly integrate the three into his arsenal and establish himself as a respectable threat. Last season was the preview, and this year is the full film. Opposing teams are currently not buying into Bam's newfound penchant for threes. 68% of Adebayo's threes are WIDE open, and yet, he's shooting 27.7% from three on the season. If that sounds particularly disproportionately bad, it is.



There's Bam in the bottom right, reaching the nadir of the area with plenty of room to fire mixed with disappointing accuracy. I was shocked that Bam was in contention for the worst combination of great opportunities and low output, so I attempted to

score this pitiful mix.

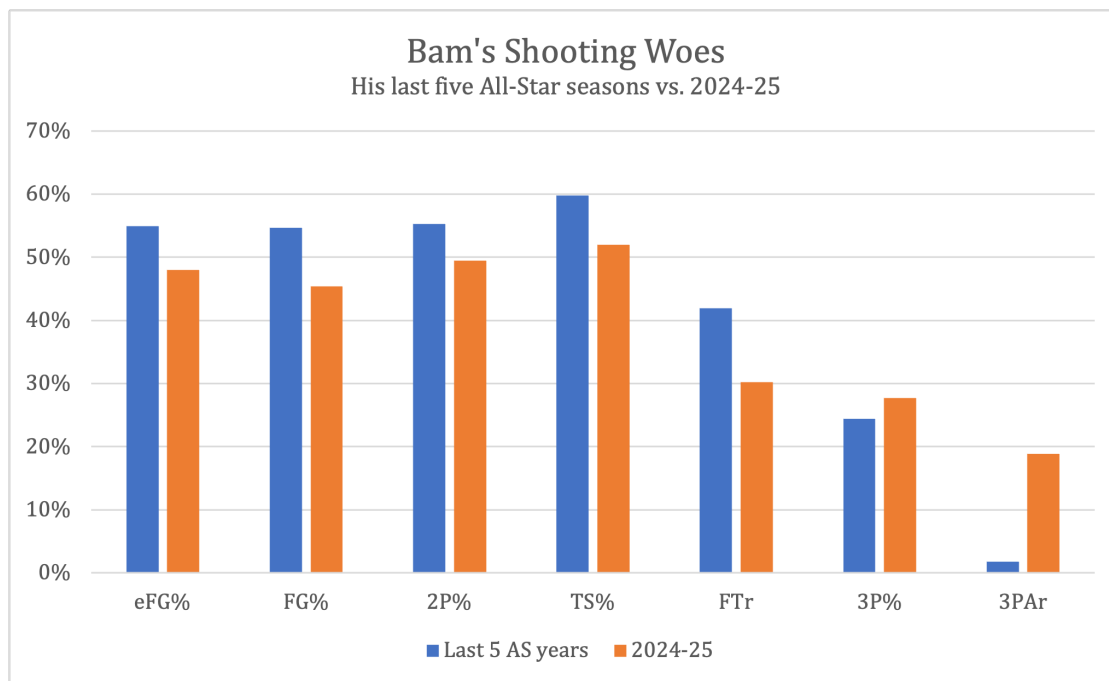
To produce the previous graph, I used a dataset of NBA players who have taken at least 100 threes in 2024-25. The two key statistics percentage of threes being wide open and three-point percentage were then used comparatively. Percentiles of both stats were taken, and to match Bam's undesirable profile, a player must have a very high percentile of threes being wide open and a low percentile of actually making threes. This isolates the players who are given the most open threes while simultaneously converting a low percentage of them.

Player	%Threes wide open	Percentile	3P%	3P% Percentile	Difference
Kris Dunn	83.6%	98.5	30.5%	8.7	89.74
Zaccharie Risacher	71.9%	91.8	28.1%	3.1	88.72
Dyson Daniels	77.9%	95.9	31.4%	11.8	84.10
Stephon Castle	67.5%	84.6	25.8%	1.0	83.59
Bam Adebayo	68.3%	85.6	27.7%	2.6	83.08
Ayo Dosunmu	80.3%	96.4	31.8%	14.4	82.05
Jaden McDaniels	82.3%	96.9	32.9%	21.0	75.90
Bilal Coulibaly	63.0%	77.4	27.5%	2.1	75.38
Josh Giddey	72.4%	92.8	32.4%	17.4	75.38
Toumani Camara	74.6%	94.4	33.3%	23.1	71.28

Bam ranks fifth-worst in this metric

This is truly dreadful company to be bumping elbows with. I would have liked to believed that my Miami Heat fanaticism was exaggerating the perception that opposing teams are content to let Bam brick threes, but it's true. They are letting Edrice shoot and they are being comfortably rewarded.

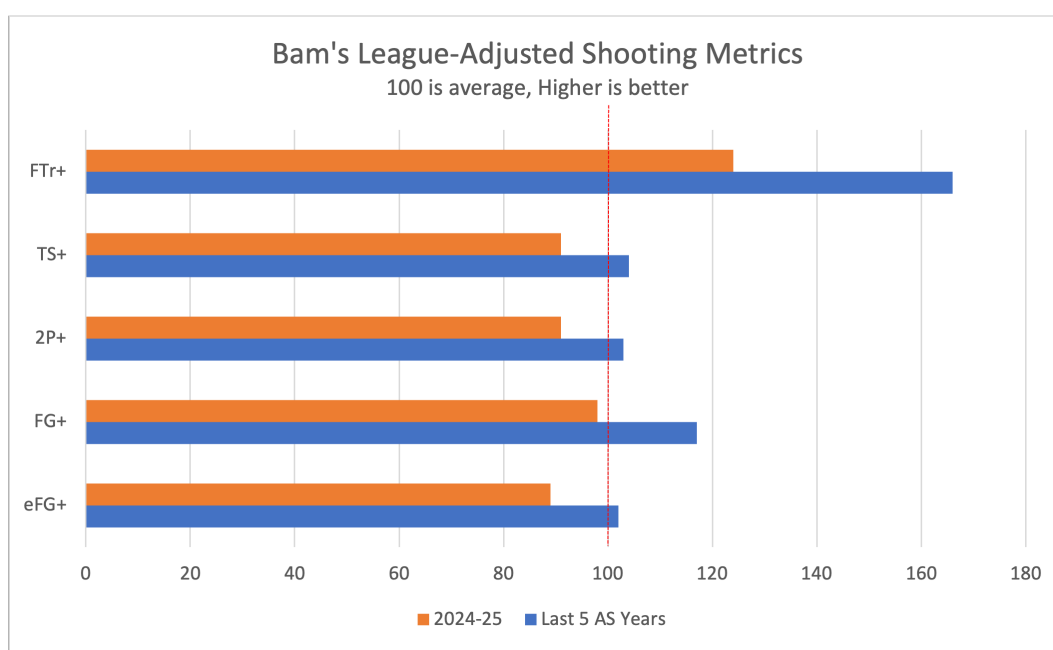
The miserable three-point addition has been accompanied by a decline across the board for Bam's shooting.



No, seriously, every shooting metric is down. Even his free-throw percentage is the lowest it has been since 2020. It would easy to point to the spike in chucking threes as the culprit for Adebayo's shooting woes. It is a factor, but look at the two-point percentage...it has fallen below 50%. I went into this piece with my attention captured by Bam's three-point shooting, but the extent of the concerns grew with more research. Bam's TWO-point shooting is now an area of concern too?

Under the Hood

Adebayo is hunting for more three-pointers, but can that properly explain the sudden cratering in Bam's two-point shooting? Yes and no. His contentment to shoot more jumpers could lead to a lack of aggression. Bam was never an offensive dynamo, but he was very productive during his last five all-star campaigns.



Bam is now below average in all these shooting stats, except his free-throw rate, but it still dropped by 25%. Bam's life would be made easier if he took greater advantage of his freakish athleticism and forced defenses to foul him. The decreased free throw rate will hurt his true shooting, indicating that he is taking (and missing) tougher shots.

Naturally, Bam's average shot attempt distance has reached career-high levels this season. That does not explain why his shooting at closer distances has decreased.

???	Avg Dist (feet)	FG% from 0-3 ft	FG% from 3-10 ft
Last 5 All-Star Years	7.2	.745	.479
2024-25	10.7	.688	.417

This is not simply a shot selection issue: this is a widespread epidemic. Bam is getting about two open threes a night and is not making them at an efficient rate – that has been established. This does not explain Bam having near career lows in shooting from 0-10 feet, only second to his rookie season. In fact, Bam has fallen below average in scoring in these two areas, along with a third.

Below Average Metrics	Two-Pointers	0-3 ft	3-10 ft	10-16 ft
League Average FG%	.542	.691	.456	.434
Bam's FG%	.498	.688	.421	.431
% of Bam's FGA	81.0%	23.0%	31.5%	22.7%

Bam's sudden inefficiency is concerning when it's paired with the reality that he has above average volume in the latter two distances. The shots from 3-10 feet are particularly alarming, considering he shot 51.5% from 3-10 feet last season, a huge drop-off. His shooting from 10-16 feet is not as below average, but funny enough, his volume is extremely high. Adebayo attempts field goals from 10-16 feet at one of the highest rates in the league:

Mid Mafia	Shots from 10-16 feet	
Player	%FGA	FG%
Kevin Durant	34.0%	53.2%
DeMar DeRozan	28.2%	48.0%
Oso Ighodaro	26.9%	32.1%
T.J. McConnell	24.0%	46.0%
Bam Adebayo	22.7%	43.1%
Deandre Ayton	20.5%	45.3%

If rookie Oso Ighodaro's ghastly statistics¹ are excluded, Adebayo is the only player on the list who is below average from 10-16 feet with an attempt rate above 20%. This stat would be easier to digest if he had not taken such drastic steps backward in his shooting at other areas.

What makes this so odd is that it all feels unnecessary. I understand that Bam wants to make defenses respect his ability to improve spacing, but with everything we have seen, it is not working. The opposite effect is occurring – Bam is bailing out defenses with his willingness to shoot jump shots. Someone with Adebayo's athletic gifts should not be so content to settle. Secondly, the Heat lineup is not hard-pressed for spacing issues. Herro, Robinson, Highsmith, Jović, and Rozier (before this season) are all good three-point shooters. Even Jimmy Butler has an above-average 3P% this season, but he doesn't play for Miami anymore, so his usual unwillingness to shoot threes will not be a detriment much longer. There is one more player I forgot to mention; he plays for Miami, he plays center too, he is receiving more playing time as the season wears along, and he shoots well, unlike Bam. I am talking about Heat rookie Kel'el Ware.

Beware of the Understudy

Kel'el Ware is beginning to emerge, both in terms of playing time and quality of play.

Kal-El	GP	Min/g	Pts/g	Reb/g	Blk/g	TS%	Game Score
Miami's first 25 games	10	6.9	2.4	1.6	0.5	.464	1.7
Last 17 games	17	19.6	10.9	6.1	1.2	.666	10.6

¹Ighodaro shoots a lot of runners and floaters coming off screens, and they clearly just are not going well right now

The Heat initially brought Ware along slowly, but the more minutes he received, the more he contributed. This Miami Heat team is undeniably struggling; their best player wants out while causing chaos within the organization, their franchise center is not the same player, as we have established, Jaquez is slumping, and Terry Rozier reeks. If it were not for Tyler Herro, this team would be in much greater trouble. They are grasping for any sort of spark, and this rookie is providing one. He has scored 19+ points in three of his last five games and he is not going anywhere.

Player	Min	ORtg	DRtg
Jimmy Butler	766	136	114
Kel'el Ware	403	123	107
Alec Burks	402	121	114
Tyler Herro	1448	119	115
Nikola Jović	768	117	113
Pelle Larsson	337	116	114
Haywood Highsmith	978	115	113
Duncan Robinson	941	113	116
Bam Adebayo	1374	110	109
Jaime Jaquez	901	107	111
Terry Rozier	1083	103	115

What do you mean "flawed stat?"

What is notable about Kel'el is that he is already very adept at the exact area Bam struggles with: shooting threes.

Player	3PA/36 min	3P%	3P+
Bam	2.7	.277	77
Ware	3.7	.390	109

Ware's volume is not relatively high either (64 3PA+), but his occasional three-point attempts are more fruitful and thus more respected by opposing defenses.

Adebayo is bigger than the sum of his shooting metrics. He offers a level of versatility on both ends of the court: his passing, basketball IQ, defensive ability. Bam is a terrific basketball player who is having a down season. Kel'el Ware is flashing some exciting stuff on both ends of the court, but he is not Bam. This is a clash of two periods in time: Bam is severely struggling with his shot and Kel'el Ware is starting to show his potential. If Bam can collect himself and either take less jumpshots or improve them, he will be okay. I imagine it would be helpful if the Heat had less drama as well, but that is still a pending situation.

References

- [1] Statistics taken from Basketball-Reference, NBA.com, and FIBA.basketball.com.
Data manipulation and visualizations done in R and Excel.