

G-League Hot Streaks

Examining the recent play of former top recruits and NCAA standouts

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Introduction

This piece is about recent surges in the G-League by some former college standouts and top recruits. The offensive environment of the G-League is unbelievable, but it still requires talent and hunger to succeed in a league where everyone is fighting tooth and nail to get a deal from the NBA.

Marcus Bagley



During a four-game stretch from February 4 to February 10, former Arizona State Sun Devil Marcus Bagley posted the following games:

- Feb. 4: 30 points, 5 rebounds, 11-16 FG, 6-11 3PT
- Feb. 6: 17 points, 11 rebounds (4 offensive), +30 +/-
- Feb. 9: 16 points, 5 rebounds, 4-8 3PT
- Feb. 10: 20 points, 6 rebounds

Marcus Bagley has an interesting basketball journey, to say the least. After being a top recruit out of high school, Bagley only played in seventeen games for ASU. He struggled mightily with his shot, struggling to become comfortable on a team with lots of mouths to feed on the perimeter.

Upon leaving college, Bagley was a wild card with the potential to be a very skilled scorer and a good shooter [1]. He went undrafted and soon joined the 76ers on a training camp deal and became a part of their G-League affiliate. Bagley needed to demonstrate the scoring ability he was theorized to have, and prior to this four-game stretch, he was struggling mightily. Here are Bagley's averages before and during the hot stretch.

	Min/g	Pts/g	FGA/g	Reb/g	3P pct	3PA/g	TS pct
Before Feb. 4 (13 GP)	16.1	3.1	4.5	4.0	14.3%	2.1	32.8%
4-Game Stretch	29.1	20.8	14.8	6.8	39.0%	8.2	64.9%

There are a few factors that can explain Bagley's red-hot stretch. First, he quite simply got more opportunities; his minutes nearly doubled, and several players in front of Bagley (Terquavion Smith, Kenneth Lofton Jr., Ricky Council IV, David Duke Jr., Ja'Vonte Smart) did not play in those four games. Those five players were at the top ranking members of the Blue Coats in both usage percentage and field goal attempts (per 36 minutes), so naturally, Bagley actually had chances to assert himself on offense.

Second, Bagley's shooting took a significant leap forward. His true shooting percentage doubled, his three-point percentage nearly tripled, along with a sharp rise in both two-point attempts and three-point attempts. As a result of getting more playing time and offensive responsibility, Bagley's proficiency and confidence skyrocketed.

Marques Bolden



Moving on to another player with a homophonous name, Wisconsin Herd center and former Duke Blue Devil Marques Bolden has been a double-double machine throughout the past six games:

- Jan. 29: 18 points, 10 rebounds
- Feb. 1: 10 points, 14 rebounds (4 offensive)
- Feb. 3: 25 points, 17 rebounds (7 offensive), 4 assists, 3 blocks, 2-4 3PT
- Feb. 7: 23 points, 12 rebounds, 5 assists
- Feb. 9: 10 points, 12 rebounds

- Feb. 11: 16 points, 17 rebounds

Bolden, similar to Bagley, was a top recruit who did not make a substantial impression in college. Unlike Bagley, Bolden has gotten NBA action. He has played just nine games in three seasons across five years. Bolden can be considered a G-League veteran, playing in 75 games entering the 2024 season. On the cusp of turning 26, Bolden is desperately fighting for a real NBA opportunity.

Playing time has not been an issue for Bolden in the 2024 season; he has averaged 25 minutes a game, so his dominant streak can not be attributed to a sharp rise in playing time. For some context on the double-double machine's six-game stretch, here is a statistical breakdown before and during:

	Min/g	Pts/g	FGA/g	Reb/g	Double-Doubles
Before Jan. 29 (25 GP)	23.5	12.4	9.3	6.3	5
6-game stretch	30.8	17.0	13.2	13.7	6

The biggest story is the spike in Bolden's double-doubles; he had five in 25 games, and then had one in all six games, becoming an absolute menace on the glass. His field goal percentage rose from 54.8% to 58.3%, and his true-shooting percentage remained the same. His three-point shooting took a dip (44.4% vs 21.7%), but he averaged two attempts per game as a 6-11 big, so if Bolden were to have a true role in the NBA, his three-point shooting would not be the reason. Bolden also has averaged 1.5 blocks per game this season, demonstrating another useful facet of his game.

Aminu Mohammed



Moving onto a teammate of Marcus Bagley, former Georgetown Hoya and current Delaware Blue Coat Aminu Mohammed has had a solid four-game stretch:

- Feb. 4: 24 points, 7 rebounds
- Feb. 6: 10 points, +36 +/-
- Feb. 9: 11 points, 4-6 FG
- Feb. 10: 17 points, 5-9 FG

Mohammed, similar to the previous two entries, was a top recruit out of high school. He flashed a lot of potential while at Georgetown en route to earning Big East All-Freshman honors, but struggled with inconsistency, poor shooting, and frankly, having been thrust into the role with the most responsibility for a 6-25 Hoyas team. Mohammed led the Hoyas in usage percentage, minutes played, games played, points produced, free-throw attempts per 100 possessions, and was second in FGA per 100 possessions. A 20-year-old was forced to be the guy for a terrible team in a vicious conference in the Big East.

Perhaps jumping the gun, Mohammed declared after his freshman season, went undrafted, and ended up with the 76ers' G-League affiliate. He was sparsely involved in 2022-23, averaging 7.8 minutes and 4.1 points in 29 games with the Blue Coats. Up until this week of performances, it was more of the same:

	Min/g	Pts/g	FGA/g	Stl/g	TS pct	10+ Pt Games
Before Feb. 4 (19 GP)	14.7	6.6	5.2	1.0	58.0%	4
4-game stretch	25.4	15.5	10.0	1.8	69.8%	4

Bagley and Mohammed are both Blue Coats that have taken a leap in February, but how they are producing is starkly different. Bagley has averaged over eight three-point attempts a game, while Mohammed is averaging 1.5 attempts during the four-game stretch. For more context, Mohammed has a three-point attempt rate of just 15% – meaning 15% of his field goal attempts are from downtown – while Bagley is north of 50 over his last four games. This is not out of character; the former Hoya was among the lowest in three-point attempts per 100 possessions while at DC, averaging just 3.3. Mohammed is strong and incredibly athletic, and he refuses to settle for threes and bail the defense out with a shot he is not particularly adept at.

Mohammed's penchant for turning opponents over turns the lens to the other side of the ball, where his player profile perhaps projects more positively. He does not shoot threes frequently – although he has shot it well (40% on 0.4 3PA/g) when he does launch – but he does offer a lot on defense. He led Georgetown in steal percentage¹ among players who were actually a part of Georgetown's rotation, and he placed sixth in the Big East in the same statistic, remember, as a freshman. If Mohammed can develop a more consistent offensive game, he has a very useful set of skills to offer an NBA club.

Antoine Davis

Remember the man who nearly broke Pistol Pete's record? Upon leaving Detroit Mercy, I found Davis's transition into professional basketball fascinating; how would someone who had this much autonomy on the court adjust to playing on a team with players that are as talented as he is? Transitioning has taken time:

	Min/g	Pts/g	FGA/g	FG pct	3P pct	TS pct	10+ Pt Games
First 16 games	15.5	7.0	7.1	31.9%	29.8%	47.7%	3
Last 16 games	29.9	19.6	14.8	44.5%	40.2%	63.0%	15

¹He lead the Hoyas in steals, steals per game, steals per 100 poss. and steal pct, to be more complete.



Antoine Davis was the premier volume scorer during the 2022-23 NCAA season at Detroit Mercy. He always ranked among the top ten NCAA players in field goal attempts; he capped his college career by leading the nation in his super-senior season, along with leading the country in usage percentage. Davis's 732 field goal attempts (22.2 FGA/g) are mind-boggling –they were the most in a D-1 season since 2015-16 – but he was not inefficient, posting a 56.8 TS% in his final season.

Even in the G-League's torrential offensive environment, Davis was never going to touch that many attempts. The G-League is full of NBA-level players fighting for a chance to impress scouts and team executives; this is a far cry from playing in the Horizon League. When free throw attempts² per game are taken into account, Davis averaged 24.6 true shooting attempts² per game in 2022-23. For context, Luka Doncic averaged 26.6 TSA/g in 2022-23; that was the level of volume-shooting Davis had reached.

This is a long-winded way to state that Antoine Davis was going to have to adjust to not constantly having the ball in his hands. He would have to rely on his most translatable skill set: his three-point shooting. Davis is the NCAA all-time leader in three-point field goals made and attempted; he pounds the rock, but his ability to shoot is still very valuable regardless of his usage. Through these 32 games with the Rip City Remix, 75% of Davis's field-goal attempts are threes; he is acutely aware of what he does well.

Another part of the dichotomy between the two sixteen game stretches is Davis's role on the Remix:

	Min/g	Games Started
First 16 games	15.5	1
Last 16 games	29.9	13

Davis's minutes doubled, and he started 13 games during the most recent streak of games, as opposed to just one during the first. This is interesting because someone with Davis's volume scorer skill set appears more suited for a microwave role off the bench, where he would have a perpetual green light whenever he is on the floor.

DeJon Jarreau

Jarreau, a man whose stat-stuffing, playmaking, offensively challenged game made him look like the Houston Cougars' version of Rajon Rondo, has had a prolific stretch

²FGA + 0.44*FTA



as of late:

	Min/g	Pts/g	Reb/g	Ast/g	AST/TO
First 17 Games	14.8	7.3	2.9	3.1	2.17
Last 11 games	33.7	20.7	8.9	9.5	4.04

While at Houston, Jarreau blossomed into a basketball Swiss army knife. During his final year with the Cougars, Jarreau was among the AAC leaders in rebound, assist, steal, and block percentage, as well as offensive and defensive box score plus-minus. He kept up his stat-stuffing ways during his first year in the G-League, but he struggled to score efficiently. Through 28 games in 2023-24, Jarreau has shifted his shooting strategy:

"Jarr3au"	FGA/g	FG pct.	3P pct.	FT pct.	TS pct.	3PA rate	FTA rate
First 17 GP	5.7	45.6%	36.4%	66.7%	57.4%	.193	.263
Last 11 GP	16.3	49.1%	31.2%	78.1%	58.4%	.196	.196

During Jarreau's strong stretch, he has doubled his shot attempts, even when adjusted for equal minutes (15.7 FGA/40 min vs 19.3 FGA/min). Despite the spike in attempts, his field goal percentage has risen. His three-point rate remained about the same, but his percentage dipped. His free throws had an opposite effect: the attempt rate dropped, while his percentage rose.

Jarreau never shot particularly well while at Houston (52 TS% across his three seasons), so if he can post solid shooting numbers, that would make him a much more viable NBA player. I say more viable to bring the focus back to Jarreau's ability to do a little bit of everything. He can make plays, defend, rebound, and he has the raw box score numbers to back that up:

"DeJon Rondo"	10 Ast Games	Double-Doubles	Triple-Doubles	Game Score ³
First 17 GP	0	0	0	6.4
Last 11 GP	5	6	2	20.4

The highlight of the last eleven games has been the 30-point, 15-rebound, 10-assist performance he had on January 20. His wide range of skills and hopefully burgeoning offense demonstrate what kind of impact Jarreau could have in the NBA.

Bonus! The Taze Moore Update



Taze Moore, another Houston Cougar who missed playing with DeJon Jarreau by a single year, has experienced his own personal turnaround in the G-League. Through eight games with the Texas Legends, Moore was really struggling, but since then, it has been like night and day:

	Min/g	Pts/g	FG pct	3P pct	TS pct	10+ Pt games
Before Nov. 28 (8 GP)	27.5	6.6	37.2%	0-21	37.2%	0
Next 11 Games	29.2	10.7	46.6%	31.9%	55.6%	6
After Trade (7 GP)	28.5	12.4	50.7%	36.0%	58.4%	7

As the 2023-24 G-League season has progressed, Moore has been scoring far more efficiently; this revelation is best revealed in his true shooting percentage as it jumped from a disgraceful 37% to a very solid 58%. The shooting statistic that encapsulates Moore's woeful start is the 21 straight missed threes. While he was at Houston, Moore shot a fair amount of threes: 40% of Moore's field goal attempts were from deep, and that led to a 31.9% from three on just under four attempts per game. Taze Moore is best described as a streaky shooter who is more comfortable doing his scoring inside the arc. After being dealt to the Rip City Remix, his three-point shooting has been solid: 36% on 3.6 attempts a night.

Unlike most of the previous entries, Moore's minutes have remained constant. This is not a situation where Moore was granted more opportunity; the only difference is quality across those three isolated periods. Moore is merely doing more in the same amount of playing time.

Another pleasant surprise since the acquisition has been Moore's improved playmaking:

	Ast/g	TO/g	AST/TO
Before Nov. 28 (8 GP)	4.0	2.8	1.45
Next 11 Games	3.8	3.0	1.27
After Trade (7 GP)	4.4	1.9	2.38

While at Houston, Moore did not turn the ball over profusely – he had the third-lowest turnover percentage among Cougars with significant playing time – so it was surprising to see him struggle with turnovers while playing with the Legends. The recipe for Taze Moore's chance at a shot in the NBA is to continue improving his shooting to respectable status while also cleaning up ball security.

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