Waiting on Scoot

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Introduction

On January 14, 2025, roughly a year ago, Scoot Henderson scored a career-high 39 points against the Brooklyn Nets. It was the peak in Scoot's sophomore season and it highlights Scoot's highs, lows, areas of growth, and facets where he still struggles.

MP	FGM	FGA	3PM	3PA	FTM	FTA	AST	TOV	STL	PTS
38:49	13	18	8	10	5	8	6	4	2	39

Table 1: Scoot Henderson's Box Score

Halfway through the 2025-26 season, Henderson has yet to make an appearance for the Trail Blazers. His development path has taken an awkward turn with the Blazers' additions of Jrue Holiday and Deni Avdija, the budding Shaedon Sharpe, and the emergence of Caleb Love. The route to consistent reps and playing time now appears uncertain on a congested Portland roster along with his nagging hamstring injury. Given the uneasiness ahead, I am going to use Scoot's 39-point explosion to highlight his growth from year one to year two and where he still needs to improve.

Perimeter Shooting

> **Brief Definitions**
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> **Three-Point Attempt Rate**: $3PAr = 3PA/FGA$
> **Free Throw Attempt Rate**: $FTr = FTA/FGA$
> **League-Adjusted Rate Stats**: Ex.: $3P+ = 100 \times 3P\% \ / $ League Avg. $3P\%$

On Henderson's career night, he drilled a career-high eight threes. He wasn't billed as a good shooter coming into the 2023 Draft, but he looked extremely comfortable making eight out of ten attempts. The Nets went under on several screens and Henderson took advantage and made the open three. Scoot's three-point shooting in year two has been significantly better than his rookie campaign.

Season	3P%	3PAr
2023-24	.325	.336
2024-25	.354	.434

Table 2: Scoot Is More Willing to Shoot Threes

As a rookie, Scoot shot 32.5% from the three-point line. Among 160 qualified players, that was the eighth-lowest percentage in the NBA. In year two, Henderson shot 35.4% from deep, which was just shy of league average. Along with shooting better, Henderson also shot threes more often:
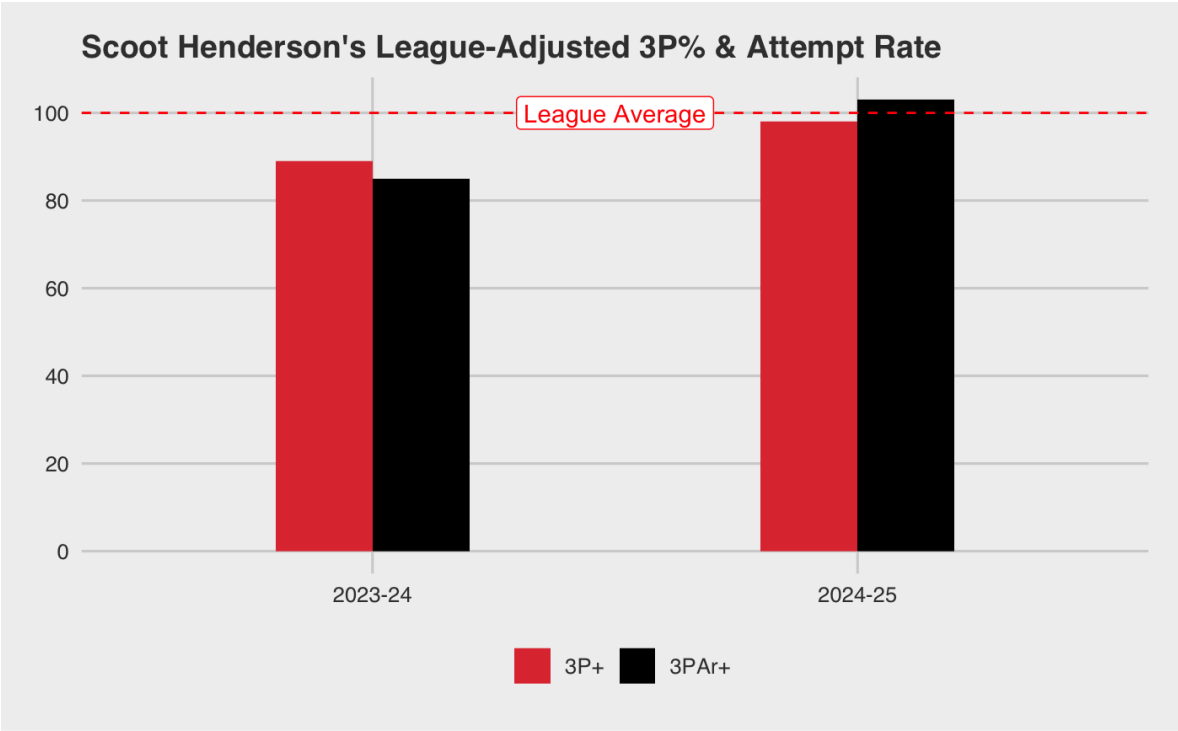

Figure 1: Scoot's three-point improvement

As a result of shooting threes more often and at a higher clip, Henderson's $eFG\%$ rose substantially. However, he is still near the bottom of the league.

Season	$eFG\%$	Percentile
2023-24	.440	1[1]
2024-25	.496	9[2]

Table 3: Henderson's $eFG\%$

Along with improving his three-point shooting, Henderson also decreased the amount of long mid-range jump shots he attempted. In his rookie season, 25% of his field goals were from ten feet to the edge of three-point territory; that dropped to 13.3% in year two. He also shot better from that range. With that improvement in multiple areas, it begs the question why Scoot remained in the bottom-tenth percentile in $eFG\%$.

Inside Scoring

Coming into the NBA, Scoot was praised for his ability to finish through contact around the rim. Unfortunately, that hasn't quite translated thus far. Part of the issue

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[1] Scoot ranked last in $eFG\%$ this season.

[2] Henderson fell slightly below the statistical minimum threshold, so this is among NBA players with 275+ field goals made.

is Scoot's shot selection. During his huge game against the Nets, three of his five missed field goals were difficult contact layups. He would use a crafty move to get by the initial defender, which showcased his dynamite athleticism, but then he ran into the help defenders and forced a tough shot.

Early in Scoot's career, his field goal percentage around the rim has been abysmal.

Season	$FG\%$ from < 10 feet	Percentile
2023-24	.422	1
2024-25	.495	8

Table 4: Scoot's $FG\%$ from less than ten feet

Scoot is an elite athlete, but at 6'2", he has trouble finishing these difficult contact layups in traffic. The area from 5-9 feet is where Henderson really struggles.

Season	$FG\%$ from 5-9 feet	Percentile
2023-24	.278	3
2024-25	.299	5

Table 5: Henderson's $FG\%$ from 5-9 feet (Minimum 50 attempts)

Henderson isn't an elite mid-range shooter, either, so combine all of that, you get a last-place finish in $2P\%$ in 2023-24 and tenth-lowest last season. Returning to the Nets game, Scoot had no issue blowing by defenders, but it would benefit him to aim to avoid the defenders in mid-air rather than attempting to shoot through or over them. It is difficult to score at the rim with acrobatic and crafty finishes that avoid contact, and Scoot is only in year three of his career (Assuming he plays this season).

Season	Restricted Area		Non-RA Paint		Mid-Range	
	$FG\%$	Percentile	$FG\%$	Percentile	$FG\%$	Percentile
2023-24	.473	1[3]	.379	10	.366	19
2024-25	.553	4	.373	10	.375	22

Table 6: Scoot's two-point scoring profile

This all appears bleak, but again, two-pointers comprise only 57% of Henderson's attempts. Additionally, given his athleticism, relentless attacking and ability, that allows Henderson to get to the line very easily.

Drawing Fouls & Free Throw Shooting

After two seasons and at the age of 20, Henderson is already very adept at drawing fouls and converting at the line. That's been a strong point in Scoot's game in his first two seasons.

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[3]Last

Season	$FT\%$	FTr	Percentile	FT/FGA	Percentile
2023-24	.819	.256	61	.210	65
2024-25	.767	.301	76	.231	78

Table 7: Scoot's strong free throw shooting

Since Henderson draws fouls and makes free throws at a near-elite rate, his true shooting percentage is higher than his effective field goal percentage, but his poor efficiency within the three-point line drags down his efficiency to where he's still below average in both statistics.
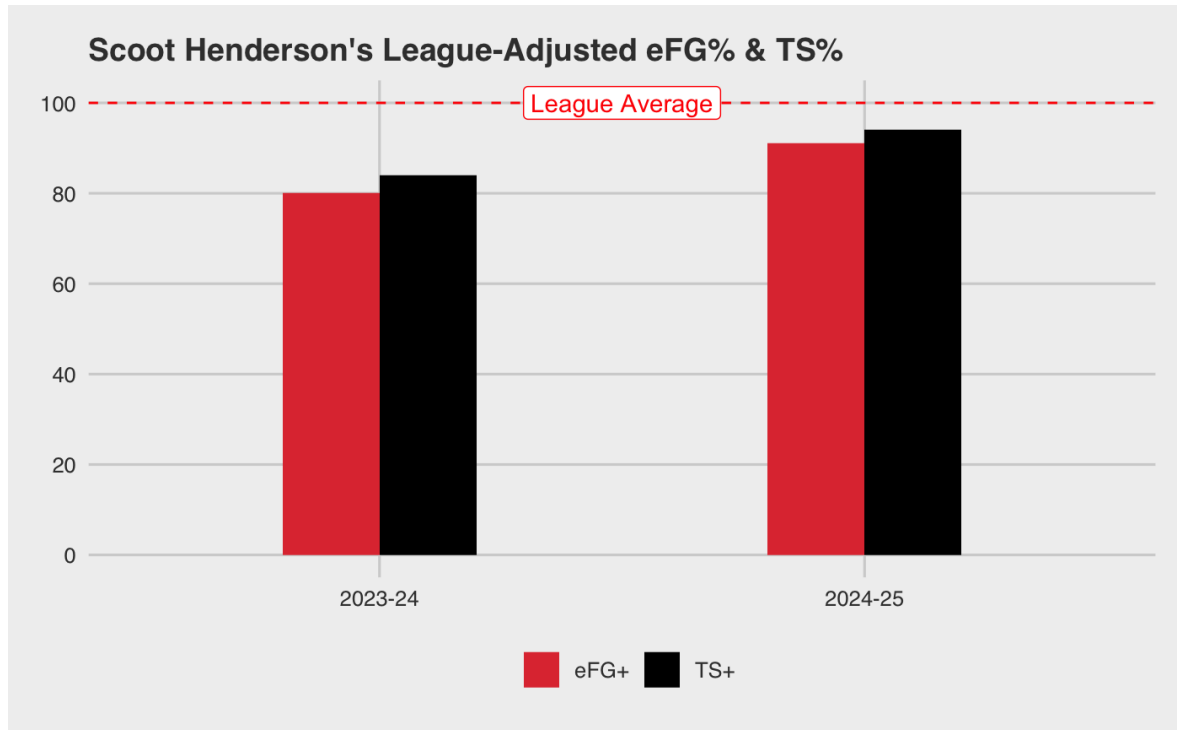

Figure 2: Scoot's Overall Shooting Efficiency

Through year two, Scoot has demonstrated that he is more than willing to take advantage of his elite athleticism. It's very encouraging that such a young player with size concerns is drawing fouls at quite a high rate. I've touched on Scoot's questionable shot selection, which was on the minds of scouts coming into the draft. However, I haven't given context for how Scoot generates these shots or what kinds of shots he is taking. It will shed more light on Scoot's poor two-point shooting and reveal some interesting truths.

Shot & Play Types

Before the 2022-23 season, Scoot was considered the no-doubt second overall pick. He flashed his prospect pedigree in his first season as a member of G-League Ignite, despite starting just four out of 25 games and losing shots to other prospect hopefuls. This feels like an appropriate time to briefly talk about the short existence of the Ignite program.

G-League Ignite was the NBA's attempt to poach top high school recruits away from either college, Europe, or other stopgaps. Many players chose that route: Jalen Green, Jonathan Kuminga, Jaden Hardy, Dyson Daniels, Matas Buzelis, and Ron Holland are probably the most notable examples. Scoot did something interesting; he reclassified his high school status and opted to spend two years at Ignite. This was easily Ignite's biggest fish in their nascent existence, so how did they go defunct three years after Scoot's decision?

In short, Ignite was a structural mess. Their rosters were a medley of top prospects gunning to improve their draft stock and over-the-hill NBA veterans who were meant to be mentors of some kind. The teams never played with any visible chemistry and usually went as far as the prospects' "your turn, my turn" gameplan took them. Despite all that talent, the Ignite teams were never very good and their last two seasons ended with a combined 13-53 record. After their 2024 team posted a 2-32 record, the program folded.

Since Ignite had no structure other than "watch the prospects go," it begged the question of how well the players actually developed. There was no culture, no incentive to win, and every incentive to chase stats. Previous players like Green and Kuminga entered the NBA with bad habits. The 2022 edition saw top recruits Hardy (2nd) and Michael Foster Jr. (13th) plummet in the draft, with Foster going undrafted. Henderson, the longest-tenured Ignite prospect, only dropped to third overall.

In his rookie season, it became clear that Henderson, although very talented, was still very raw. Those questions about G-League Ignite's ability to develop high school recruits were affirmed. His offense has some glaring holes at this point in his young career.

Entering the draft, Henderson was praised for his ability to create off the dribble and generate his own shot. That has not been the case thus far. Henderson's self-created attempts have been fruitless through two years. Here's how Scoot's isolation scoring ranks among the NBA:

Season	Iso Frequency	Pts Per Possession	Percentile
2023-24	7.9%	0.74	25
2024-25	12.6%	0.69	14

Table 8: Scoot's struggles scoring in isolations

Aligned with isolation scoring, Scoot has struggled to score efficiently when he takes more than three dribbles. The gap was wide in year one, but it has grown into a chasm in year two:

	< 3 Dribbles		≥ 3 Dribbles	
Season	FGA	$eFG\%$	FGA	$eFG\%$
2023-24	344	.451	441	.431
2024-25	348	.545	337	.445

Table 9: Scoot's scoring splits by number of dribbles

His $eFG\%$ is ten percentage points higher when he takes less than three dribbles. Using bootstrapping, I found that the difference in Scoot's $eFG\%$ grouped by the number of dribbles was statistically significant. This, combined with his struggles with

isolation scoring, illustrates that Henderson is not a very efficient shot creator. This is attributed to poor shot selection and his height, but not a lack of ability in my opinion.

On a brighter note, Scoot is becoming a better pull-up jump shooter:

Season	FGA	Freq.	$eFG\%$	Percentile
2023-24	343	.430	.448	45
2024-25	221	.322	.471	57

Table 10: Scoot's pull-up shooting

In addition to greater efficiency, Henderson is shooting pull-up jumpers at a lower rate, which is a combination of a few factors. One, he's being more selective. This kind of growth in year two is very encouraging. Two, along with being more selective, he's more focused on getting to the basket. We saw in Table 7 that he is drawing fouls at a higher rate. Three, Scoot had less responsibility in year two. The Blazers acquired Deni Avdija, Shaedon Sharpe played 72 games in 2024-25 (compared to 32 games in the season prior), and Simons played a healthier campaign too (70 games in 24-25, 46 games in 23-24). Henderson had a 26.5 $USG\%$ as a rookie and a 22.5 $USG\%$ as a sophomore.

Season	Games Played	Games Started	MIN/G	$USG\%$	Percentile[4]
2023-24	62	32	28.5	26.5%	80
2024-25	66	10	26.7	22.5%	63

Table 11: Henderson's Smaller Role in 2024-25

Rookies should be allowed to play through their mistakes. Henderson played for a bad Ignite team and a terrible Blazers squad in year one, three straight seasons of environments where bad habits can grow. It would be of great benefit for him to be part of a team with a winning culture. Unfortunately, while he has been given ample playing time, he hasn't taken part in a Blazers game yet this season when they have been playing very well.

As far as mistakes go, Henderson has made a lot of them.

Season	$TOV\%$	Rank	TOV Per 100 Possessions	Rank
2023-24	19.3%	2nd	5.9	t-1st
2024-25	18.6%	5th	4.9	t-7th

Table 12: Scoot is loose with the ball.

This goes hand-in-hand with his high usage percentage and the woeful Blazers teams. Scoot was immediately given a large share of responsibility, and we already discussed his proclivity for forcing shots. Playing on poor, unorganized teams can lead a player of Scoot's talent to do too much offensively.

All this has been focused on Scoot's role within the offense as a creator, but what about his ability to fit in the offense?

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[4]$USG\%$ is not an inherently good or bad statistic, so it feels misleading to apply the blue-red gradient to it.

Within the Offense

Through two years, it's been a mixed bag offensively. This is in part due to him playing on teams that have suffered injuries and inferior talent. But enough excuses, let's talk about the specifics.

Given the modern NBA landscape plus Scoot's shorter stature, it is important for him to be an effective contributor within the pick and roll. In his first two seasons, he's been medicore:

Season	Frequency	Pts Per Possession	Percentile
2023-24	39.8%	0.86	52
2024-25	31.3%	0.82	42

Table 13: Scoot's Pick and Roll profile

First, Henderson's frequency at which he runs pick and roll is very high. Both seasons have placed him inside the top-50 in frequency. Unfortunately, the results have not followed. As we have seen, most of Henderson's stats have increased from year one to two, but Scoot's pick-and-roll efficiency percentile marks the second statistic to decline in year two (The first being his iso scoring in Table 8).

Additionally, Scoot has been trying to improve not only his overall perimeter shooting but also his catch-and-shoot shot making. This is another way in which he can fit into an offense, and having a respectable jump shot makes his ability to attack the basket more dangerous.

Season	FGA	Freq.	$eFG\%$	Percentile
2023-24	120	.151	.450	5
2024-25	171	.250	.532	35

Table 14: Scoot's catch-and-shoot shooting

While he's still below average, this is still a very large jump in just one season. Given that Scoot has already improved his three-point shooting to nearly an average level, it's fair to hope that he continues this trend of rounding out the edges of his offensive game.

Scoot has struggled with half court offense and downhill scoring, and given his explosive athleticism, one would guess that transition opportunities would be like gold for Henderson. It's a chance for him to get a shot when the defense isn't set, or to draw a foul, which he's already quite adept at. In a huge twist, that's not the case at all.

Season	TOV Freq.	Rank	$eFG\%$	Rank	Pts Per Poss.	Rank	Perc.
2023-24	21.7%	8th worst	44.3%	5th worst	0.83	4th worst	7
2024-25	18.3%	t-23rd worst	47.8%	16th worst	0.89	t-15th worst	9

Table 15: Scoot's poor in transition? (Ranks are among players with 50+ transition opportunities. Percentile is among all qualified players.)

I would never have guessed that Henderson's transition production was in the bottom ten percent. However, based on what we've seen in prior tables, it does not seem so

far-fetched. Scoot struggles mightily to take care of the ball and he tends to force difficult contact layups. Both of those components make for a poor transition player.

Wait, there are two sides of the ball?

Defense!

Yes, we're going to briefly touch on Scoot's defense. It wasn't a selling point for Henderson's draft profile; his size makes him a target on defense. However, there is a way he can contribute, and he certainly did so during the Nets game: Steals. He had two of them against the Nets.

In two seasons, Henderson has become a very underrated menace on the defensive end.

Season	$STL\%$	Perc.	Deflections per 36 MIN	Perc.
2023-24	1.3%	45	2.2	54
2024-25	1.9%	77	3.7	90

Table 16: Scoot Henderson's Ability to Cause Turnovers

Despite standing just 6'2", Henderson is making an impact on the defensive end. He's making use of his athleticism and demonstrating both hustle and intelligence to cause these steals and deflections.

Wrap Up

Overall, I believe that there are several reasons to be excited about the development arc of Scoot Henderson. The fact that he hasn't played all season certainly causes anxiety and his role appears unclear on a Blazers team that has learned how to proceed without him in the lineup. However, when he does return, he'll continue the jump he made from year one to two, especially when he gets his legs back and he is privileged to a healthy preseason and training camp.

Scoot is still very young and has much to improve on, but the leap he made in just his second season should engender confidence among the fans and the front office. For further reinforcement, here is *Cleaning The Glass* to provide additional context on Henderson's improvement.

	Net Points Added per 100 possessions					
Season	Offense	Perc.	Defense[5]	Perc.	Overall	Perc.
2023-24	-1.1	45	+6.5	6	-7.6	17
2024-25	+6.9	92	+2.4[6]	29	+4.5	76

Table 17: Scoot's Net Impact from *Cleaning The Glass*

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[5]Using Scoot for an example, "+5" on defense means Blazers' opponents score 5 points more per 100 possessions when Scoot is on the floor. So "+"+ is bad on defense.

[6]Henderson's one positive defensive area? Creating turnovers! Blazers' opponents had a greater $TOV\%$ when Scoot is on the floor; he's in the 76th percentile, just like we saw above!

References

[1] O'Connor, Kevin, "THE RINGER'S 2023 NBA DRAFT GUIDE," *The Ringer*, 22 June 2023 (latest version), URL.

[2] Statistics are taken from NBA.com, Basketball-Reference, and Scoot Henderson's Cleaning The Glass page.

[3] Data aggregation and manipulation was performed using Python (Pandas, NumPy, BeautifulSoup), R (tidyverse), and Excel. Data visualization was done using ggplot2.