Zhuric Phelps: The Chucker Who Makes Wade Taylor Blush

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Earlier this week, the First Team SEC Honors were announced. The SEC has been easily the best conference in college basketball this season, so this selection was going to be tough; this conference is loaded. When the list came out, one name drew the ire of college basketball fans: Texas A&M guard Wade Taylor. Foul, they cried. What is this shot chucker doing on the first team? Should he have made it over guys like Tre Johnson, Murray-Broyles, Hubbard, Lanier, Condon, etc.? I'm not here to argue that. I have a history of questioning the ever-luminescent green light of Wade Taylor. When his shot isn't falling, it's a very ugly scene. However, Wade Taylor's "shot chucking" has not been as heinous this season as it was last year, when he led the NCAA in field goal attempts while having a true shooting percentage barely above 50%. The mean true shooting in the SEC during the 2024-25 season is 57.2%, and Taylor is at 52.6%. Not great, but this season, he has upped his three point and free throw rate, while shooting less field goals overall. In fact, the infamous shot chucker Wade Taylor does not even lead the Texas A&M Aggies in field goal attempts. That would be a man by the name of Zhuric Phelps. I'm here to argue that if there ever was a man who was worthy of Taylor's shot chucking reputation, Zhuric Phelps is more than deserving of that title.

Zhuricology: What Makes a Shot Chucker

Before laying out what makes Phelps's shot chucking so horrid, we need some back-story and terminology. The phrase "shot chucker" refers to basketball players who shoot jump shots at a rate that is not justified by their accuracy. Some examples from the NBA include Josh Smith and Antoine Walker. The former was never a strong jump shooter, but that didn't stop him from firing mid range jumpers at will. The idea is that a chucker kills possessions or stops the offense by taking mediocre or poor-quality shots.

As mentioned previously, Wade Taylor lead the SEC in field goal attempts last season. He shot the ball a staggering 585 times, posting .366/.325/.847 shooting splits[1]. His effective field goal percentage[2] was .450 and his true shooting shooting percentage was .509. These two shooting metrics will compose the **Taylor Line**, the bar for shot chucking for which Zhuric Phelps will be judged. These parameters were enough for Taylor to be ridiculed and labeled a chucker by fans. Those two figures were below the
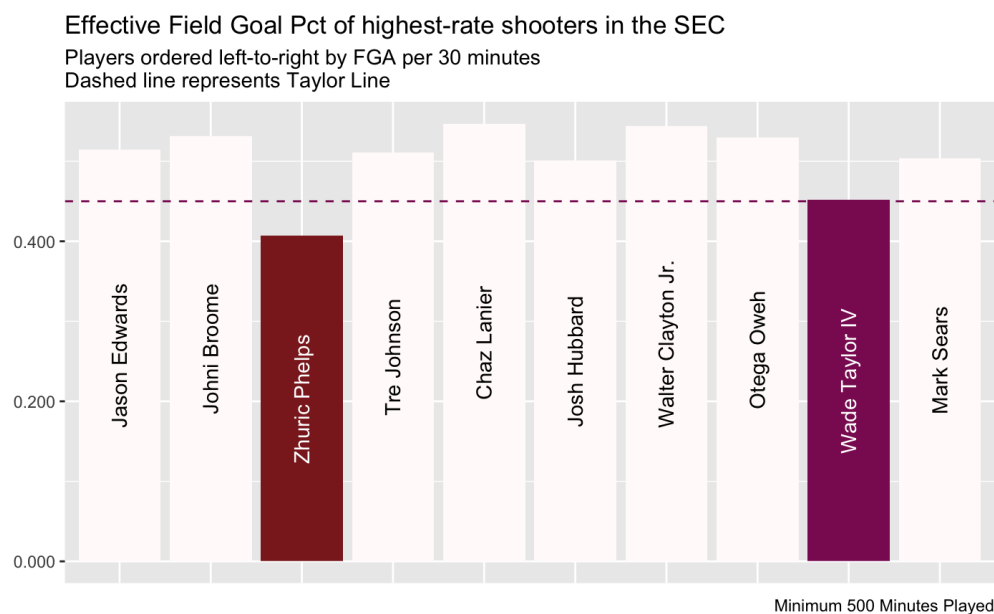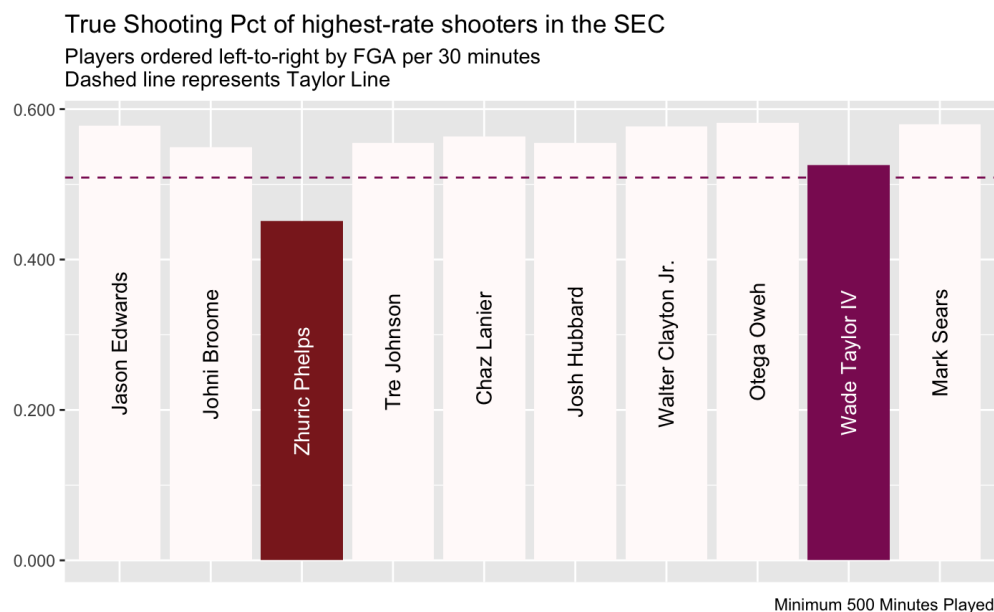
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[1]Shooting splits formatted FG%/3P%/FT%
[2]$eFG = (FGM + 0.5 * 3PM)/FGA$

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SEC average, but they aren't scraping the bottom. Taylor's metrics are benefitted by two factors: he shoots threes at a decent rate and he gets to the line while also being an elite free throw shooter. Those factors alleviate the impact of a sub-40% field goal shooting on such a high volume of attempts. In 2023-24, Taylor shot 14.9 field goal attempts per 30 minutes, finishing second in the SEC behind Dalton Knecht. I'm going to use this metric for evaluating shot chuckers, since it's scaled more so than total field goal attempts or field goal attempts per game.

$$FGA/30 = 30 * (FGA/Minutes\ Played)$$

Moving on to this season, here are two bar graphs of the ten SEC players that rank highest in $FGA/30\ minutes$ with the height representing effective field goal and true shooting percentage, respectively, with the Taylor Line for both statistics.

True Shooting Pct of highest-rate shooters in the SEC
Players ordered left-to-right by FGA per 30 minutes
Dashed line represents Taylor Line
Minimum 500 Minutes Played

Effective Field Goal Pct of highest-rate shooters in the SEC
Players ordered left-to-right by FGA per 30 minutes
Dashed line represents Taylor Line
Minimum 500 Minutes Played

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Zhuric Phelps takes shots at the third highest rate in the conference, ahead of elite shooters and scorers like Tre Johnson, Mark Sears, and more, and has those ghastly numbers to show for it? How is this possible? How are Phelps's advanced shooting metrics much lower than Taylor's marks of this and last season? It's because of the two areas I mentioned before: three point shooting and free throw shooting. Here's how Phelps's shooting compares to Wade Taylor's two most recent seasons.

Player	Season	FGA/30	FG%	3P%	3PAr	FT%	FTr	eFG%	TS%	OBPM
Wade Taylor IV	2023-24	14.9	.366	.325	.516	.847	.325	.450	.509	4.8
Wade Taylor IV	2024-25	12.3	.354	.330	.592	.883	.388	.452	.526	4.9
Zhuric Phelps	2024-25	14.5	.367	.262	.310	.699	.324	.407	.451	0.8

Taylor's 3P% isn't stellar, but 32-33% is far better than 26%. Taylor has a free throw percentage nearly twenty percent north of Phelps's in 2024-25. Phelps has a base field goal percentage marginally higher than Taylor's, but to use baseball for comparison, it's similar to one player having a slightly higher batting average, but a significantly lower on base and slugging percentage. This will lead to worse advanced shooting metrics. The fact that Taylor takes threes and free throws at a higher rate and more efficiently helps his case. I included Offensive Box Plus Minus in the table to illustrate the difference in offensive impact between the two. This statistic isn't bulletproof, but such a stark difference reflects the gaps between Phelps and Taylor in their shooting efficiency–all of this while shooting field goals at a higher rate than Taylor. If Wade Taylor is a shot chucker, then I am not sure what term applies to what Phelps is doing.

The Pits of Despair

Zhuric Phelps appears to be the worst shot chucker in the SEC, but is he the worst shooter in the SEC as well? In this case, volume is not as relevant; shot chucking is based on volume and efficiency that doesn't match up, but raw shooting accuracy makes volume irrelevant. I wasn't sure how to decide on a metric to settle that debate, so to once again borrow from baseball, I mutated a variable using effective field goal percentage and true shooting percentage. A la OPS (On Base Plus Slugging) in baseball, I present EFG plus TS (EPT), the sum of both advanced shooting statistics. Here are the bottom-10 finishers in EPT (as of March 14, 2025) plus the 2023-24 Taylor Line included as an entry in italics.

Player	Team	FGA/30	3P%	3PAr	FT%	eFG%	TS%	EPT
Curtis Givens III	LSU	9.4	.246	.648	.591	.349	.377	**.726**
Solomon Washington	Texas A&M	5.9	.196	.383	.679	.391	.445	**.836**
Manny Obaseki	Texas A&M	11.1	.350	.209	.733	.398	.457	**.855**
A.J. Hoggard	Vanderbilt	10.9	.274	.324	.747	.403	.452	**.855**
Zhuric Phelps	Texas A&M	14.5	.262	.310	.699	.407	.451	**.858**
Jace Carter	Texas A&M	6.0	.238	.578	.420	.436	.437	**.873**
Davon Barnes	Ole Miss	7.0	.203	.418	.725	.422	.468	**.890**
Zachary Davis	South Carolina	8.1	.277	.443	.735	.443	.492	**.935**
Jacobi Wright	South Carolina	7.2	.295	.428	.790	.446	.491	**.937**
Way Tay The Fourth	*Texas A&M*	*14.9*	*.325*	*.516*	*.847*	*.450*	*.509*	**.959**
Jamarii Thomas	South Carolina	10.3	.362	.451	.735	.453	.516	**.969**

2024-25 Bottom-10 *EPT* finishers with Wade Taylor's 2023-24 season included
Stat minimums: Minutes Played $\geq$ 500, $FGA/30 \geq 5$, $FGA \geq 100$

There are a few observations here. First, there are a disturbing amount of Texas A&M players here. Second, Curtis Givens III has remarkable inefficiency. Out of 113 SEC players with the above conditions satisfied, Givens is the only player with more field goal attempts than points. When a player posts .269/.246/.591 shooting splits, that will happen. Third, Zhuric Phelps is not last, but he's close. I never argued that he is the worst shooter, just that he is the most egregious shot chucker in the SEC. Recall the two bar graphs before; here is the tabular version with the EPT statistic added.

Player	Team	FGA/30	3P%	FT%	eFG%	TS%	EPT
Jason Edwards	Vanderbilt	14.6	.360	.831	.515	.578	1.093
Zhuric Phelps	Texas A&M	14.5	.262	.699	.407	.451	.858
Johni Broome	Auburn	14.5	.297	.616	.532	.549	1.081
Chaz Lanier	Tennessee	14.1	.405	.747	.547	.564	1.111
Tre Johnson	Texas	14.1	.393	.887	.511	.555	1.066
Josh Hubbard	Mississippi State	13.4	.343	.878	.501	.555	1.056
Walter Clayton Jr.	Florida	12.6	.364	.852	.544	.577	1.121
Wade Taylor IV	Texas A&M	12.3	.330	.883	.452	.526	.978
Otega Oweh	Kentucky	12.3	.361	.784	.530	.582	1.112
Mark Sears	Alabama	12.2	.352	.848	.504	.580	1.084

Ten highest shooters by $FGA/30$

The only other player with an EPT with the same amount of significant figures as Phelps's is...Wade Taylor's. Those shades of blue on Phelps's cells demonstrate how inferior his shooting is compared to his similarly trigger-happy contemporaries. Even if $FGA/30$ was instead changed to True Shooting Attempts per 30 minutes $(TSA/30)$[3], the table remains largely unchanged.

Player	Team	TSA/30	3P%	3PAr	FT%	eFG%	TS%	EPT
Jason Edwards	Vanderbilt	35.3	.360	.450	.831	.515	.578	1.093
Johni Broome	Auburn	34.1	.297	.177	.616	.532	.549	1.081
Zhuric Phelps	Texas A&M	33.4	.262	.310	.699	.407	.451	.858
Tre Johnson	Texas	31.4	.393	.425	.887	.511	.555	1.066
Josh Hubbard	Mississippi State	30.7	.343	.625	.878	.501	.555	1.056
Chaz Lanier	Tennessee	30.5	.405	.568	.747	.547	.564	1.112
Jeremiah Fears	Oklahoma	30.3	.275	.327	.845	.481	.562	1.043
Mark Sears	Alabama	30.2	.352	.532	.848	.504	.580	1.083
Otega Oweh	Kentucky	30.0	.361	.194	.784	.530	.582	1.112
Wade Taylor IV	Texas A&M	29.1	.330	.592	.883	.452	.526	.978

Ten highest shooters by $TSA/30$

All of these figures, charts, and numbers all converge to the same conclusion: Zhuric Phelps is the most lethal combination of voluminous shot chucking and lack of shot making that the SEC has to offer. Texas A&M was knocked out of the SEC tournament this week, and well...

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[3]$TSA = 2*(FGA + .475*FTA)$

Player	MP	FG	FGA	FG%	3P	3PA	3P%	FT	FTA	FT%	eFG%	TS%	AST	STL	TOV	PTS	GmSc
Wade Taylor IV	42	5	18	.278	2	7	.286	17	18	.944	.333	.546	3	0	6	29	14.6
Zhuric Phelps	39	3	19	.158	1	9	.111	1	2	.500	.184	.201	2	1	2	8	-3.3

Wade Taylor and Zhuric Phelps's box scores in the SEC tournament loss to Texas

Just saying. It will be interesting when the big dance starts, because the statistics indicate that it's matter of when, not if, Phelps will shoot the Aggies out of a game.

References

[1] Statistics taken from College Basketball Reference.

[2] Tables and charts were made in Excel and R.

[3] Data manipulation and aggregation was done in R, Excel and SQL.