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The question comes up all the time. What is the NBA equivalent of MLB's Moneyball approach? Are there stats that can be used to come up with a better model for building an NBA team? The answers are Yes and No.

Yes, there are stats that are out there that could be used to better build an NBA team, but No, they can't be used for building an NBA team, because the stats that most likely most correlate to a player and team's success are not being collected.

I'm not here to say I know exactly which variables independently, or collectively equate to getting a competitive and financial advantage. Only actual testing will determine what works. I will say which stats I think are most important, and let you know that its more than just a little bit of a logistics challenge to try to accumulate accurate data.

Here are the stats I think the Mavs will need to figure out how to collect as a first effort towards determining which have the greatest impact on success:

Deflections, Deflections for turnovers

Defensive Penetrations Allowed, Defensive Penetrations stopped (did you stop your man from penetrating in the paint before he shot or gave up his dribble)

Assists in paint, Assists outside of paint, within each, assists leading to jumpshots, assists leading to layups, assists leading to foulshots, and within each of these, are they part of fastbreak or not.

Rebounds in traffic, Rebounds from free throws

Shot percentages – location zone of shot, and within each, whether guarded or open

Turnovers – forced, unforced, rule violation turnovers by type (traveling, palming, etc.)

Touches – How often, where, duration in seconds, conclusion (pass, assist, shot, turnover as a percentage of total touches)

Charges taken, blocks given

Blocks above head, blocks that were strips, fouls on block attempts by each

Turnovers caused – steals, forced by defense (i.e., preventing your man from crossing 8 sec line, or guarding your man for more than x seconds leading to 24 sec clock violation)

There are obviously more, but these are a good starting point to see what works. Unfortunately, this data is not always available just from tape, so it would be necessary to have multiple people at the scorers table at the game to see it, confirm it and get help on it. That's what makes all this so difficult to collect. It may well be that we need to add cameras to each gym that can cover all the action and then go back and determine the information. Either way is expensive, which means it could be along time in coming to the NBA.