**Current Point Differential vs. Historical Final Records**

I have compiled each team’s current point differential (total points scored minus opponents’ points scored). Then, I’ve generated a list of every team between the 1969-70 and 2018-19 season that had a point differential similar (±5 points) to the current season’s teams through the same number of games played.

For example, the Sixers have a point differential of +30 through their first 12 games this season. The 1995 Seattle SuperSonics had a point differential of +35 through their first 12 games; they get added to the Sixers’ list. The 2009 Indiana Pacers had a point differential of +24 through their first 12 games; they are excluded. From this subset of similar teams, the average win count was calculated and normalized to an 82-game season shown in the *Historical Average Wins* column below (I forgot this season is 72 games). This seems like possibly useful information until you peek at the range of teams that were deemed similar. Obviously, the season is young and point differential isn’t a perfect metric for this exercise. Teams start slow due to injuries, rust, short offseason, etc. COVID has, and will continue to, have a major impact. And trades and more injuries will affect the remainder of the season.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Team** | **GP** | **Point Differential** | **Historical Average Wins** | **Standard Deviation** | **Best Case** | **Worst Case** |
| 76ers | 12 | +30 | 45.8 | 7.2 | 2011 Bulls  62-20 | 1980 Warriors  24-58 |
| Bucks | 12 | +137 | 56.1 | 7.3 | 1992 Bulls  67-15 | 1998 Knicks  43-39 |
| Bulls | 11 | -55 | 32.0 | 8.8 | 1994 Bulls  55-27 | 1992 Timberwolves  15-67 |
| Cavaliers | 12 | -61 | 30.7 | 8.6 | 2019 Rockets  53-29 | 1997 Celtics  15-67 |
| Celtics | 10 | +18 | 44.2 | 7.9 | 1990 Trail Blazers  59-23 | 1982 Jazz  25-57 |
| Clippers | 12 | +16 | 44.6 | 7.7 | 2007 Suns  61-21 | 1982 Jazz  25-57 |
| Grizzlies | 11 | -15 | 40.0 | 7.9 | 2013 Nuggets  57-25 | 1996 Raptors  21-61 |
| Hawks | 10 | +44 | 50.0 | 7.9 | 2013 Heat  66-16 | 1974 Trail Blazers  27-55 |
| Heat | 9 | -12 | 39.6 | 9.7 | 2007 Mavericks  67-15 | 1998 Grizzlies  19-63 |
| Hornets | 12 | -1 | 39.7 | 7.9 | 2015 Hawks  60-22 | 1995 76ers  24-58 |
| Jazz | 11 | +39 | 46.6 | 8.5 | 1996 SuperSonics  64-18 | 2018 Grizzlies  22-60 |
| Kings | 12 | -87 | 28.9 | 6.5 | 2014 Nets  44-38 | 1988 Warriors  20-62 |
| Knicks | 12 | -66 | 31.3 | 8.8 | 2001 Bucks  52-30 | 1982 Cavaliers  15-67 |
| Lakers | 13 | +137 | 55.2 | 5.3 | 2015 Warriors  67-15 | 1992 Spurs  47-35 |
| Magic | 11 | -46 | 32.9 | 8.9 | 1991 Jazz  54-28 | 2008 Heat  15-67 |
| Mavericks | 10 | +50 | 51.7 | 7.0 | 2018 Rockets  65-17 | 2012 Trail Blazers  28-38 |
| Nets | 13 | +74 | 52.0 | 6.3 | 2012 Spurs  50-16 | 2018 Pistons  39-43 |
| Nuggets | 11 | +31 | 47.1 | 8.3 | 2000 Lakers  67-15 | 1976 Hawks  29-53 |
| Pacers | 11 | +50 | 50.2 | 7.9 | 2013 Heat  66-16 | 2016 Suns  23-59 |
| Pelicans | 10 | 0 | 42.0 | 9.8 | 1995 Spurs  62-20 | 2002 Warriors  21-61 |
| Pistons | 11 | -75 | 28.1 | 7.7 | 1982 Bullets  43-39 | 1987 Clippers  12-70 |
| Raptors | 10 | -14 | 39.7 | 8.9 | 2015 Hawks  60-22 | 1994 Pistons  20-62 |
| Rockets | 9 | -17 | 38.6 | 9.5 | 2007 Mavericks  67-15 | 2019 Knicks  17-65 |
| Spurs | 11 | -10 | 40.1 | 7.9 | 1998 Jazz  62-20 | 1996 Raptors  21-61 |
| Suns | 11 | +41 | 47.3 | 8.1 | 1996 SuperSonics  64-18 | 2018 Grizzlies  22-60 |
| Thunder | 11 | -75 | 28.1 | 7.7 | 1982 Bullets  43-39 | 1987 Clippers  12-70 |
| Timberwolves | 11 | -111 | 25.1 | 8.0 | 1977 Bulls  44-38 | 1998 Nuggets  11-71 |
| Trail Blazers | 11 | +25 | 44.4 | 7.3 | 2007 Mavericks  67-15 | 1972 76ers  30-52 |
| Warriors | 11 | -38 | 33.5 | 9.5 | 2005 Pistons  54-28 | 1982 Clippers  17-65 |
| Wizards | 11 | -9 | 40.1 | 8.0 | 1998 Jazz  62-20 | 1996 Raptors  21-61 |

As expected, the more games played, the more we can dial in that range of similar teams and get a better estimate of where teams are headed. This is nothing remarkable; at the start of the season, you can still hope that your team will go undefeated. But when your team is 20-61 going into the final game, you know the two possible unfortunate outcomes.

Just for curiosity’s sake, I’ve ranked the teams based on their historical average wins. This does not factor in current record, and as stated, there is a lot of precedence for movement and varying final outcomes.

Standings

West

1. Lakers
2. Mavericks
3. Suns
4. Nuggets
5. Jazz
6. Clippers
7. Trail Blazers
8. Pelicans
9. Spurs
10. Grizzlies
11. Rockets
12. Warriors
13. Kings
14. Thunder
15. Timberwolves

East

1. Bucks
2. Nets
3. Pacers
4. Hawks
5. 76ers
6. Celtics
7. Wizards
8. Hornets
9. Raptors
10. Heat
11. Magic
12. Bulls
13. Knicks
14. Cavaliers
15. Pistons

*Stats are through Jan 13 games and per NBA.com/Stats & Basketball-Reference.com.*