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# Non-Statistical Factors Present in Successful NBA Rookies

Colin R. Salisbury
crs00871@sjfc.edu

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**Abstract**

Becoming a successful NBA rookie is a desire of many. Athletes want to be them and coaches and GM's want to know how to predict them. What non-statistical factors are present in successful NBA rookies? This research used secondary data to show non-statistical factors that were present in successful rookies and what kind of similarities they had. They included, conference, institution, coaching, and draft position, etc... It is important to know what a successful rookie is and if there is a correlation between draft position and rookie success. The point of this research is to show the journeys that the successful rookies took before becoming successful rookies to help better understand what it takes to become a successful rookie.

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Non Statistical Performance Factors That Are Present in Successful NBA Rookies

Colin Salisbury

St. John Fisher College

**Abstract**

Becoming a successful NBA rookie is a desire of many. Athletes want to be them and coaches and GM's want to know how to predict them. What non-statistical factors are present in successful NBA rookies? This research used secondary data to show non-statistical factors that were present in successful rookies and what kind of similarities they had. They included, conference, institution, coaching, and draft position, etc... It is important to know what a successful rookie is and if there is a correlation between draft position and rookie success. The point of this research is to show the journeys that the successful rookies took before becoming successful rookies to help better understand what it takes to become a successful rookie.

**Non-Statistical Performance Factors That Are Present in Successful NBA Rookies**

It is a dream for many kids, from a toddler to a college athlete, to make it into the NBA. Making it to the NBA is not easy, in fact only .03% of high school basketball players will be drafted into the NBA someday (Hoopsvibe, 2014). An NBA rookie's journey starts from the minute he picks up a basketball at a young age. Many hours, influences and decisions will go unnoticed from the moment a player picks up a basketball for the first time, to the time he becomes an NBA rookie. The real journey starts AAU and high school basketball and ends in the NBA their first season. The influences, and decisions that happen between then is what allows a player to become a successful rookie and how they fare in the NBA. All NBA rookies are different and have come from different backgrounds. Whether they came from college, or internationally is a factor in if a player is a successful rookie or not. One player could have been a highly recruited high school player, while another rookie may have had one scholarship offer out of high school. Continued, some rookies go to prestigious college basketball programs, while others come from low mid major colleges or did not go to college. Some are highly recruited as high school players where others may only have a single scholarship offer.  Some of those

players are recruited into prestigious college programs while others may find themselves at a

low, mid-major school.  By the time the draft rolls around, American collegiate players are

competing against those who are coming from an international market. Despite these many

differences, a variety of backgrounds have allowed players to find success as NBA rookies.

However, it is unknown…

It is a story that many players, coaches, and general managers want to find out in order to

draft successful players on a regular basis. Many times, you will find players not living up to

expectations when they were drafted. Other times you will find players outperform expectations

and people are puzzled as to why. The point of this research is to answer why someone is

successful in their first NBA season and what journey they took to get their so people can better

understand what it takes to be a successful NBA rookie.

### Literature Review

**Physical and Mental Attributes**

Physical and mental attributes are important in becoming a successful rookie. The taller a

player in the NBA the more value they have. For example, if a player is seven foot he has more

value than a six-foot player because seven foot players that have an NBA skill set are rarer than

six-foot players that have an NBA skill set. An article written by Berri, Brook, Frick, Fenn and

Vicente-Mayoral states,

> "…97.9 percent of young adult males are six feet three or smaller. In the NBA
> though, less than 20 percent of players in the 2003–04 season were six feet three
> or smaller. In fact, nearly 30 percent of the league was six feet ten or taller, a
> height that in the general population is extremely difficult to find" (p. 1034).

If a player is six-foot-three or taller he is less than three percent of the population. Therefore,

finding a player that six foot three or taller that has NBA skill set is rare and rarer the taller a

player gets. That is why taller players are usually taken higher in the NBA draft than guards

because they have more value and have a higher chance of having successful rookie seasons. Staw & Hoang found that, the measure of quickness, toughness and the player's position were not major factors in determining playing time, which would lead to more production (Staw& Hoang, 1995). Physical attributes do not make or break successful rookie but the chances are better for a player to be a successful rookie if they have superior physical attributes.

Injuries play a major role in player development. If a player gets injured it can affect the outcome of their rookie season and whether it was a success. An article written by Staw and Hoang mentioned how the occurrence of injury directly affected the number of minutes played (1995). This is critical because if a player does not play a lot of minutes it is hard for him to produce and have a successful rookie season. Aside from the loss of playing time, there is also the mental side of injuries to consider. Although addressing college athletes, Dr. Putukian found that athletes will "When a student-athlete is injured, there is a normal emotional reaction that includes processing the medical information about the injury provided by the medical team, as well as coping emotionally with the injury" (2015, para. 3). Furthermore, "Those emotional responses include: sadness, isolation, irritation, lack of motivation, anger, frustration, changes in appetite, sleep disturbance, disengagement" (Putukian, 2015, para. 7). Clearly, injuries affect players in many ways and can hinder development allowing player to not live up to expectations that they were drafted with. A perfect example of this is Joel Embiid, part of the 2014 NBA draft class. Embiid was taken with the third pick but has not played a game until the 2016-2017 season. Injuries have always piled up for him, at times he has said himself, that he has considered quitting because of injuries (ESPN, 2014).

**Recruiting Differences**

An underrated aspect of NBA rookie success is high school success and recruiting. For

example, the last three rookies of the year were top 20 players coming out of high school in their

respective recruiting years (ESPN, 2016). For a school to be successful in college you need to

recruit the best high school athletes and more times than not, the best high school athletes have a

realistic shot at the NBA. From the late 2000's to mid-2010's the schools with the best recruiting

classes' year in and year out are Duke and Kentucky (ESPN, 2016). It should come as no

surprise then that they send the most players to the NBA year in and year out. Furthermore, top

teams that recruit and sign the top high school players are constantly in the running for the

national championship. Most NCAA basketball champions have been from the Power Five

conferences, they send the most players to the NBA, and get the best recruits out of high school

(ESPN, 2016). That being said, it does not mean that mid-major conference teams such as The

University of Connecticut, Butler, or Wichita State do not get good players, but to have a shot at

being a successful rookie in the NBA you need to truly be elite, and elite players tend to go to

prestigious schools.

　　　A questionable college rule is the one-and-done rule, where high school players must go

to college for one year before being eligible for the NBA draft (CBS, 2015). This plays a huge

role in recruit's decision making because the better, more prestigious basketball schools will get

the one-and-done players. That means that those schools will be the most talented which in turn

leads to winning and players getting drafted high.

　　　Previous research has uncovered that it is important to be a highly rated high school

recruit if you wanted to get drafted high. From the 2013-2015 NBA drafts ten out of the fifteen

players drafted in the top five were top fifty recruits coming out of high school (Basketball

Reference, 2017). Eight out of those fifteen players were top ten high school recruits. Three of

the players not ranked in the top fifty were international players who do not get ranked coming

out of high school. That means out of the fifteen players that were ranked, only two were ranked outside the top fifty.

**Environmental Factors**

Environment plays a role is successful rookies, a role which can be determined by if the player is coming from an international league or coming into the NBA out of college. This is a factor for the player because the playing styles are different in international basketball compared to college basketball and the NBA. Recently, foreign scouting budgets have doubled because of the increased presence in international players and talent in the NBA. Some NBA general managers have even gone as far as scouting overseas talent themselves by making the trip (Eschker, Perez & Siegler, 2004). Just because there was an uptick of international players in the NBA and players getting drafted does not mean they are having success. In fact, international players taken in the first round of the NBA draft have not met expectations. On the other hand, international players taken in the second round have over achieved in rookie success. "Regressions of NBA performance reveal that international players drafted through 2001 tended to outperform expectations adjusted for draft positions. Teams subsequently drafted more international players, but first-round picks tended to underperform, implying that teams overreacted in adjusting their valuations of international prospects" (Motomura, 2016). This goes to show that if an NBA general manager is stuck between an international player and a college player in the second round of the draft, the general manager should take the international player. The opposite can be said about the first round where the general manager should take the college player because he is more likely to meet expectations.

Intangibles are another non-statistical performance factor that play into NBA rookie success. Intangibles are behaviors that are taught and become a routine over time or are not

taught and are a natural habit. One instance where the factor is taught is through scheduling and how players are able to adapt to a busy schedule. If a player in the NBA is not able to adapt to their schedule, then they will not be successful. A place where this is taught is college basketball and how players are able to develop time management skills and become it becomes routine work. The following was said about college basketball players' schedule at a high-level conference, "considering that the NCAA competition schedule provides a high frequency of games in a small period and with long travels in between, players did not have a standard weekly training schedule. Typically, players undertook five 120-min training sessions and played one or two games with one mandatory rest day during the standard weekly training schedule (Conte, Tessitore, Smiley, Thomas & Favero, 2016). Lastly, an intangible that can be taught and worked on over time is chemistry. Rookies that have good chemistry with teammates are likely to be more successful than rookies that do not have good chemistry with their teammates. A research conducted by De La Torre-Ruiz and Aragón-Correa stated, "Team members in highly interdependent teams need to go through the process of working with others in the team and of spending time together to improve their coordination and, consequently, be able to anticipate each other's behavior" (2012, p. 209). Chemistry plays a major role in rookie success, hence the pre-draft interviews and how critical they are on players and their answers.

**Institutions**

The last non-statistical performance factor are the institutions in which the player comes from. Institutions vary greatly from each other, even within their own conferences. For example, in the ACC a school like Boston College is a far cry from a school like Duke when it comes to basketball alumni, coaches, and facilities. Furthermore, the reason recruits chose a certain institution differs. An article written by Andrew, Martinez, and Flavell "suggest student-athletes

identified academic reputation, the college head coach, the location of the school, athletic

facilities, and athletic traditions as the top five factors that influenced their decision" (2016, p.

211). Although basketball program prestige does usually play a major factor, it is not always the

deciding factor as mentioned by Andrew, Martinez, and Flavell.

Looking at RPIratings.com, schools within Power Five conferences send the most players

to the NBA. In general, schools that have a rich tradition, with reputable coaches and prestigious

pasts send the most players. In 2016, the Rating Percentage Index publication of the Collegiate

Basketball News found that "For the 5th consecutive season, players from Kentucky, Duke,

Kansas, and North Carolina are the top colleges with the most former players on 2016-17 NBA

Opening-Day Rosters" (2016, para 2). Those four schools are rich in tradition and have a

reputation of sending successful rookies into the NBA. This demonstrates that schools that have

a reputation of sending players into the NBA will continue to get players selected by teams.

Therefore, it is safe to say that reputable institutions and reputable coaches send the most

successful players to the NBA.

College coaches have as much of a say as anyone as far as what players make it to the

NBA and which ones are successful. Since 2003 John Calipari of Memphis and Kentucky has

sent the most players to the NBA. From 2003-2014 Calipari has sent twenty players to the NBA

(Powers, 2014).  Of those twenty players, nineteen are actively playing in the NBA, showing he

sends successful players into the NBA. This important to know because this is a non-statistical

performance factor and if a general manager is looking to find a player that can be a successful

rookie but is stuck between two players, he should go with the Kentucky player because they

have proven success. Other coaches have proven success in sending players to the NBA

successfully include, Coach Self of Kansas, Coach Krzyzewski of Duke, and Coach Boeheim of

Syracuse (Powers, 2014). Coaches are also susceptible to being fired or leaving schools. If an

NBA scout thinks that a player will not perform as well because they have a new coach

midseason, they are wrong. One article found that a midseason coaching change leads to

improved team performance in about sixty-one percent of the cases examined" (Martinez &

Caudill, 2013, p.111). If a player has a new coach mid-season, you should almost expect their

play to pick up. In other words, a player could potentially improve his draft stock and potentially

improve his game enough to have a future in the NBA. Therefore, coaching does have a non-

statistical performance influence on successful rookies.

The one-and-done rule has taken a huge toll on prestigious programs. Teams such as

Duke and Kentucky use this rule to their advantage, where they recruit kids to their programs for

one year and then the kids go to the NBA. In the article, *One-and-Done: An Academic Tragedy*

*in Three Acts*, the following is said regarding one-and-done players, "…he can enroll in order to

maintain his eligibility to play and then not even bother to attend classes, knowing that he won't

be back after his first year. Because freshmen are immediately eligible to play, the first year

becomes an opportunity for the prospect to demonstrate his skills on the court" (2009). What this

means is that one-and-done players are going to these colleges to basically try out for the NBA.

This gives the prestigious basketball schools a huge advantage over other schools and

tremendous recruiting difference.

**Conference**

The conference a college athlete comes out of and into the NBA from is a non-statistical

performance factor. Players that come out of Power Five conferences are more likely to get

drafted for many reasons. A few of the conference non-statistical performance factors are

competitiveness, recruiting differences, and players in the NBA.

Competition among Power Five conferences is a dog fight, night in and night out. The

Power Five conferences are: ACC, BIG Ten, BIG 12, Pac 12, and SEC (ESPN, 2016). Power

Five conferences send the most players to the NBA, therefore players in the Power Five

conferences play future NBA talent night in and night out. This allows for faster development of

players and better all-around players which translate to more NBA ready players. However,

some Power Five conferences are more competitive and have more NBA talent than others.

Power Five conferences are much stronger and have more talent than mid major conferences.

This quote shows that top college basketball conferences have better players,

> "We also interact performance with an indicator for a top college basketball
> conference and with one indicating players from institutions whose teams played
> for a national championship in the 11 years prior to their draft year to allow for
> the possible statistical discrimination and option value issues" (Coates &
> Oguntimein, 2010).

Basically players that play for top conferences are the best players in college basketball, allowing

them to compete for a national championship every year. These are the same players that go on

to get drafted and have successful rookie seasons. Furthermore, NBA scouts know that college

conferences have different talents levels in them. Scouts evaluate players in the Power Five

conferences differently than players in smaller conferences. "Interestingly, pooling the small and

big conference players is rejected by the data, indicating that NBA clubs evaluate performance of

players from big and small conferences differently" (Coates & Oguntimein, 2010, p. 21). That

being said, the scouts know that Power Five conference players are more likely to make the NBA

and have a successful rookie season because of the competition they face in college.

**Draft Position**

A final non-statistical factor that impacts rookie success in the NBA is draft position and

how a player fits a team's system. A team that is a perfect example of finding players that fit

their system is the San Antonio Spurs. Year after year player that were not valued by most teams

will perform for the Spurs. For example, the Spurs drafted Tony Parker and Manu Ginobili

(FoxSports, 2016). These two players were relatively unknown coming from international

countries. They have spent their whole careers on the Spurs and made multiple All-Star games.

The Spurs brought these players from unknowns to stars because they fit their system of play. On

the other hand, you have the Philadelphia 76'ers who draft horribly. The 76'ers have had a top

10 pick the last three seasons but have not made the playoffs in over five years (ESPN, 2014).

These players that they have selected in the first top ten picks have not produced and are average

players. None of them have made all-star teams and a couple of their players taken in the top ten

have been traded for the team or have not played a game for the team yet due to injuries. Draft

order is important to a rookie's success. The higher a player is selected the more minutes they

play. The more minutes a rookie plays, the more they produce, which means the chances they are

successful are higher. The following was said about draft order in a research article, "…draft

order was a significant predictor of minutes played over the entire five-year period" (Staw,

1995). This means that rookies that were drafted in the first round played significantly more

games and minutes than rookies that were drafted in the second round. Therefore, if you are a

rookie drafted in the second round you will have a difficult time finding minutes to produce. This

could be true because if you look at most the players in the NBA today, most that stick around

are from the first round. A player's draft position plays an enormous role on the ability of a

player to be successful, although not the deciding factor.

**Purpose Statement**

A statistically successful NBA rookie is a player in his first year of the NBA who

averages a high amount of points per game (PPG), rebounds per game (RPG), assists per game

(APG), minutes per game (MPG), and accolades (usually the result of exceptional statistics).

These are statistical factors that make a successful rookie, however, the purpose of this research

is to find out what non-performance statistic factors are present in successful NBA rookies. The

research is exploring three specific questions:

1.  What is a successful NBA rookie?

2.  What non-statistical performance factors are present in successful NBA rookies?

3.  What is the relationship between draft position and rookie success?

Taken collectively, the following non-statistical performance factors and concepts can make a

successful NBA rookie: Player/Person + Institution + Conference= Successful NBA rookie.

NBA general managers, coaches and NBA prospects are generally confident in predicting how

performance factors (game statistics) can more or less accurately predict rookie success. .

However, existing research and NBA history has shown that statistics are only one of a host of

other factors that can contribute to success and that the accuracy of that prediction is far from

perfect.  It is therefore important to test new factors to see what, if any, they can contribute to

understanding why some players live up to their draft pick and why others do not.  Players like

Jimmer Fredette and Anthony Bennett were high picks in the NBA draft who many thought

would be successful rookies and players and they were false predictions. Then players like

Draymond Green, a second round draft pick, find both rookie and career success in the NBA.

The goal of this research is to find out what non-performance statistical factors played an

influence in that happening.

**Method**

This research is considered secondary research because there was no contact with the

players. All data collected was through websites, and sport specific databases. Furthermore, this

is predictive research in the fact that we are trying to predict non-statistical performance factors that are present in successful NBA rookies (Publication Manual, 2012). The reason this is predictive research is because we are trying to predict future outcomes (Publication Manual, 2012). Lastly, this is post-positivist research. This research is post-positivist. Moreover, this is predictive research as we are trying to connect the dots and predict future outcomes (Publication Manual, 2012). However, with post-positivist research we can be confident in our predictions but we cannot be certain and that is the case with this research.

The subjects of this research are the 2013-2015 NBA draft classes. The reason the 2016 draft class was not used is because there is not a full season worth of data to use from that class yet. These three draft classes are used because they are the most recent draft classes with a full seasons worth of play and they are draft classes under the current NBA Collective Bargaining Agreement. For instance, if the draft classes from 2003-2005 were used, that would not be possible because their CBA was different, 2003 had players like LeBron James come out of high school which would have skewed data we are trying to find and use. After all draftees were identified, the sample was separated into those who are statistically successful and those who are unsuccessful.

**Variable operationalization**

There are many different variables that went into the research of a successful rookie. Each player has different variables into what made them a successful rookie or a bust of a rookie. The first variable is where the player was drafted in their respective draft; what pick number were they from 1-60 represents an ordinal scale. Furthermore, the player/person themselves is a variable as no person or player is the same and how they fit into their new teams playing style. Continued, what country or what school they came from is an important variable. It is important

to know if the player is coming from an international style of play or American style of play (measured using a nominal scale). Data will also be collected on a player's recruiting rankings out of high school.  This information will be recorded as ordinal.

As revealed by Conte et al. (2016) and Coates & Oguntimein (2010), college playing environment has an impact on professional success therefore several factors will be measured. What conference they played in during their college career will be nominally measured as well as their college coach.  Measurement of the coach will be a nominal scale as well with one group being an experienced or Hall of Fame coach and the other being someone who has under ten years of coaching experience.

The remaining variables will be measured on a ratio scale to help provide more insight into player attributes.  Height (inches), weight (pounds), and age are important statistical factors that are variables in being a successful NBA rookie. Performance statistics of points per game, rebounds per game, assists per game, minutes per game, and games played are being gathered and used to separate successful versus unsuccessful rookies. All of these variables have an impact on whether a player will be a successful rookie or a bust.

**Data Collection Instrument and Process**

All data is being collected into Microsoft Excel and transferred to SPSS. The spreadsheet is organized with the variables listed across the top and each row representing a unique player (see Figure A). Data was collected from all 180 players from the three-draft class from 2013-2015 and split into Excel by position. The five positions are Point Guard, Shooting Guard, Small Forward, Power Forward, and Center. Once the players were split up into their positions, statistics such as points per game (PPG), rebounds per game (RPG), assists per game (APG), minutes per game (MPG) and rookie accolades were collected on each. Determination of success

was based on positional specific statistics falling one standard deviation above the mean. For

example, point guard success is measured by PPG and APG. After finding the mean and standard

deviation for all of the players of this position in the sample selection, player statistics were

explored to identify those who were +1 standard deviation in both of those statistical categories.

These were then labeled as the successful rookies. The same technique was done for each

position using the following statistical combinations: shooting guard (PPG & APG), small

forward (PPG, APG & RPG), power forward (PPG & RPG) and centers (PPG & RPG).

Obviously, accolades played a role in being successful but just because a player received a

rookie accolade does not mean he was successful compared to the rest of the class. For example,

if a player won rookie of the month once, that could have been just a good month for that player

and the rest of the year he was an average player. Therefore, winning accolades does help

determine successful rookies but is not a deciding factor. Additional information collected on the

180 players included: which college conference they played in, international or college

basketball players, who coached them in college, their recruiting ranking, lastly the player's

height and weight. Select data from excel was then put into SPSS for further analysis.

**Data Analysis Plan**

To see the outcome of this study the results must be sorted and analyzed to try to find

common factors and concepts between successful rookies. Correlations and significant values

were run and analyzed to figure out the importance of each data set. Each data set includes the

significance of draft position and rookie success, high school recruiting ranking and rookie

success, and coach experience and rookie success. This was done through Chi-squared testing

(See figure D). Also, it was tested to see if there was a correlation from college conference

prestige and rookie success. With all of the data collected and analyzed, it will be easy to figure

out the averages of a successful rookie and see what a successful rookie looks like by position

(see figure B). Once the successful players are identified, it will be easy to determine the non-

statistical factors present in successful rookies. These factors include: college, college coach,

college conference, college or international player, height, weight, and age. Also, correlations

between draft position and if a player is successful can be determined. That way it can be

determined if there is a significance in whether draft position plays a role in being a successful

NBA rookie.

## Results

Based on figure C it shows that players from bigger conferences were more likely to be

successful rookies than those in smaller conferences. If you look at figure C, you see that all

players that were considered successful from the draft classes of 2013-2015 were from Power

Conferences or international teams. It also goes to show that most players had experienced

coaches but not all did and that most players were rated highly coming out of high school. The

Chi-squared testing showed there was a moderate correlation between draft position and rookie

success, moderate correlation with high school recruiting ranking and rookie success, and a weak

correlation between coach experience and rookie success (See figure D). More, there was little

correlation between conference prestige and rookie success.. Interestingly, it was also found that

players are drafted more based on weight than height, when height was thought to be the biggest

factor. Correlation tests showed that players with higher weights for their positions has a higher

chance of getting drafted higher than players that were taller for their position. That shows that

general mangers and people drafting players put more stock into a players weight than their

height.

Results varied by position (see figure B). The small forward position had the youngest

average age among successful rookies, while point guards had the highest average age among

rookies. While looking at figure B it is noticeable that the Center position dominated the last

three draft classes in terms of successful rookies putting up good numbers. The Center position

averaged over 18 points per game and 8 rebounds per game among successful rookies. Out of the

14 successful rookies, 11 came from power five conferences and 3 came from international

basketball. Off that, 10 out of the 11 successful rookies that played in college had hall of fame

coaches or coaches that had experience of ten or more years coaching (see Appendix C). Lastly,

it is obvious that the number of rookies was narrowed to a small number once the formula for

successful rookies was used. The number of rookies within one standard deviation of the average

stats, narrowed down which players were successful compared to the average players or players

that were bust.

Per figure A, a player's average height and weight for each successful rookie's position

can be noted. It should be noted that games played and minutes played lead to a direct correlation

of production. For example, obviously, a rookie that did not play a lot of games or minutes could

not produce, which means they could not be a successful rookie. On the other hand, there is a

player like Karl Anthony-Towns, who plays significant minutes, played a significant number of

games and produced like a rookie of the year. That would mean he is a successful rookie

compared to a player that is up and down in the D-League like Rakeem Christmas

**Discussion**

The goal of this research was to find out what journey a player takes to becoming a

successful NBA rookie. Research was also done to see if there was any correlation between draft

position and rookie success. Of the 180 draft picks from the 2013-2015 NBA drafts, 14 were

considered successful rookies based on their statistical performances.

The results went on to answer all my research questions. A successful rookie is a player that is one standard deviation above the average. For instance, a point guard's points per game and assists per game were averaged from the three draft classes and a player that was one standard deviation above the average for both those categories was considered a successful pint guard. In the three draft classes, there was only three point guards to be found as successful rookies. All of this was done at each position to determine successful rookies at their positions.

As far as what non-statistical factors were present in successful NBA rookies, multiple factors were found to make a difference. First, a successful rookie more than likely played for an experienced coach before his rookie NBA season. Next, the player was likely a highly recruited kid coming out of high school. Lastly, a successful rookie is likely going to be a high draft pick. Another factor that had some significance but very little was conference. Players from Power Five conferences were well represented by successful rookies but the significance value was minimal.

Lastly, the question of if draft position has a relationship with rookie success? In fact, it does have a relationship, in the research it was found that draft position has a moderate correlation to rookie success. This can be found in figure D and the correlation was run through a Chi-squared test. With the results found it should better help NBA general managers, owners, coaches, and players understand what it takes to be a successful NBA rookie and what journey the players should take in order to become a successful NBA rookie.

**Limitations**

There were few limitations in this research as most information gathered was what was needed. One of the limitation was the number of draft classes that could be used. Only a certain number of draft classes could be used because the draft classes had to be under the current NBA

C.B.A. Therefore, instead of three draft classes used and 180 players there could have been

10draft classes with more players and there would have been more specific and accurate results.

But because of the C.B.A this could not happen because the rules for the draft are different now

than they were 10 years ago.

Also, another limitation during this research was time. A couple more draft classes could

have been researched but due to time constraints it was not possible. Three draft classes are

enough to get solid results and can predict what a successful rookie looks like and what journey

they took to the NBA. However, a narrower search could have been done if there was more time

to do this research.

Lastly, it is hard to measure certain characteristics of a player. There are certain things

such as heart, determination, and work ethic that you cannot measure in a research paper nor in a

scouting report. These are things that will lead to becoming a successful rookie. A player that

comes to mind that has these qualities was Kobe Bryant and he became one of the game's best

players ever. Those are limitations within this paper that cannot be researched or measured.

**Future Research**

For future research, the same formula should be used to define a successful rookie.

However, more draft classes should be used to narrow results of successful rookies. The more

draft classes that are used, and the more players that are used will help results and research. More

players will be defined as successful rookies which means it is possible to see the journeys that

more successful rookies took to the NBA. This would help GM's, coaches, owners, and future

players in what it takes to be a successful rookie.

Lastly, for future research it will be important to look at specific teams and coaches to see

how they draft and what kind of players they draft. What that means is the Spurs do not draft the

same as the Knicks because the teams have different philosophies, chemistry and personalities. The reason why this needs to be researched in the future is because a player might have all the talent but may not fit what a team is looking for. This could hinder a player's development or could help a player explode onto the map and make him a superstar. A lot of the drafting and players becoming stars is based on situation within a team and the number of minutes available at a player's position. That is why it is important to research these things in the future because it will help better define what a successful rookie is, and how they got to that point. **Conclusion**

Like it was said at the beginning, it is a dream for many kids, from a toddler to a college athlete, to make it into the NBA. Making it to the NBA is not easy, in fact only .03% of high school basketball players will be drafted into the NBA someday (Hoopsvibe, 2014). The findings of this research should better help NBA personnel and future NBA players what it takes to become a successful rookie. With this research, it better helps bridge a gap in what it takes to find a successful rookie when drafting. A player with NBA aspirations can look and see what journey they should take to give them the best chance to be a successful rookie based on this research. With that being said, it is best for a player to play for an experienced college or international coach, try to become a highly recruited high school basketball player, to a certain extent it is important to play at a bigger conference, and lastly to try and become a high NBA draft pick. These were the major factors found in successful NBA rookies and what journey they took to becoming successful based on the 2013-2015 NBA draft classes.

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# Appendix

## Figure A

| | PickNumber | Player | SchoolCountry | Conference | CoachExperienced | Height | Weight | Age | Position | PPG | RPG | APG | MPG | GP | RookieAccolades | RecruitingRank | Successful |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 3.00 | Joel Embii | Kansas | 3 | 1 | 84.00 | 250.00 | 19.00 | 5 | 20.20 | 7.80 | 2.10 | 25.40 | 31.00 | 3 time rook... | 6.00 | y |
| 2 | 1.00 | Karl Antho | Kentucky | 5 | 1 | 84.00 | 244.00 | 20.00 | 5 | 18.30 | 10.50 | 2.00 | 32.00 | 82.00 | 1st team al... | 9.00 | y |
| 3 | 3.00 | Jahlil Oka | Duke | 1 | 1 | 83.00 | 265.00 | 20.00 | 5 | 17.50 | 7.00 | 1.20 | 30.00 | 53.00 | 1st team al... | 1.00 | y |
| 4 | 2.00 | Jabari Par | Duke | 1 | 1 | 80.00 | 250.00 | 19.00 | 4 | 12.30 | 5.50 | 1.70 | 29.50 | 25.00 | 1 time rook... | 2.00 | y |
| 5 | 12.00 | Dario Sari | Croatia | 7 | 3 | 82.00 | 245.00 | 19.00 | 4 | 11.30 | 6.20 | 1.90 | 25.00 | 59.00 | none | .00 | y |
| 6 | 4.00 | Kristaps P | Greece | 7 | 3 | 87.00 | 240.00 | 20.00 | 4 | 14.30 | 7.30 | 1.30 | 28.40 | 72.00 | 1st team al... | .00 | y |
| 7 | 1.00 | Andrew Wig | Kansas | 3 | 1 | 80.00 | 199.00 | 19.00 | 3 | 16.90 | 4.60 | 2.10 | 36.20 | 82.00 | 1st team al... | 1.00 | y |
| 8 | 8.00 | Stanley Jo | Arizona | 4 | 1 | 79.00 | 245.00 | 19.00 | 3 | 8.10 | 4.20 | 1.60 | 23.10 | 73.00 | none | 7.00 | y |
| 9 | 13.00 | Zach LaVin | UCLA | 4 | 2 | 77.00 | 189.00 | 19.00 | 2 | 10.10 | 2.80 | 3.60 | 24.70 | 77.00 | 2nd team a... | 50.00 | y |
| 10 | 23.00 | Rodney Hoo | Duke | 1 | 1 | 80.00 | 206.00 | 22.00 | 2 | 8.70 | 2.30 | 1.70 | 21.30 | 50.00 | 1 time rook... | 31.00 | y |
| 11 | 13.00 | Devin Book | Kentucky | 5 | 1 | 78.00 | 206.00 | 19.00 | 2 | 13.80 | 2.50 | 2.60 | 27.70 | 76.00 | 1st team al... | 18.00 | y |
| 12 | 2.00 | Victor Ola | Indiana | 2 | 1 | 76.00 | 210.00 | 21.00 | 1 | 13.80 | 4.10 | 4.10 | 31.10 | 80.00 | 1st team al... | .00 | y |
| 13 | 11.00 | Michael Ca | Syracuse | 6 | 1 | 78.00 | 190.00 | 22.00 | 1 | 16.70 | 6.20 | 6.30 | 34.50 | 70.00 | 1st team al... | 21.00 | y |
| 14 | 7.00 | Emmanuel M | China | 7 | 3 | 77.00 | 200.00 | 19.00 | 1 | 12.80 | 3.40 | 5.50 | 30.40 | 68.00 | 2nd team a... | .00 | y |
| 15 | 5.00 | Alex Len | Maryland | 1 | 2 | 85.00 | 260.00 | 20.00 | 5 | 2.00 | 2.40 | .10 | 8.60 | 42.00 | none | .00 | n |
| 16 | 6.00 | Nerlens No | Kentucky | 5 | 1 | 83.00 | 220.00 | 20.00 | 5 | 9.90 | 8.10 | 1.70 | 30.80 | 75.00 | 1st team al... | 1.00 | n |
| 17 | 12.00 | Steven Ada | Pittsburgh | 6 | 1 | 84.00 | 255.00 | 20.00 | 5 | 3.30 | 4.10 | .50 | 14.50 | 81.00 | 2nd team a... | 6.00 | n |
| 18 | 13.00 | Kelly Olyn | Gonzaga | 8 | 1 | 84.00 | 238.00 | 22.00 | 5 | 8.70 | 5.20 | 1.60 | 20.00 | 70.00 | 2nd team a... | .00 | n |
| 19 | 16.00 | Lucas Nogu | Brazil | 7 | 3 | 84.00 | 241.00 | 22.00 | 5 | 1.00 | 1.80 | .20 | 3.80 | 6.00 | none | .00 | n |
| 20 | 21.00 | Gorgui Die | Louisville | 6 | 1 | 83.00 | 241.00 | 24.00 | 5 | 4.80 | 5.00 | .70 | 13.60 | 60.00 | 2nd team a... | .00 | n |
| 21 | 22.00 | Mason Plum | Duke | 1 | 1 | 83.00 | 245.00 | 23.00 | 5 | 7.40 | 4.40 | .90 | 18.20 | 70.00 | 1st team al... | 10.00 | n |
| 22 | 27.00 | Rudy Gober | France | 7 | 3 | 85.00 | 250.00 | 21.00 | 5 | 2.30 | 3.40 | .20 | 9.60 | 45.00 | none | .00 | n |
| 23 | 39.00 | Jeff Withe | Kansas | 3 | 1 | 84.00 | 231.00 | 23.00 | 5 | 3.30 | 2.60 | .40 | 11.80 | 58.00 | none | 43.00 | n |
| 24 | 45.00 | Marko Todo | Spain | 7 | 3 | 82.00 | 240.00 | 24.00 | 5 | .00 | .00 | .00 | .00 | .00 | none | .00 | n |
| 25 | 49.00 | Erik Murph | Florida | 5 | 2 | 82.00 | 230.00 | 23.00 | 5 | .30 | .30 | .10 | 2.60 | 24.00 | none | 38.00 | n |
| 26 | 53.00 | Colton Ive | Colorado S | 8 | 2 | 84.00 | 255.00 | 23.00 | 5 | .00 | .00 | .00 | .00 | .00 | none | .00 | n |
| 27 | 55.00 | Joffrey La | France | 7 | 3 | 83.00 | 220.00 | 23.00 | 5 | 3.90 | 3.20 | .50 | 11.20 | 24.00 | none | .00 | n |
| 28 | 59.00 | Bojan Dubl | Montenegro | 7 | 3 | 81.00 | 235.00 | 21.00 | 5 | .00 | .00 | .00 | .00 | .00 | none | .00 | n |

## Figure B

| Stats | PG | SG | SF | PF | C |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PPG | 14.4 | 10.9 | 12.5 | 12.6 | 18.7 |
| APG | 5.3 | 2.6 | 1.9 | 1.6 | 1.8 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **RPG** | 4.6 | 2.5 | 4.4 | 6.3 | 8.4 |
| **MPG** | 32 | 24.6 | 29.7 | 27.6 | 29.1 |
| **GP** | 72.7 | 67.7 | 77.5 | 52 | 55.3 |
| **Age** | 20.6 | 20 | 19 | 19.3 | 19.7 |
| **Height (inches)** | 77 | 78.3 | 79.5 | 83 | 83.7 |
| **Weight (pounds)** | 200 | 200 | 222 | 245 | 253 |

**Figure C**

| Position | Pick # | School | Conf. | Coach | Height (in) | Weight (lbs) | Age at Draft | Awards | Recruit Rank (top 100) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Point Guard | | | | | | | | | |
| Oladipo | 2 | IU | Big 10 | Y | 76 | 210 | 21 | Y | N/A |
| Carter-Williams | 11 | SYR | Big East | Y | 78 | 190 | 22 | Y | 21st |
| Mudiay | 7 | China | N/A | N/A | 77 | 200 | 19 | Y | 5th |
| Shooting Guard | | | | | | | | | |
| Lavine | 13 | UCLA | Pac 12 | N | 77 | 189 | 19 | Y | 50th |
| Hood | 23 | Duke | ACC | Y | 80 | 206 | 22 | Y | 31st |
| Booker | 13 | UK | SEC | Y | 78 | 206 | 19 | Y | 18th |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Small Forward | | | | | | | | | |
| Wiggins | 1 | Kansas | Big 12 | Y | 80 | 199 | 19 | Y | 1st |
| Johnson | 8 | UA | Pac 12 | Y | 79 | 245 | 19 | N | 7th |
| Power Forward | | | | | | | | | |
| Parker | 2 | Duke | ACC | Y | 80 | 250 | 19 | Y | 2nd |
| Saric | 12 | Croatia | N/A | N/A | 82 | 245 | 19 | N | N/A |
| Porzingis | 4 | Greece | N/A | N/A | 87 | 240 | 20 | Y | N/A |
| Center | | | | | | | | | |
| Embiid | 3 | KU | Big 12 | Y | 84 | 250 | 19 | Y | 6th |
| Towns | 1 | UK | SEC | Y | 84 | 244 | 20 | Y | 9th |
| Okafor | 3 | Duke | ACC | Y | 83 | 265 | 20 | Y | 1st |

Note. Table presents those rookies whose statistics fell at least on standard deviation above the mean in all relevant statistical categories.

**Figure D**

| Correlations | Correlations | P-value | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|
| Rookie Success | Draft Position | (r=-.385, p<.001) | Moderate |
| Rookie Success | Recruiting Ranking | (r=-.307, p<.01) | Moderate |
| Rookie Success | Coach Experience | (r=-.164, p<.05) | Weak |
| Rookie Success | College Conference | ($\chi2(6) = 5.759$, p>.05) | Weak |