My NBA Analysis – Part 3 of 3

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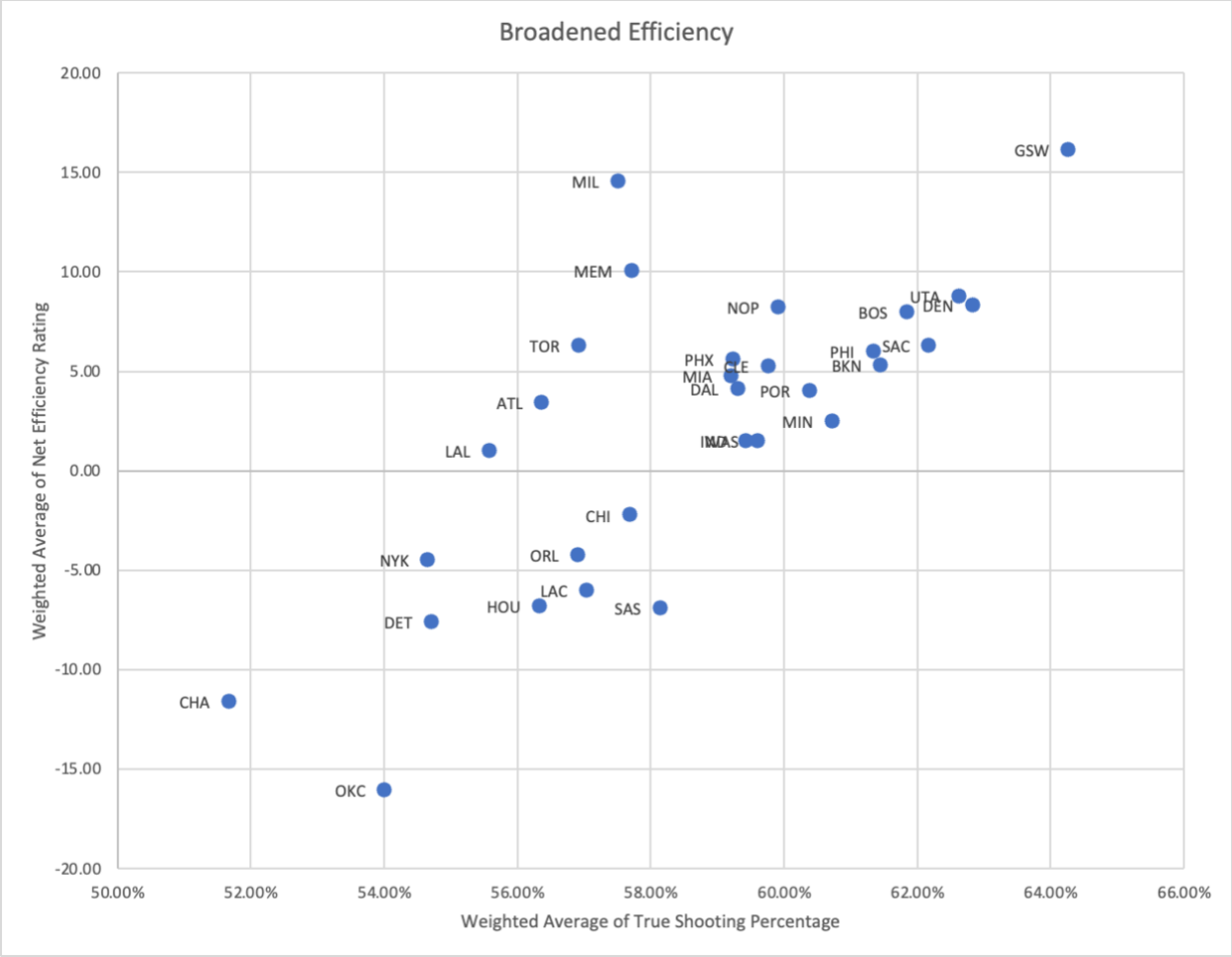
PART 3

Continuing Part 2…

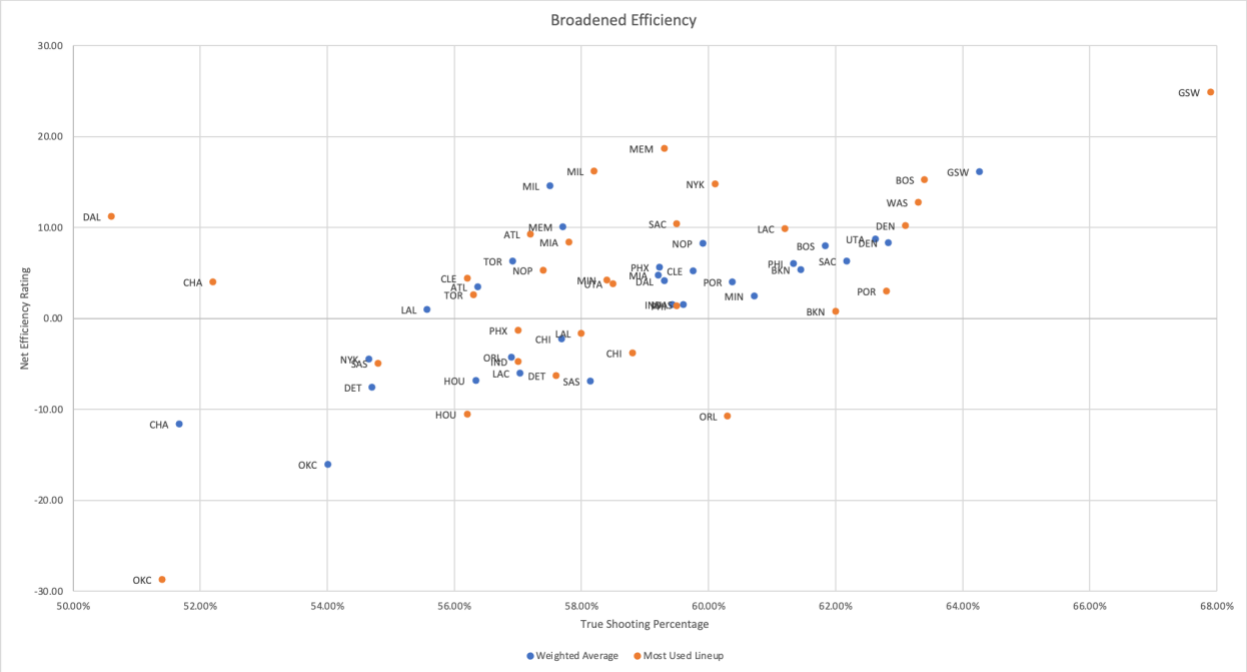
I constructed a scatter plot that displays the weighted averages of the distribution of two metrics of these ***most used lineups*** from each team. (This helps filter out garbage time from the traditional box score grabs of the metrics, as well as erratic runs by any team.) For the sake of keeping the data two-dimensional, I converted the offensive and defensive efficiency ratings into a net efficiency per 100 possessions and plotted it against the true shooting percentage.



It's amazing to me to see teams such as Milwaukee have one of better records and net efficiency rating given their below average true shooting metrics. We can conclude that their defense has been impactful while they deal with Middleton's injury to continue to be a contender. On the opposite side, San Antonio's youthful corps boasts a solid true shooting percentage but is most likely being held back by their inexperience on defense and any attempts to continue tanking. The Warriors have faced a tough December but prior to that, chef Curry was cooking it up and the defending champs' most used lineup looked as though they were ready for a repeat.

Sacramento and Utah jumped out well but don't show the same potential to be championship contenders as other teams do. I would hypothesize that the true contenders are ones with a weighted net efficiency above 7.0. In order of true shooting percentage, these would include the Bucks, Grizzlies, Pelicans, Celtics, Nuggets, and Warriors (I believe the Jazz to be an anomaly as they are already coming down from their strong start).

The second set of data added into the graph below is the true shooting and net efficiency metrics for the most used lineup on each team.



Now we are able to observe which teams have weak starting lineups or weak benches by the discrepancy in their efficiency metrics. I will dive into some of the extreme cases below.
The overlapped jumble of unreadable labels close to the center should indicate Indiana and Washington's weighted average as well as Philly's most used lineup.

Dallas drops from a true shooting percentage of 59.3% for the general distribution to 50.6% for their most used lineup which clearly centers around a high usage of Luka Doncic through the offense. However, their net efficiency improves from 4.13 to 11.2 with this starting lineup because it also features key defensive role players in Finney-Smith, Bullock, and Powell. Their bench may be smarter at choosing the shots they take with a more team-ball approach, but they fail to produce the same net efficiency.

The Clippers most used lineup boasts an efficiency rating of 15.9 compared to their weighted average of -6.00. This can be evident that their first 6-7 stars (including PG, Kawhi, Reggie Jackson, and Zubac) are great but they lack serious depth.

As mentioned before, the Warriors' first third of the season has been operating at an elite level with their weighted average ranking better than every other team's starting lineup when it comes to true shooting. Furthermore, their most used lineup is untouchable for other teams consisting of Steph, Klay, Draymond, Wiggins and Looney.

The Knicks, as disappointing as they might seem this season, are actually optimizing their lineups correctly. Their most used lineup has a true shooting percentage of 60.1% and net efficiency of 14.80 compared to their averages of 54.66% and -4.48. Charlotte and Washington are also great examples of doing the best with what they have. Charlotte's net efficiency improves from -11.57 to 4 with their starting lineup. Washington's net efficiency improves from 1.53 to 12.80 with their starting lineup. Additionally, their true shooting percentage improves from 59.6% to 63.3%.

Lastly, OKC presents an interesting but explainable case. They already rank last in the league in weighted net efficiency with -16.01. This has a drastic slide to -28.70 with their most used lineup which includes budding players like Giddey, Dort, and Gilgeous-Alexander. I believe this gap can be explained with the fact that these young starters are typically playing against other team's best lineups. Meanwhile, their alternative lineups play their opponent's benches.

Thanks for reading! I can be reached on Twitter - **@NumberswithNik**