

APPENDIX B: BACKGROUND ON BASKETBALL AND THE NATIONAL BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION (NBA)

To get the most out of this case, there are a few pieces of context that might be helpful, especially for those not familiar with basketball.

Basketball: It's not really necessary to know much about basketball itself to get the point of the assignment, but if you're interested in learning more, visit [Breakthrough Basketball](#).

The key ideas that are helpful for this case are as follows:

- Shooting the ball into the hoop: Each shot is called an **attempt**. Players are differentially successful. The highest success rate, on average, is uncontested from the foul line (called **free throws**). The second-highest success rate is inside the three-point arc, with shots worth two points. Finally, outside the arc, shots are worth three points each. This area has a much lower shooting percentage. Field goal attempts include both two-point and three-point shots.
- When a player misses a shot, either the player's team or the opposing team can capture the ball. This is called a **rebound**. If the opposing team gets it, it is called a **defensive rebound**, and they will advance it the length of the court to hopefully score. If the shooter's team gets it, it is called an **offensive rebound**, and the team will try to put it up again, either instantly, or through a play (a series of passes and moves).
- Players with the ball must dribble (the ball must be bouncing to the floor and back to their hand) while moving. If they don't, the other team gets the ball. This is called a **turnover**. There are other ways to turn the ball over: knocking it out of bounds, passing it errantly, or "double dribbling." Turnovers are basically unforced errors.
- The opposite of turnovers are **steals**. The team defending takes the ball from an offensive player, forcing an error. The player who forces the error is credited with a steal.
- When a player is shooting, generally from the two-point area, but not exclusively, the defending team can block the shot. That means getting a hand on the ball before it gets into the basket.
- The best team play includes excellent passing, which leads to baskets. These excellent passes are credited to

the players who make them as **assists**, if the excellent pass leads to a successful basket.

- Hitting the opposing team is frowned upon and, to some degree, penalized. The penalty is called a **foul**. If a player commits too many fouls in a game (six in the NBA), he fouls out. If a team commits too many fouls, the other team gets to shoot **free throws**, shot attempts that are uncontested. If a player fouls while the opponent is shooting a basket, even if there are not many team fouls, the opponent will get to shoot free throws: two if the player missed the shot, or one they made it.
- Positions: Generally, there are two larger players who play **forward** (closer to the basket, planning on scoring from two-point range): a **power forward** and a **small forward**. There are two smaller players who play guard (farther from the basket, often doing much of the ball handling, and scoring from three-point range): **point guard** and **shooting guard**. The final player, usually the tallest, is called the **center**. He plays in the middle, guarding the hoop closely on defense, and shooting from "the paint" (the part inside the free-throw area) on offense. These positions are generalizations, and there are many defensive and offensive schemes that move the players around. In addition, some teams have started playing "small ball" without a true center. Positions are listed in the data, and may matter somewhat for playing time. Some players have more than one position.

The National Basketball Association: The top men's professional basketball league is called The National Basketball Association, or NBA. The teams in the NBA are divided into two leagues (East and West). Teams are located in cities across the United States, with one team in Canada (Toronto Raptors).

Player Acquisition:

Teams in the NBA acquire players in three ways:

1 The amateur draft: Each June, teams take turns selecting from among the amateur players aged 19 and over from U.S. colleges, U.S. high schools, and some international opportunities (with some exceptions not worth discussing here). Once a player is selected, he can only sign with the team that selected him. This selection process is especially important for those teams that are

financially disadvantaged, since signing top veteran players is difficult for them. The order of the draft is determined by a lottery. Teams who perform poorly in a season have a higher chance of being selected early in the draft lottery, and therefore having a higher draft pick.

2 Free agency: Once a player's contract ends, he is free to sign with another team. This is where small-market teams are at the biggest disadvantage. Some of the

players that you recommend will be available through free agency. If other teams also want them, then their salaries could go up substantially from what they are currently paid.

3 Trades: Players can be traded from one team to another. Some of the players you recommend will only be available to be traded because they're in a contract with their current teams.

MORE INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND FOR EACH TEAM AT:

[Britannica: NBA Teams](#)

[Basketball Reference: List of all the NBA & ABA Teams](#)

[Wikipedia: NBA Teams](#)

[NBA Hoops Online: NBA Team Roots](#)

[NBA: Official Site](#)

[NBA: Teams and Rosters](#)[Competition: NBA Team Locations](#)