

Going Gorilla: The weekly Phoenix Suns rant - What counts as a close game?

Written by

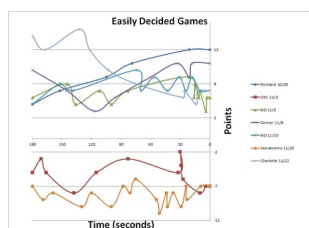
Sunday, 24 November 2013 10:00 -



Last week I took a look at how the Suns had fared in close games this season. Consider this part two, as I look further into what constitutes a close game and the correlation between winning % in close games compared to overall winning %.

We have hit the last Sunday before Thanksgiving and the Suns sit at 6-6 after a practically unwatchable bounce back victory against the Charlotte Bobcats. The Suns basically dominated the second half of that game, but let the Bobcats scramble to within single digits in the waning moments. Charlotte even hit that magical number of five points with :14 left in the game...

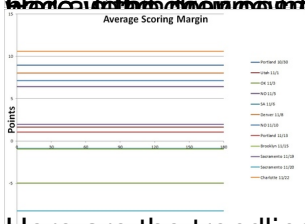
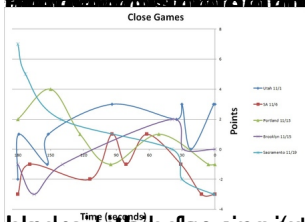
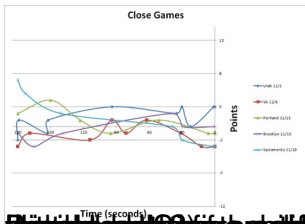
That makes it 11 out of 12 games this season where the score has been within five points in the final **three** minutes. Yes, three. Don't ask me why people were disseminating the five points/five minutes stat when this makes it appear even closer. But at this point that stat has really become a farce. The Suns have played very competitively this season. They have led in the fourth quarter of every game with the exception of their home loss to Sacramento. But only a few of their games have really been close...



And so I have a graph... a graphtastic graph. The plots on this graph depict the scoring margin between the Suns and their opponents at each time either team scored over the last three minutes (180 seconds). Everything above zero represents the Suns leading and everything below zero represents the Suns trailing. The Suns are 5-2 this season in games that really aren't that close. Six of these got within the fabled five point mark in the last three minutes, but only one of them even became a one score game (OKC). Calling any of these close, with the possible exception of OKC, seems really disingenuous. I'll expound on this as we progress.

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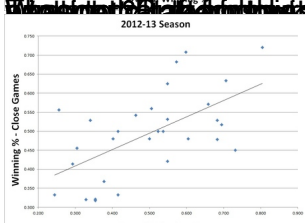
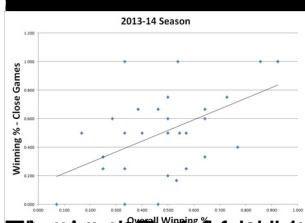
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Here are the trendlines for each game. Here is the methodology for determining these values.

Seconds	Score +/-	Points
180	5	140
152	7	329
105	9	234
79	11	638
21	13	273
0	13	0

Average Difference: 2.97



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