

NBA Playoff Tiebreaker Rules on Three-Way Ties

Written by
Wednesday, 02 April 2014 08:51 -



Taking a look at the tie break rules to make the playoffs, given that the Phoenix Suns, Memphis Grizzlies and Dallas Mavericks seems determined to finish with the same record.

There have been a lot of suggestions for improving the [NBA playoffs](#) , many of which involve having more Western teams in the field of 16 than just the 8 they are allotted each season.

To wit, the [Dallas Mavericks](#) are 44-31 so far this season. That's good enough for 3rd in the East, but can't even crack the top 8 in the West.

The [Minnesota Timberwolves](#) are 36-37, which is good enough for 7th in the East but only 10th in the West.

Play-in tourney

One suggestion for improvement has been to have a "play in" tournament for the West's last two seeds.

Thanks to the schedule and the season results so far, those folks are getting their wish. The [Phoenix Suns](#)

,
[Memphis Grizzlies](#)

and Dallas Mavericks all have 44 wins, prompting a shuffle of the 7th-8th-9th positions on a daily basis. All three teams are already in the "play in" tournament.

Making matters even tougher, the Suns, Mavericks and Grizzlies all play each other on the final three nights of the season. The Suns play the Mavericks in Dallas, then the Grizzlies at home before finishing on the road at the [Sacramento Kings](#) . The Grizzlies and Mavericks finish the season facing each other on the final night.

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The possibility definitely exists for a tiebreaker to declare the final playoff spot or two.

Two-way tiebreaker

[Da Rules, per nba.com](#)

Two Teams Tied

- (1) Better winning percentage in games against each other

- (2) Better winning percentage against teams in own division (only if tied teams are in same division).

- (3) Better winning percentage against teams in own conference.

- (4) Better winning percentage against teams eligible for playoffs in own conference (including teams that finished the regular season tied for a playoff position).

- (5) Better winning percentage against teams eligible for playoffs in opposite conference (including teams that finished the regular season tied for a playoff position).

- (6) Better net result of total points scored less total points allowed against all opponents ("point differential").

The Suns currently beat out Dallas, but lose to Memphis.

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The Suns are 1-1 against Dallas but have a slightly better conference schedule, while they are 0-3 against Memphis.

Three-way tiebreaker

What if all three teams finish with the same record? Who gets the final two playoff spots?

[Da Rules, per NBA.com](#)

More Than Two Teams Tied

- (1) Better winning percentage in all games among the tied teams.

- (2) Better winning percentage against teams in own division (only if all tied teams are in the same division).

- (3) Better winning percentage against teams in own conference.

- (4) Better winning percentage against teams eligible for playoffs in own conference (including teams that finished the regular season tied for a playoff position).

- (5) Better net result of total points scored less total points allowed against all opponents ("point differential").

At the moment, the Phoenix Suns lose any tiebreaker that involves Memphis - either a two-way tie, or a three-way tie - because the Suns are 0-3 against Memphis this season.

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Doesn't matter till game 82

We will all pull our hair out over the next two weeks, but the high likelihood is that the season won't be decided until the last game or two.

When the three teams play each other, the tie-break scenarios will likely change once again (though the Suns will almost certainly never win a tiebreak over Memphis).