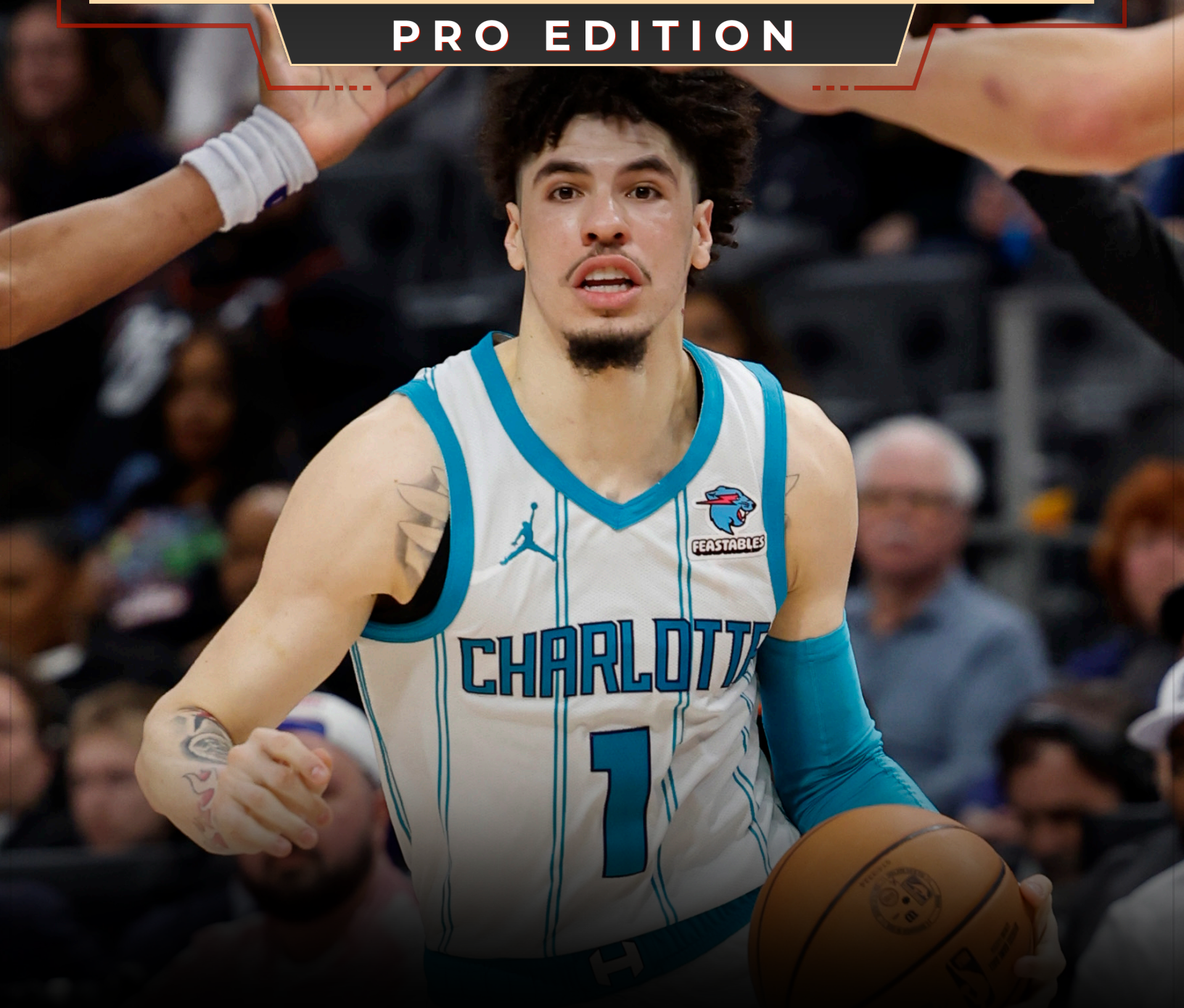


# NBA BETTING GUIDE

PRO EDITION



## INCLUDES

- REGIONAL TEAM COVERAGE
- PROP AND LIVE BETTING STRATEGIES
- POWER RATINGS



# PLAYER PROP BETTING THE SMART WAY

By Zachary Cohen

As betting becomes more and more popular, we're seeing a huge increase in the number of people that want to bet specifically on player props. There's something about rooting for individual players that is appealing to a lot of fans, and that's especially true of the NBA. A lot of that has to do with the fact that you're often getting national television games that feature some of the league's superstars. And sportsbooks also happen to offer a lot of bet boosts on those stars, making it easy for props to catch the attention of bettors.

I have been hitting NBA player props in my daily best bets column for VSIN, so you'll be able to get some of my favorite props of the day if you're regularly checking out the website. However, I know that part of the fun in betting is doing it yourself. With that in mind, I want to give you some tips on how to go about player prop betting in a smart way.

## LEARN FROM THE GAME SPREAD/TOTAL

The first thing I do when beginning to look for props is look at the spreads and totals for the day's slate. If a game has an extremely high total, you're likely going to have a chance to cash some Overs on points and assists. And if one of the teams is a big favorite in that game, you might want to lean towards choosing players from that roster. Similarly, if a game has a low total, you can probably find some good Under plays on the underdog's side. Or you might be able to look to the blocks and steals markets, as lower totals in the NBA are usually reserved for teams that play good defense or sloppy offense. The one caveat there is that a low total could simply mean that one, or both, of the teams in that game play at a slow pace. Pace of play is one of the many things that is available on the official NBA stats page.

## DO YOUR RESEARCH

Not only is pace available on the NBA's stats pages, but their advanced stats are the ultimate resource for sports bettors. It's amazing the type of information they provide for free and learning how to mine those pages can be crucial when trying to become a profitable player prop bettor. In addition to looking for the spreads and totals on a specific game, I regularly take note of where teams stand in certain advanced stat categories. For example, the Wizards had the lowest rebound percentage in basketball last year. Knowing that helps you look to Washington's opponents as potential Over bets on rebound totals. Meanwhile, the Jazz happened to have the highest turnover ratio in

basketball last year. That generally means that backing the Over on steals for one of the players on the opposing team can be a smart bet. But the overall theme here is that there's a lot out there that can help you. Don't go into this blindly.

We also have a VSIN Daily Prop Analyzer that lists all the players that are playing on any given evening. It tells you what their prop totals are for points, rebounds, assists and 3s made. It also lets you know how they have performed with those totals throughout the season, and it even allows you to sort by which players have been most profitable. That's a tool you'll want to regularly use when betting props.

## DON'T BE AFRAID TO THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

Sometimes a player's statistics don't tell the whole story. For example, a point guard might set their teammates up for great opportunities, but those guys might not be cashing in on them. That could mean that the passer's assist numbers will be a little down. But I like to find teams that are playing against weak defensive opponents and then look at the NBA's "potential assists" numbers. I think this is an even better way of approaching assist props than by looking at assists per game. It's just so important to be betting on players that consistently put their teammates in good positions to score. When combining potential assists with a weak opponent and a game in which both teams play at a fast pace, you're going to have a good chance of hitting your assist Overs. This is one of my favorite angles on the player props market. But there are also other things you do. For example, a known marksman from deep might be in the middle of a cold stretch shooting the ball, which leads to lower 3-point totals than usual. But looking at older percentages will tell you that those stretches are bound to end, which could lead to favorable prices and profitable outcomes. Looking at one-on-one matchups within a game can also be helpful. If a team has a bad defensive center taking on the assignment of guarding Nikola Jokic, what does that mean? Sure, he's the best passing big man in the NBA — and arguably the best passing big ever — but he might look to score more than usual in that situation. These are things you want to be thinking about often. Don't just look at numbers. Try to think about how a game will play out.

## BE SOMEWHAT ACTIVE ON X

Nobody needs to sit there refreshing social media nonstop, but you're going to want to follow some of the league's bigger news breakers and check X in the hours leading up to the daily NBA slate. While the NBA is trying to cut down on the "load management" problem, there's simply no way around it. Teams are not going to overlook the benefits of giving their players some extra rest, which means key players will still be rested here and there. When they are, you're going to want to pounce on their teammates to step in and replace some of their numbers.

## DON'T GO OVERBOARD

As with anything, you want to be careful when betting player props. There are so many options available on any given night, so you might be tempted to spray the board. But try and limit yourself to the few that you're very confident in and use a consistent unit size throughout — unless you feel like somebody being out gives you a bigger edge than usual. Also, I'd personally suggest staying away from parlays with more than two or three legs. I know people post tickets to X in which they're turning \$5 into \$50,000 and whatnot, but those are fool's gold and extremely difficult to hit. You're better off being consistent and earning small profits over an extended period of time.



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# RULES AND LIVE BETTING STRATEGIES TO LIVE BY

By Kelley Bydlon

With so many markets now available to bettors, there are a lot of different ways to bet a game in any sport. However, live betting should never be overlooked — especially in the NBA. With so many possessions in a game, the NBA provides more opportunities to profitably jump in live on a side or total than any other sport. In fact, for many NBA bettors, including myself, in-game bets can account for the majority of bets you make in a season.

Below, I go through some things new bettors should know as they begin to get involved in live betting games...

## RULES TO LIVE BY

### **1. IF YOU'RE ENTERING A GAME WITHOUT A PRE-GAME BET AND ARE LOOKING TO SOLELY FOLLOW A LIVE BETTING STRATEGY YOU HAVE IN MIND, YOU HAVE TO BE ALRIGHT WITH NOT MAKING A SINGLE BET.**

I think people often force in-game bets if they enter games looking for action. You should enter each game with a specific strategy in mind and be on the lookout for the opportunities that will offer you a good time/price to jump in live. Simply put, those opportunities you wish for will not present themselves in every game. Sometimes games just go a completely different way than you had thought, and that should be fine with you because you don't have a single dollar invested.

### **2. IF YOU'RE NOT VERY FAMILIAR WITH LIVE BETTING, START OFF BY BETTING THE ABSOLUTE BARE MINIMUM OR NOTHING AT ALL. TRACK HOW THE SPREAD AND TOTAL MOVE THROUGHOUT GAMES.**

You'll want to get a feel for how spreads and totals move based off of scoring and pace. You'll also get a feel for when the live odds really start to shift away from the pregame numbers. You'll usually find this takes until at least the second quarter.

### **3. WAIT FOR BREAKS IN THE ACTION TO MAKE IN-GAME BETS.**

Just like any other sport, you really want to wait for a timeout or commercial break to get your bets in. If watching on TV, you'll always be behind what's really happening on the court. Even if the game has hit a time/score and the spread/total you were hoping for, you don't want to risk a bet while the game is still being played. You could be close to a full minute behind the real-time action that's taking place. That's a lifetime in the NBA and before you know it, you might be looking down at a very dumb bet you made. Wait for a break, then you can truly evaluate how best to proceed with betting the game.

### **4. KNOW WHO YOU'RE BETTING AGAINST: A COMPUTER OR A PERSON.**

Sportsbooks will often utilize technology and computer algorithms to set live odds throughout a game. For a bettor, this is ideal. Those books will have live odds posted throughout most of the game, whereas a sportsbook that is booking the game by hand will usually only post numbers during commercial breaks, and even that may be inconsistent. Betting against a computer will not only give you more opportunities to bet, but those algos might also miss out on accounting for injuries that take place, ejections, players fouling out, etc. Those are all things a bettor can take advantage of. Whichever state you bet in, familiarize yourself with your live betting options from book to book.

Alright, now that you have all that boring stuff squared away, let's talk about some ways to make some damn money. Below, I go through some of the live betting strategies I utilize regularly.

## LIVE BETTING STRATEGIES

### **1. IT'S ALL ABOUT SHOOTING PERCENTAGES**

Even if it's a game you didn't have plans to bet, some opportunities will present themselves that you just can't pass up. Let's say Team A is favored by 5 pre-game and is down 12 in the middle of the second quarter. You check the box score and see that Team A is shooting 39% from the field and 18% from 3, while Team B is shooting 53% from the field and 47% from 3 (yes, I'm completely making up numbers for this example). Well, basketball is a game of shooting and runs, and teams can often start out very hot or cold from the field before finding their true average. In the example above, you should expect by the end of the game for Team A's shooting percentages to look much better and Team B's to look much worse, and in the second quarter you could be betting that pre-game 5-point-favorite at a much better number.

### **2. OKAY, IT'S MOSTLY ABOUT 3-POINT SHOOTING PERCENTAGES**

That's the number you should be focused the most on. With how many 3s are shot in the NBA today (about 40% of FGA), you can often find teams with drastically different 3PT percentages at different points in a game. However, these percentages usually regress to near a team's average by the end of a game. So, if you see a game with outlier shooting percentages on one side, or both, look to capitalize on it with a bet.

### 3. GUESS WHAT? THIS WORKS FOR NOT JUST SIDES BUT TOTALS TOO!

Let's say both teams start out shooting poorly from 3, or both teams start out shooting way too hot from 3. This can lead to easy in-game bets on the Over or the Under.

### 4. TIMING IS CRUCIAL

Okay, we've discussed what you're looking for when it comes to shooting percentages, but when should you make the bet? A couple of minutes into the game, the odds won't have shifted enough off the pregame numbers, and if you wait until too late into the game, you're not going to give the team you're betting on enough possessions to make up the points you need. If I'm basing my bet mainly just off shooting, I'm usually not getting involved until the second quarter has started, and I'm usually shutting it down by about midway through the third quarter. Again, you have to leave your team enough time.

### 5. KNOW WHEN STAR PLAYERS TAKE THAT FIRST BREAK

As a season progresses, get to know when star players usually take their first rest in a game. Is it the end of the first quarter? Beginning of the second quarter? These are good to note as the season goes on and will help you make easier decisions on timing your in-game bets.

### 6. I LIKE A TEAM TONIGHT, BUT MAN, I WISH I WAS GETTING AN EXTRA FEW POINTS OR LAYING A COUPLE LESS!

You'll often say that every week during football season with not much you can do about it. Well, in the NBA that's what I would call a pre-game lean that I'm looking to bet live. Let's say you're leaning Team A, and then the game starts off with a flurry of points from Team B. You could wait three minutes into the game, a timeout is called, and boom, all of a sudden you have a live number available to you that you were looking for pre-game. Yes, your team has an uphill climb ahead of them, but there are so many more possessions left in the game.

### 7. WE DON'T ROOT FOR INJURIES, BUT THEY CAN OFTEN LEAD TO BETTING OPPORTUNITIES

We see bettors capitalize on this often in the NBA. Whether it's an injury or a day off for a player, you'll often see big changes in the spread when that injury report comes out and you see a star player taking another game off. The books will look to quickly pull down their numbers or adjust them, and bettors try to beat them to the punch. A similar approach can be taken in-game. If a player is injured, ejected, or fouls out, it might not be reflected in the live odds immediately. This is a major opportunity for bettors.

### 8. OH SWEET, BEAUTIFUL MIDDLES

These aren't for everybody, and it's not even something I dabble in as much as I used to, but there's nothing quite like the feeling of having +points with both teams and the game falling right in the sweet spot. Of course, this is not something you can do with every game, but maybe you bet a big dog pre-game that gets off to an extremely good start that you know they won't be able to maintain. Then come in with a smaller bet on the other side. You never know; you might win both. Of course, this can be applied to totals as well.

### 9. LIVE PLAYER PROPS

This is a new frontier for me, and I don't have a ton of betting advice on it now, but it is something I'm hoping to bet more this season if the Vegas books allow me to. Just like all other live markets, it's one you should study to see how you might be able to profit from it.



# STEVE MAKINEN'S POWER RATINGS

TEAM	POWER RATING
BOSTON	104.0
OKLAHOMA CITY	103.5
NEW YORK	103.0
DENVER	102.0
PHILADELPHIA	102.0
DALLAS	101.5
MINNESOTA	101.5
MILWAUKEE	101.0
PHOENIX	100.0
CLEVELAND	99.5
INDIANA	99.5
ORLANDO	99.5
MEMPHIS	99.0
NEW ORLEANS	99.0
SACRAMENTO	98.5
GOLDEN STATE	98.0
LA LAKERS	98.0
MIAMI	98.0
HOUSTON	97.0
LA CLIPPERS	97.0
SAN ANTONIO	96.5
ATLANTA	96.0
TORONTO	95.0
CHICAGO	94.5
CHARLOTTE	93.5
UTAH	93.5
DETROIT	93.0
PORTLAND	92.0
BROOKLYN	91.5
WASHINGTON	91.0



# CHARLOTTE HORNETS

CONFERENCE: EASTERN • DIVISION: SOUTHEAST  
2023-24 RECORD: 21-61 SU, 33-47-2 ATS, 42-39-1 O/U

In 2022, the Hornets finished with a 43-39 record and made the Play-In Tournament, thanks in large part to LaMelo Ball playing 75 games. The team ranked ninth in the NBA in adjusted offensive rating that season, and Ball's fun, uptempo brand of basketball made Charlotte unique. However, in the past two seasons, Ball has only appeared in 58 games due to injuries.

If Ball stays healthy, the Hornets could once again compete for a Play-In spot, though that's undoubtedly a big "if." But Ball will reportedly wear ankle braces this season, which is a good start. Ball suffered three ankle injuries in 2022-23, so he realizes he needs to try something.

Despite his limited playtime in 2024, Ball posted the highest EPM of his career at +3.2, which placed him in the NBA's 93rd percentile. His stats last season (23.9 PPG, 8.0 APG, 5.1 RPG), and really all throughout his young career, show he can be the engine of a great offense.

Ball's strengths include his exceptional passing and consistent 3-point shooting, which he has maintained despite a significant increase in volume. If he can improve his finishing as a driver, he could be an All-NBA player.

Defensively, Ball needs to recapture his 2022 form, as he posted a -0.2 Defensive EPM. That number is far from impressive, but Charlotte will be fine defensively as long as Ball isn't killing his team on that end of the floor. New head coach Charles Lee will play a crucial role in guiding Ball and the rest of the team.

Lee, 39, has already made a name for himself as an assistant for two championship teams: the 2021 Bucks and 2024 Celtics. Both teams were Top 10 in the NBA in both offensive and defensive efficiency, and Lee's experience should help foster a winning culture in Charlotte. His leadership and attention to detail make him a promising fit for this Hornets roster, which isn't in as rough of shape as you might think.

Lee is also very in tune with the modern style of basketball. Last year's Celtics shot more 3s than any team in the league, and Lee understands the importance of that shot. That alone will be big for a Hornets team that was just 16th in the NBA in 3PT frequency (35.9%) and 22nd in 3PT shooting (36.1%) in 2023-24. Perhaps the shots won't fall right away, especially given the look of this roster. But Charlotte's shot profile will be a lot healthier from Day 1.

One player to watch this year is second-year forward Brandon Miller, who averaged 17.3 points, 4.3 rebounds and 2.4 assists as a rookie while shooting 44.0% from the floor and 37.3% from 3. Miller is a smooth three-level scorer, and with Ball setting him up, he's only going to get better. Lee could also help Miller become a more effective wing defender, building on his length and willingness to compete.

Mark Williams is another player that should thrive in a better overall environment. The 22-year-old rim runner is an ideal pick-and-roll partner for Ball and a very impressive rim protector. However, he needs to stay healthy after appearing in only 19 games last season. He already sprained his foot and missed time in training camp, but it doesn't seem like an injury that will bother him once the real games start.

Miles Bridges, despite being a polarizing figure, remains a key player. Last year, he averaged career highs in points (21.0) and rebounds (7.3) per game, though his shooting percentages dropped, and his defense was a mess. But the team having real aspirations to compete could light a fire under Bridges, who has proven he is capable of being a two-way contributor.

The Hornets also boast decent rotation pieces in Grant Williams, Josh Green, Tre Mann and Nick Richards. Williams, who spent four years in Boston, brings floor spacing, good decision-making and leadership to the team. Green, acquired from the Mavericks, is a 3-and-D player with athleticism. Mann is a dynamic ball handler with an elite ability to create space, though he still needs development. Richards, a high-energy backup center, averaged 9.7 points, 8.0 rebounds and 1.1 blocks last season and stepped up when Williams was injured.

First-round pick Tidjane Salaun is another intriguing prospect. At 6-foot-9 with a 7-foot-2 wingspan and a solid jumper, Salaun has the tools to develop into a very good player, though he needs time to refine his skills.

With a new head coach, a balanced roster and low expectations, the Hornets could surprise some people this season. The young guys will just need to listen to Lee and be willing to battle on the defensive end on a nightly basis. Without a pretty big defensive turnaround, Charlotte isn't going anywhere. But this team has the right pieces and system to be good enough on that end of the floor, and the goal within the organization is to be competitive immediately.

## OUTLOOK

**I love the Hornets to go Over 29.5 and I'm also going to put a little something on them to win 35+ games at +245 odds. I'm aware this is essentially a bet on Ball's health, but I'm fine with that. Players generally figure out how to stay healthy eventually, and Ball seems like he's willing to make some changes in order to get there this season. If he plays a decent number of games, this could be the most improved group in the league.**

## THE ODDS

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