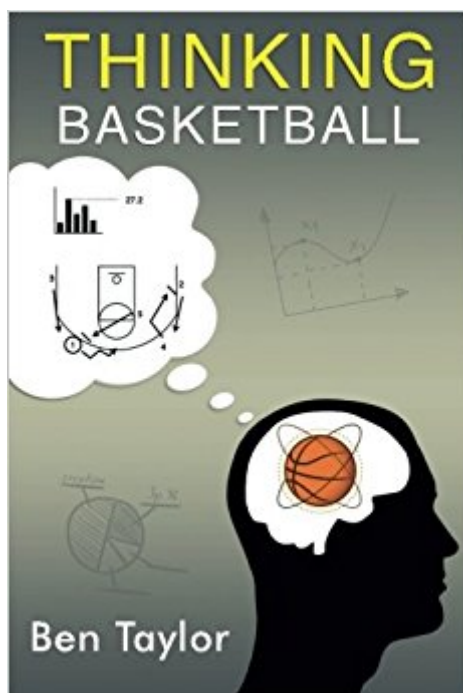


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# Thinking Basketball



## Synopsis

Are top scorers really the most valuable players? Are games decided in the final few minutes? Does the team with the best player usually win? Thinking Basketball challenges a number of common beliefs about the game by taking a deep dive into the patterns and history of the NBA. Explore how certain myths arose while using our own cognition as a window into the game's popular narratives. New basketball concepts are introduced, such as power plays, portability and why the best player shouldn't always shoot. Discover how the box score can be misleading, why "closers" are overrated and how the outcome of a game fundamentally alters our memory. Behavioral economics, traffic paradoxes and other metaphors highlight this thought-provoking insight into the NBA and our own thinking. A must-read for any basketball fan -- you'll never view the sport, and maybe the world, the same again.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Ben Taylor is the founder of [backpicks.com](#), which focuses on the "cognition of sports," primarily through the lens of basketball. His work in sports analytics has been used on [basketball-reference.com](#) and on websites like ESPN, Sports Illustrated and the Wall Street Journal. He holds a B.S. in Cognitive Science from UCLA and an M.S. in Human Factors from Bentley University. At UCLA, he covered basketball and football for the Daily Bruin and hosted a sports show on UCLA Radio. In 2009, he covered the Los Angeles Lakers for the Los Angeles Times blog.

I've been an avid reader of Ben Taylor's work on basketball since 2010, dating back to the days he ran his [backpicks.com](#) blog. Taylor is in the top 5 of basketball analysts because of the way he

approaches the game. He judges players based on the actions they did, not by narrative. If you are expecting a book that rates players with a lot of titles highly because of wins, then this book is not for you. This book contains a lot of the concepts that Ben Taylor discussed on his website. If you haven't been exposed to those concepts in the past, this book will change the way you think of basketball. Here are a few concepts you will learn from the book: -A 7 game playoff series is a small sample size. The best team will not always win because of the small sample size -A player's value is determined on what he can do on a good team, not a bad team. A player who improves a 45 win team to 60 wins is more valuable than a player who moves a 15 win team to 45 win team. -Portability of a player's skill is very important in determining his value. A player who can play well on multiple teams is more valuable than a player whose skill set fits on a few teams. For example, Isolation scoring is not a portable skill. Most good teams already have isolation scoring. Adding an isolation scorer will not move the needle as much as adding an offensive rebounder or good defensive player. If you add Allen Iverson to the Warriors, they do not become a better basketball team. They might be worse because the team is distributing more shots to him that should have gone to Curry and Thompson. If you add Durant to the Warriors, they become a better team. His shooting, rebounding, and defense will fit all teams.

I thoroughly enjoyed Ben Taylor's book on basketball. I love analytical insights and the game of basketball. And prior to reading the book, I must admit that I was a believer in concepts such as having a great clutch shooter at the end of the game is critical or a 7 game series is plenty of games to determine the best team or a single superstar can totally turn around a team. Ben uses data, analytical insights and explanations of behavioral bias to open one's eyes to what really is going on. I have a much greater appreciation of winning the first 3 quarters, the over emphasis on scoring averages, the power of the team vs. the individual, and the bias towards remembering the "winning" shot vs. all the miss shots. And I even get why the number of rings does not truly measure the impact and career success of a given player...although I still would rather have 5 rings than zero or one ;-)

I really enjoyed this book! It covers some of the common cognitive and basketball evaluation/perceptual biases well. It utilizes good analogies, examples, and new terms to further illustrate the Author Ben Taylor's points that typically run counter to traditional basketball wisdom. It covers a lot of basketball philosophies I have discussed in depth with friends and my students over the past several years in a very engaging and clear manner. I definitely recommend this book to any

basketball fan and/or anyone trying to get into the industry!

Wow, this is an unbelievable book! I am an avid basketball reader, having read quite a few books on the subject. I feel that Mr. Taylor's book completely turns the table on how one thinks of the game by presenting us with a current and new view of its playing arena in the context of "today's player." Because of his behavioral approach to the sport's commentary and analysis, the concepts he discusses are not only easy to understand and grasp but entertaining as well. Think of him as the Malcolm Gladwell of basketball writing, truly fresh, truly unique, utterly eye-opening.....A great, essential read for anyone who loves the games of hoops and wants to learn more!

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