

MODELLING HOME ADVANTAGE IN BASKETBALL AT DIFFERENT LEVELS OF COMPETITION

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to find out if there were any differences between the home and road basketball teams that played in three different levels of competition, in nineteen standard and derived statistical indicators of situational efficiency. The home and road teams from NLB-Adriatic league, Euroleague-regular season and Euroleague-Top 16 were analysed. Three discriminant analyses have been conducted in order to track down possible differences between the home and road teams in game stats. Obtained results show the differences in game related statistics between the home and road teams from NLB and Euroleague (regular season) competition. Home teams are characterised by higher number of assists, steals, points and points scored by the starting five, while the road teams have more turnovers. This points to aggressive defensive and offensive tactics of the home teams. There were no statistically significant differences between the home and road teams played in Euroleague-Top 16. As the quality of competition becomes stronger, the advantage of home court becomes less dominant. In other words, when the quality of teams is pretty equal, home advantage is low and does not have a dominant and crucial role in winning games.

Key words: statistical indicators, situational efficiency, discriminant analyses

Introduction

Basketball is a game that attracts millions of spectators all around the world, not only with its attractive and dynamic actions, but also with its uncertain outcome when more than often a winning team is not known until the buzzer sounds. Predictable outcome in any sport is something that does not attract spectators to attend games. This is especially the case in competitions and leagues where the home teams win most of the games regardless of the opponent's quality. Home advantage is a phenomenon that is well documented (Pollard & Gomez, 2007; Jones, 2007; Pollard & Pollard, 2005). It exists in individual and team sports, but it is more expressed in team sports (basketball, soccer, handball, volleyball...) where constant cooperation between players and common actions of more than two teammates are present. Also, it occurs both in professional (Mizuruchi, 1985; Nevill, Newell, Gale, 1996; Pollard & Pollard, 2005; Smith, 2003), and amateur sports, college and high school (Bray & Widmeyer, 2000; Greer, 1983; Madrigal & James, 1999; Moore & Brylinsky, 1993; Varca, 1980; Gayton & Coombs, 1995; McCutcheon, 1984). According to (Courneya & Carron, 1992) when "home teams in sports competitions win over 50% of the games played under a balanced home and away schedule" that can be described as home advantage.

They developed a conceptual framework for the home advantage research consisting of five major components: (1) game location (2) game location factors (3) critical psychological states, (4) critical behavioural states (5) performance outcomes. Before them, a few authors tried to explain the phenomenon using psychological and sociological factors. A psychological influence of crowd was attributed by Whyte (1943).

Schwartz and Barsky (1977) analyzed college basketball teams over a 15 year period when they played at home. They emphasized the heightened aggression of the home team and familiarity of players with the playing field. They found that home advantage was greater when the playing conditions are most uniform. A frustration-aggression theory was offered by Varca (1980). His study confirmed that basketball teams play more aggressively at home, and they show more aggressive tendencies when playing in front of their home crowd. Pollard (2008) suggested difficulties in examining influence of familiarity with the home court, but also confirmed it as a significant factor for home advantage. Physiological factors and their influence on home advantage are less investigated. A study conducted by Neave, N. & Wolfson S. (2003) revealed that "salivary testosterone levels of soccer players were significantly higher before a home game than before an away game" They also showed that "perceived rivalry of the opposing team was important as testosterone levels were higher before playing a fierce rival rather than a regular opponent." Influence of the home court advantage on the final score in basketball has been confirmed by Jones (2007) who analyzed 1189 NBA games, Pollard and Gomez (2007) who analyzed NBA and four European national leagues. They came up with the conclusion that home advantage is relatively low (60.3%) in NBA unlike in Greek and Italian national league (66.4% to 66.3%). A question which basketball game related statistics discriminate between the home and road teams was investigated in several studies. Schwartz and Barsky (1977) found that the home teams take more shots, make more field goals and score more points than when they play in front of a hostile crowd. Gomez, Lorenzo, Ortega, & Olmedilla (2007) investigated home advantage in women's basketball.

When the winning teams played at home, they were differentiated by successful two point field-goals, steals and assists. García, Sáez, Ibáñez, Parejo & Cañadas (2009) concluded that the home and road teams were discriminated by successful 2-point field-goals, blocks, dunks and assists. The purpose of this study was to investigate if there is home advantage in three different levels of basketball competition (Euroleague-regular season, Euroleague-top16, NLB league) and do/which game related statistics discriminate between the home and road teams.

Methods

The research has been conducted on three different samples of games that represented three different levels of basketball competition played in the 2008/2009 season. The first sample consists of 118 Euroleague (regular season) games, so that 236 different statistical samples (official box scores) have been analyzed. The second sample consists of 48 Euroleague (top 16 teams) games, so that 96 different statistical samples (official box scores) have been included in analyzing. The third sample consists of 181 NLB-Adriatic league (regular season) games, therefore 362 different statistical samples (official box scores) have been analyzed too. So the total number of analyzed games was 347 with 694 analyzed statistical samples. The total number of analyzed variables was twenty one. Fourteen standard and five "derived" variables of statistical indicators of basketball situational efficiency have been analyzed. One variable that presents win-lost record and one criterion variable that represents home-road record. Data were collected by means of statistical patterns provided by official FIBA and NLB web sites, www.fiba.com and www.Adriaticbasket.info. Dependent (criterion) variable was home-road record. One of independent variables was win-lost record binary presented. Teams that won a particular game were assigned by number one, but teams that lost were assigned by number two. The other examined variables consisted of 20 independents; 14 standard indicators of game-related statistical parameters and 5 derived (parameters that can be calculated or seen from the official games statistics). Standard variables included: A-FT-PTS -free throw attempts, M-FT-PTS -free throws made, FT % - free throw percentage, A-2-PTS - two point field goal attempts, M-2-PTS -two point field goals made; 2P-% - two point field goal percentage, A-3-PTS - three point field goal attempts, M-3-PTS - three point field goal made, 3P-% - two point field goal percentage, AS -assists (team stats), ST -steals (team stats), TO -turnovers (team stats), BS - blocked shots (team stats), PF -personal fouls (team stats), DEF-REB - defensive rebounds (team stats), OFF-REB - offensive rebounds (team stats). Derived variables included FORCED-F - personal fouls (opponent's stats), START-PTS - points scored by starting five, BENCH-PTS - bench points, SCORERS - number of players who scored in a game, NUMB-PLY - number of players who played in a game.

Results

Data from table 1 show the number and percentage of games played and won by the home teams in three different levels of competition, Euroleague - regular season, NLB - Adriatic league, Euroleague - Top 16. Percentage of games won by the home teams is the highest in NLB - Adriatic league (66, 85 %), higher then in Euroleague - regular season (66, 10 %) while the lowest value is in the Euroleague - Top 16 (58, 33 %).

Table 1 Number and percentage of games played and won by the home teams in three different levels of competition

Leagues (three competition levels)	Number of games	Number of games	Percentage of games won by the home teams
		won by the home teams	
Euroleague - regular season	118	78	66,10 %
NLB - Adriatic league	181	121	66,85 %
Euroleague - Top 16	48	28	58,33 %

Table 2 Mean values of standard and derived FIBA statistical parameters

Variables	EURO LEAGUE (REGULAR)			
	HOME		GUEST	
	X / SD	X / SD	X / SD	X / SD
PTS	78.06	11.796	74.27	11.093
M-2-PTS	20.19	4.465	18.99	4.620
2PTS-missed	17.86	5.587	18.69	5.252
M-3-PTS	7.35	3.017	7.38	3.307
3PTS-missed	13.71	4.422	13.18	4.699
M-FT-PTS	15.67	5.760	14.48	5.785
1PTS-missed	5.34	3.861	5.18	3.032
OFF-REB	10.39	3.892	9.9	3.839
DEF-REB	22.56	4.638	21.86	5.176
AS	13.3	4.432	11.51	4.193
PF	20.65	4.062	21.35	4.382
TO	13.46	3.398	14.56	3.937
ST	8.73	3.218	7.54	2.978
BS	4.03	2.575	3.46	2.558
FORCED-F	21.31	4.349	20.6	4.095
NUMB-PLY	10.18	1.018	10.09	1.013
BENCH-PTS	29.42	12.089	29.12	11.724
START-PTS	48.42	11.897	45.26	13.382
SCORERS	8.8	1.244	8.55	1.144

Table 2 shows mean values of standard and derived game-related parameters of teams that played at home or on the road in different levels of competition. As it was expected the home teams have higher values of almost every "positive" variable. They have higher number of points scored, assists, steals, as well as lower number of turnovers. Also, starters that played at home scored more points than starters of the road teams.

Table 2 (continuing)

Variables	NLB LEAGUE			
	HOME		GUEST	
	X / SD		X / SD	
PTS	79.43	11.200	74.17	9.407
M-2-PTS	20.1	4.372	19.14	4.305
2PTS-missed	16.01	4.370	15.84	5.200
M-3-PTS	7.83	2.937	7.02	2.972
3PTS-missed	13.82	3.953	13.46	4.003
M-FT-PTS	16.06	5.937	14.95	5.942
1PTS-missed	5.69	3.014	5.76	3.137
OFF-REB	8.76	3.344	7.95	3.455
DEF-REB	20.55	4.235	19.71	4.237
AS	13.27	4.471	11.04	3.675
PF	22.12	4.222	22.62	3.886
TO	12.72	3.667	14.09	3.679
ST	8.76	3.344	8.17	3.302
BS	3.3	2.345	3.15	2.522
FORCED-F	22.61	3.892	22.23	3.889
NUMB-PLY	10.25	1.146	9.97	1.110
BENCH-PTS	27.73	11.996	25.98	10.031
START-PTS	51.71	12.015	48.19	11.428
SCORERS	8.64	1.390	8.31	1.118

Table 2 (continuing)

Variables	EURO LEAGUE (TOP 16)			
	HOME		GUEST	
	X / SD		X / SD	
PTS	78.12	13.589	75.29	12.560
M-2-PTS	19.19	4.451	19.79	4.608
2PTS-missed	17.25	5.289	18.54	5.683
M-3-PTS	8.08	3.500	7.42	3.121
3PTS-missed	12.96	3.946	12.56	4.089
M-FT-PTS	16.06	4.987	14.38	6.149
1PTS-missed	5.02	2.840	4.52	2.946
OFF-REB	10.12	3.571	9.77	4.038
DEF-REB	22.77	4.956	21.38	4.046
AS	13.6	4.423	12.06	4.354
PF	20.48	4.021	21.25	3.722
TO	13.77	4.193	13.58	3.842
ST	7.58	4.109	8.27	3.746
BS	2.85	2.352	2.46	1.821
FORCED-F	21.02	3.367	20.48	4.021
NUMB-PLY	10.1	0.881	10.27	0.962
BENCH-PTS	29.67	9.388	29.33	13.094
START-PTS	48.4	14.476	46.79	11.043
SCORERS	8.67	1.018	8.73	1.349

To find out possible differences between the home and road teams from the observed leagues, we conducted three canonical discriminant analyses. The results from tables 3 and 4 show values and statistical significance of obtained discriminant functions. One statistically significant (.014) discriminant function on data from Euroleague (regular season) and one on data from NLB league (.000) have been obtained. There were no statistical differences between the home and road teams that took part in Euroleague-Top 16 stage (.884). The value of canonical correlation of the first function is pretty low (.372), but we can say that, based on eighteen basketball game-related

variables we used in this research, we can discriminate between groups, the home and road teams that played in Euroleague (regular season). Canonical correlation value is 0.372 so that $0.372 \times 0.372 \times 100 = 13$, 83% of the variance in the discriminant function scores can be explained by groups' differences.

The value of canonical correlation of the second function is also pretty low, but this one is a bit higher (.407), and we can also say that, based on twenty one basketball game-related variables we used in this analysis, we can discriminate groups, the home and road teams that played in NLB league. Canonical correlation value is 0.407 so that $0.407 \times 0.407 \times 100 = 16$, 56% of the variance in the discriminant function scores can be explained by groups' differences.

Table 3 Eigenvalues

LEAGUES	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Canonical Correlation
Euroleague regular	.160 ^a	100	100	0.372
Euroleague Top16	.141 ^a	100	100	0.352
NLB League	.198 ^a	100	100	0.407

Table 4 Wilks' Lambda

LEAGUES	Wilks' Lambda	Chi-square	df	Sig.
Euroleague regular	0.861	33.605	18	0.014
Euroleague Top16	0.876	11.238	18	0.884
NLB League	0.834	63.532	18	0.000

The results from table 5 show structure matrices the two different functions and the position of group centroids at the two different functions of twenty one basketball situational efficiency variables. Centroids of the first function (Euroleague - regular season) show that positive pole is represented by the road teams and negative pole by the home teams, but that is contrary in the second function (NLB league) where positive pole is represented by the home teams and negative by the road teams.

In the first structure matrix, positive pole i.e. the home teams are highly defined by variable AS (average number of assists) with structure coefficients .518 and by variable ST (number of steels), while negative pole is mostly defined by variable TO number of turnovers. In the second structure matrix, positive pole i.e. the home teams are also highly defined by variable AS (average number of assists) with structure coefficients .612 and by variables START-PTS (average number of points scored by starters), while negative pole is also mostly defined by variable number of turnovers. We used stars to mark the structure coefficients (SC) that are higher than .30.

Table 5 Structure matrix

Euroleague regular		NLB League	
Variables	Function 1	Variables	Function 1
AS*	0.52	AS*	0.61
ST*	0.48	TO*	-0.42
TO*	-0.38	START-PTS*	0.34
M-2-PTS*	0.33	M-3-PTS*	0.31
START-PTS*	0.31	SCORERS*	0.29
BS*	0.28	NUMB-PLY *	0.29
SCORERS*	0.26	OFF-REB *	0.27
M-FT-PTS*	0.26	M-2-PTS*	0.25
FORCED-F	0.21	DEF-REB	0.22
PF	-0.21	M-FT-PTS	0.21
2PTS-missed	-0.19	ST	0.20
DEF-REB	0.18	BENCH-PTS	0.18
OFF-REB	0.16	PF	-0.14
3PTS-missed	0.15	FORCED-F	0.11
NUMB-PLY	0.10	3PTS-missed	0.10
1PTS-missed	0.06	BS	0.07
BENCH-PTS	0.03	2PTS-missed	0.04
M-3-PTS	-0.01	1PTS-missed	-0.02
Group centroids		Group centroids	
Home teams	0.40	Home teams	0.44
Guest teams	-0.40	Guest teams	-0.44
*Structure coefficients ≥ .25			

Table 6 represents the classification matrix of the home and road teams from Euroleague - regular season and NLB league. In Euroleague, seventy six out of 118 original grouped cases, the home teams were correctly classified, which is 64.4%, whereas seventy nine out of 118, the road teams were well classified, which is 66,9%. In NLB league one hundred and ten out of 181, the home teams were well classified, which is 60.8%, as well as, one hundred and thirty of 181, the road teams were correctly classified, which is 71.8%. The obtained classification percentages are not so high, but these results confirm that the chosen game-related variables and win/lost record can be used in order to discriminate the home and road basketball teams that played in similar leagues.

Table 6 Classification matrix

Leagues	HOME / ROAD					Total
	GAMES	HOME		ROAD		
Euroleague regular season	HOME teams	64.40%	76	35.60%	42	118
	ROAD teams	33.10%	39	66.90%	79	118
Nlb league	HOME teams	60.80%	110	39.20%	71	181
	ROAD teams	28.20%	51	71.80%	130	181

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate if there was home advantage in three different levels of basketball competition and which game related statistics discriminate between the home and road teams.

Presented data show that the percentage of games won by the home teams is the highest in NLB - Adriatic league (66, 85 %), higher then in Euroleague - regular season (66, 10 %) while the lowest value is in the Euroleague - Top 16 (58, 33 %). These findings confirm existence of home advantage and they are quite similar to results found by Pollard and Gomez (2007). They found that home advantage is relatively low (60.3%) in NBA unlike in Greek and Italian national league (66.4% to 66.3%). Garcia et al. (2009) found that the home teams won 55.22% of the games in the 2007-2008 Spanish ACB league. Moreover, the obtained results showed that the home and road teams from Euroleague (regular season) and NLB league can be discriminated with the win-lost record i.e. game location was a dominant advantage for winning. One can also discriminate between these teams with the help of analyzed game related statistics i.e. based on the nineteen basketball situational variables we could see which teams, home or road, were more or less technically and tactically efficient and able to win the games. Unlike these two levels of competition, in Euroleague - Top 16 there were no statistically significant differences between the home and road teams. The home teams from Euroleague (regular season) are characterized by higher number of assists, steals, scored points, while the road teams have more turnovers. In the NLB league we have pretty much the same situation, with one extra variable that discriminates between the home and road teams. The home teams' starters scored more points than the starters from the road teams.

These findings are similar to the data obtained by Gomez et al. (2007) and Garcia et al. (2009) who also found the number of assists and steals to be factors that discriminate between the home and road teams. These findings suggest that the home teams play more aggressive and forceful defence. Product of the strong and aggressive defence is usually a higher number of steals and defensive rebounds which produce more fast breaks and more chances for assists and "easy points" - dunks and lay-ups. Also, number of assists can be the product of aggressive offensive tactics with a lot of penetrations that produce a high number of open and short distance field goals. These types of aggressive defence and offence can be explained by Varca's (1980) frustration-aggression theory which suggests that the home teams in basketball play more aggressively at home, and show more aggressive tendencies when playing in front of a friendly crowd.

The higher aggressiveness of the home team players can be clarified with the findings obtained by Neave, N. & Wolfson S. (2003) who found higher level of salivary testosterone in soccer players when they played at home, especially when they played against a fierce rival. The bigger number of the home team starters' points can be attributed to better motivation and mental preparation of the players who started. Once they started well it was easier for them to give their best in those games.

The differences can be also attributed to some other facts that can contribute to home advantage such as the effects of crowd, referee bias, travel and rest interval effects as well as familiarity with conditioning and surroundings, which were previously reported as important factors in the home teams' dominance. However, the main question is why there weren't any differences between the home and road teams in Euroleague-Top 16. In this phase of the competition, total number of 25 teams has been reduced to 16 who fought against each other to reach the playoffs and grab a final four spot. It seems that home advantage becomes less dominant factor as the competition level grows stronger, therefore we can say that when the quality of the teams is very close, home advantage is low and does not have a dominant and crucial role in winning games.

Conclusion

The research showed that home advantage is more expressed in qualitatively lower levels of basketball competitions where we can discriminate between the home and road teams by win lost record and game related statistics.

That is not the case at qualitatively higher levels, where the advantage of home courts is not a crucial factor in winning games. Considering the demonstrated dominance of the home teams regarding aggressive and forceful defence, and fast and aggressive offense, we may suggest coaches of the road teams to pay attention on better psychological and tactical preparation of the start of the game, as well as on individual and group tactics that can prevent the supremacy of aggressive defence (i.e. setting more back screens against overplay defence, exercising set play against zone and one on one pressure, stopping the opponent's penetration towards the basket and risking two and three point shots...), do not get into the rhythm of the opponent, especially after the home team scored from fast-breaks or after turnovers. The results also suggest that the organizers of basketball competitions try as much as possible to reduce the factors that influence home advantage (uniformity of the court, same number of days of rest for all teams, education and psychological preparation of the officials) and thereby contribute to the uncertainty and unpredictability of games, which would certainly contribute to larger popularization of basketball.

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MODELIRANJE PREDNOSTI DOMAĆEG TERENA NA RAZLIČITIM RAZINAMA KOŠARKAŠKOG NATJECANJA

Sažetak

Cilj istraživanja je bio da se otkriju potencijalne razlike između domaćih i gostujućih košarkaških timova koji su igrali na tri različite razine natjecanja u 19 standardnih i izvedenih statističkih indikatora situacijske učinkovitosti. Podaci prikazani u istraživanju pokazuju postotak utakmica u kojima su pobijedile domaće momčadi: NLB-Adriatic liga (66, 85%), Euroleague – regularni dio sezone (66, 10%) i Euroliga -Top 16 (58, 33%). S ciljem utvrđivanja potencijalnih razlika u standardnim i izvedenim statističkim pokazateljima između domaćih i gostujućih momčadi korištene su tri kanoničke diskriminativne analize. Dobiveni rezultati ukazuju na statistički značajne razlike u situacijskim pokazateljima između domaćih i gostujućih momčadi koje su se natjecale u NLB i Euroligi (regularni dio sezone). Domaće momčadi su imale veći broj asistencija, ukradenih lopti i poena koje su postigli 'starteri', dok su gostujući timovi imali više izgubljenih lopti, što ukazuje na agresivniju obrambenu i napadačku taktiku domaćih timova, dok u Euroligi (Top 16), nije bilo statistički značajnih razlika između domaćih i gostujućih momčadi. Ovo znači da što je razina natjecanja kvalitetnija, to je prednost domaćeg terena manje izražena. Drugim riječima, kada su košarkaške momčadi prilično izjednačene, prednost domaćeg terena je mala i ne predstavlja dominantan i krucijalan čimbenik za pobjedu.

Ključne riječi: statistički indikatori, situacijska efikasnost, diskriminativna analiza

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