

TJ McConnell Should Not Be In the NBA

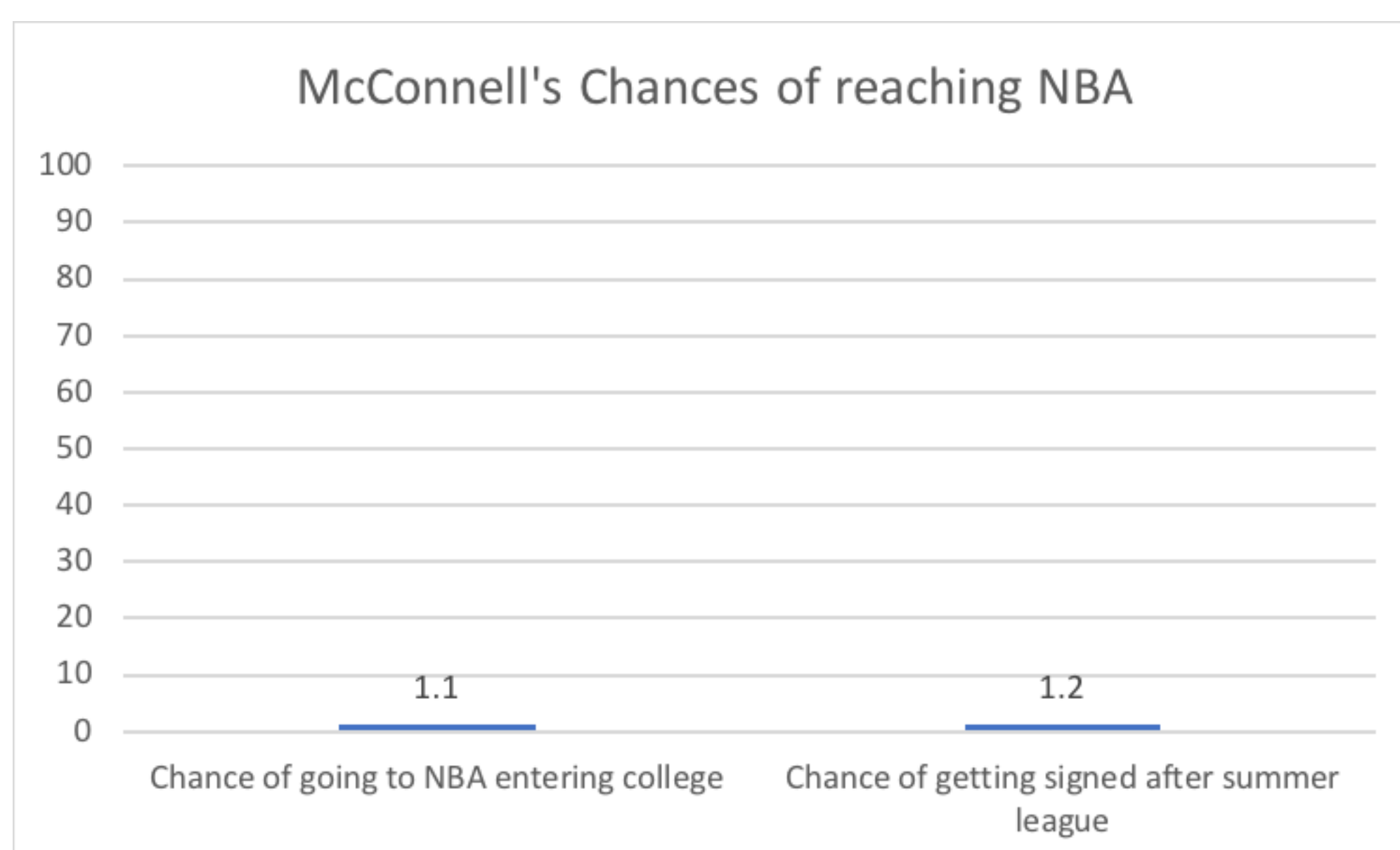
By [Zane Winston](#) • 02 Mar 2018 • 5 min read



TJ McConnell

Quite frankly, TJ McConnell shouldn't be in the NBA. He has proven us wrong time and time again; he started his college career at Duquesne, he wasn't drafted, he was picked up as a rotation player on the worst team in the league, and he's a short point guard who can't shoot threes. That's not to say that he's a bad player; he averages 24.5 minutes per game on a Sixers team likely to make the playoffs.

His unlikelihood of making a difference in the NBA started on draft night. The likelihood of an eligible college basketball players getting drafted is 1.1%, but he was the third or fourth most likely to be drafted from a strong Arizona team with two first round picks in Stanley Johnson and Rondae Hollis-Jefferson, and another undrafted player who at one point was signed by the Dallas Mavericks, Brandon Ashley. Looking at the summer after that draft makes his current situation even more unreal. In the NBA, undrafted players have a chance of being drafted to summer league rosters; those rosters are composed of players drafted over the last two years, undrafted free agents, d-league players, and overseas players. Out of all players eligible for the draft, 8% will make a summer league roster, some of who will not get to play in a single game. 90% of the summer league rosters are competing for generally less than 50 roster spots. 24 teams field summer league rosters, and these teams average around 15 players each. So around 324 players for a generously given 50 spots means that, on a good year, around 15% of the players who are invited to the NBA Summer League might make an NBA team. Combining the odds of anyone making the summer league (not exactly how it works since McConnell was a solid college player but to show how unlikely it is for aspiring athletes to make it to the NBA), he had a 1.2% chance of getting a training camp invite after leaving college. The Summer League isn't always financially stable. Players are paid \$127 a day for housing, food, travel, and anything else they need, and are not injury protected.



TJ McConnell's Low Odds

McConnell signed with the 76'ers at the end of the Summer League. After he was signed, training camp began, where he still had to live on the \$127/day salary. During the training camp of his rookie season, he was one of six point guards on the roster, and the one who was guaranteed the least amount of money. Yet again, even though he had the smallest odds of staying on the team, McConnell found a way to make the cut. Of those six, he was one of four on the final roster, and averaged the second most mpg of them, at 20, through the season. The following season, the Sixers made many roster moves and ended with three uninjured point guards, planning to play them in this order, Jerryd Bayless, Sergio Rodriguez, and finally McConnell would get any time that remained.

McConnell started 51 of 82 games that season.

McConnell has been taken out of his starting role this season as Ben Simmons is healthy and Markelle Fultz is developing, but McConnell's game and path to the NBA reflect Philadelphia's slogan--- "Trust the Process". Being a 6'1, white male also decreases his odds. Being white gives him a 3 in 1 million chance of reaching the NBA, compared to 67 out of 1 million if he was African American. Also, his small 6'1 frame means he had a 1 in 100,000 chance of playing in the NBA, whereas if he was a foot taller that'd be 1 in 7 (NY Times). Thus far through his career, he shoots 34.6% from three, in large thanks to shooting over 50% from deep this year. He is still not in the top 100 3-point shooters in the league, and is behind more than 22 other point guards in this statistic. Shooting seems to be a necessity for other players around his size, a group headlined by current stars like Stephen Curry, Kyle Lowry, and Kyrie Irving and a group of vets sticking in the league like Jason Terry and Jose Calderon. McConnell isn't a star in their caliber, but his averages of 24 mpg, 6.7 ppg, 5.3 apg, 3.1 rpg, 1.4 spg while shooting 47% is a far cry from barely making the NBA. These stats aren't even that far from his college levels of 31.8 mpg, 10.2 ppg, 5.4 apg, and 3.9 rpg. In all 3 of his seasons he has placed in the top ten in steal percentage, in 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 seasons he was top ten in assist percentage, and had the sixth most steals and eighth most assists last season.

As I said earlier, TJ McConnell shouldn't be in the NBA. But the Sixers are lucky he is; he is an instrumental asset that they found during their dark years that lives up to his nickname of "floor general", especially when he is leading the squads second line. He transferred from Duquesne to Arizona telling his dad that he had to take a shot to make a run in the NCAA tournament, and ended the discussion saying he knew it was unlikely, but why not him for the NBA. What made him different from all the guys there? I think it is evident what makes him different. His heart. Most players, especially those so statistically unlikely to make the NBA, would think they'd play four years at Duquesne and be done. Or after going undrafted take the money overseas. Or be satisfied playing garbage minutes and taking DNP's until people get injured. Or throw a fit when they get taken out of a starting role they did so much to earn. Every part of his path he had to play his best and shine, and I think his other nickname sums up all of his performances at which he could have been cut. McClutchell.

Sources: NCAA, HoopsHype, NBCSports, NYTimes, Basketball-reference

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