You hear that Mr. Anderson? That is the sound of inevitability

Agent Smith was wrong about what was [inevitable](#) for Mr. Anderson in *The Matrix*, was John Hollinger in signing UCLA alum Kyle 'Slo Mo' Anderson? Mr. Hollinger was a basketball analytics pioneer who went from writing [Pro Basketball Prospectus](#) books to working for the Memphis Grizzlies front office. Naturally then, we will use analytical tools to evaluate Mr. Anderson, his new contract, and forecast his 2018-19 performance to gauge if Mr. Hollinger's sense of inevitability was correct.

Kyle Anderson's Strengths

Defense is where Mr. Anderson stands out most. He was #16 in Defensive Win Shares (DWS) in the NBA last year, #6 in Defensive Rating, and #3 in Defensive Box +/- (per [Basketball Reference](#)). Teammates play a factor in defense certainly, but he was the highest rated Spur in DWS and DBPM, and his 101.2 just Defensive Rating was just behind Dejounte Murray's 101.

He did well in other defensive stats, but they did not have him as the top stopper on the Spurs. His [DWS on NBA.com](#) had him at #29, lower than teammates #18 Murray and #7 LaMarcus Aldridge, but still as one of the 30 best defensive players in the Association. [Total Defensive Rating](#) (TDR) from Basketball Analytics author Dr. Stephen Shea takes into account Interior and Perimeter defense separately and had him ranked tied for #42 (3.9) in the league. Similar to the NBA.com number his teammates rated higher: Murray was #6 (8.9), Rudy Gay was #24 (5.5) and Danny Green was tied for #39 (4.2). Given there are 150 starters (30 teams with 5 starters) in the league, being ranked #42 in TDR and #29 in NBA.com DWS leaves him in the top third of starters defensively. His top #6 Defensive Rating and #3 Defensive Box +/- are clearly elite.

Digging deeper into his defensive statistics, I feel he has earned the higher ratings. As you can

see from in Figure 1, this past season was not some fluke. Per Cleaning the Glass, he's been above the 80th percentiles of Block % (BLK%) since 2014-15, and Steal % (STL%) since 2015-16 and in the 90th percentile in both the last two seasons.

DEFENSE AND REBOUNDING
The red/blue numbers show the player's percentile rank in that stat relative to their _position_.
Show Playoffs Stats

Year	Age	Team	Pos	GP	GS	MIN	MPG	BLK%	STL%	FOUL%	fgOR%	fgDR%	ftOR%	ftDR%
14-15	21.1	SAS	Wing	26	8	316	12.2	83 1.0%	75 1.9%	30 3.7%	28 1.5%	100 18.6%	0 0.0%	96 30.8%
15-16	22.1	SAS	Forward	73	11	1048	14.4	82 1.3%	87 2.3%	63 3.4%	12 1.9%	94 18.2%	94 5.8%	87 32.0%
16-17	23.1	SAS	Wing	69	14	913	13.2	97 1.5%	94 2.3%	64 2.8%	88 3.8%	98 16.6%	83 2.0%	93 22.0%
17-18	24.1	SAS	Forward	74	67	1946	26.3	92 1.6%	96 2.6%	84 2.5%	76 4.3%	70 15.0%	74 2.2%	96 36.0%

Figure 1 - https://www.cleaningtheglass.com/stats/player/82#defense_rebounding (Note: CTG removes garbage time)

Jackson Frank of Clutch Points observed "While steals and blocks aren't an accurate indicator of defensive impact, they can be a barometer of defensive activity." and I feel this activity is more evidence of Anderson's defensive value within context of his high ranks in other defensive stats. Also worth noting is that last year he played the most minutes of his career and largely without Kawhi Leonard, one of the best regarded defensive players in the league.

He ranked high in those categories prior to coming into the NBA as well. His second and final year at UCLA his BLK% was 2.7%, higher than his 1.6% last year in the NBA. That was good for 21st in the competitive Pacific 12 conference, as shown in KenPom.com stats in Figure 2. More impressively it came while he spent the majority of the year playing as a Point Guard, traditionally big men do most of the blocking. He was one the prior year, playing mostly at Center and his BLK% was marginally higher at 2.8%, 14th in the conference and 472nd nationally. His STL% was better as both years he ranked in the top 10 of the conference and as one top 175 players nationally.

Kyle Anderson
5 · Fairview, NJ

			Ht	Wt	Yr	G	%Min	ORtg	%Poss	%Shots	eFG%	TS%	OR%	DR%	ARate	TORate	Blk%	Stl%	FC/40	FD/40	FTRate	FTM-A	Pct	2PM-A	Pct	3PM-A	Pct
2014 PG	14 UCLA 4 5/16 National Rank		6-9	230	So	36	80.3 311	110.6	26.1 270	21.4	51.7	56.6 436	4.5	25.5 28	34.3 22	20.2	2.7	3.1 172	2.0 107	4.8 476	49.3 369	137-186	.737	153-319	.480	28-58	.483
	Conference-only Conference Rank	17					79.9	107.7	26.7 6	22.1	50.0	55.2 22	4.5	25.4 5	36.1 1	20.6	2.3 21	2.7 9	2.2 10	4.8 14	46.9 19	67-90	.744 25	78-164	.476	12-28	.429
	vs. Tier A+B*	20					80.5	102.3	26.5	21.7	47.2	51.8	4.4	24.8	34.2	22.1	2.2	3.4	2.4	4.4	43.3	66-94	.702	83-187	.444	13-30	.433
	vs. Tier A*	12					85.0	99.4	26.2	21.1	48.0	52.8	3.6	25.1	35.6	24.9	1.8	4.0	2.9	4.0	38.1	36-48	.750	47-104	.452	9-22	.409
	Similar: Royce White '12 (899), Lorenzo Brown '12 (896), Jamont Gordon '07 (896), Kyle Singler '09 (894), Edmond Sumner '17 (884)																										
2013 C	46 UCLA 6 RT National Rank		6-9	235	Fr	35	73.7	100.2	21.3	18.7	43.0	48.5 74	8.0	23.0 397	20.8	18.9	2.8 470	3.4 159	2.8	3.5	39.9 484	86-117	.735	114-255	.447	8-38	.211
	Conference-only Conference Rank	18					76.0	102.1	21.8	19.2	45.6	51.6 24	8.0	23.6 8	21.1 12	19.1	2.9 14	3.5 5	2.6 21	3.3 17	37.3 6	48-59	.814	66-140	.471	4-18	.222
	vs. Tier A+B*	21					75.3	92.2	21.9	18.7	39.5	44.9	7.0	23.0	20.1	21.4	2.1	3.3	2.8	2.8	30.4	43-55	.782	64-157	.408	5-24	.208
	vs. Tier A*	12					76.5	88.1	22.5	18.9	38.4	42.7	7.8	22.5	21.2	22.7	1.5	3.4	2.6	2.6	26.9	21-29	.724	37-94	.394	3-14	.214
	Similar: Kevon Looney '15 (918), Devin Ebanks '09 (905), Dedric Lawson '16 (899), Robbie Hummel '08 (895), Herb Pope '08 (893)																										
Career																						223-303	.736	267-574	.465	36-96	.375

*Tier A and B represent top 50 and top 100 opponents, respectively, adjusted for game location. See game logs below for specific games.
Position identification is based on an algorithm using play-by-data.

Figure 2 - https://kenpom.com/player.php?p=16548

The positional versatility he showed in school going from the biggest to smallest positions extended partially to the NBA. He normally plays as a Small Forward but can slide down to Power Forward and up to the Shooting Guard positions. As you can see in Figures 3 from Basketball Reference his On-Off +/- Per 100 Possessions was positive while playing both positions the last two years.

Play-by-Play

Play-by-play data available for the 2000-01 through 2017-18 seasons.
Play-by-play stats are unofficial. Minor differences with official season totals may exist.   Share & more ▾   Glossary

							Position Estimate					+/- Per 100 Poss.		Turnovers			Fouls Committed				Misc.			
Season	Age	Tm	Lg	Pos	G	MP	PG%	SG%	SF%	PF%	C%	OnCourt	On-Off	BadPass	LostBall	Other	Shoot	Block	Offens	Take	PGA	SfDrawn	And1	Blkd
2014-15	21	SAS	NBA	SF	33	358	3%	17%	69%	12%		-5.0	-12.6	5	2	2	13	3	1	2	63	8	4	6
2015-16	22	SAS	NBA	SF	78	1245		1%	65%	34%		+8.8	-3.9	27	15	17	42	6	7	1	277	34	8	16
2016-17	23	SAS	NBA	SF	72	1020		21%	69%	9%		+10.0	+2.8	15	11	13	28	2	2	3	215	25	3	15
2017-18	24	SAS	NBA	SF	74	1978			63%	37%		+4.1	+2.4	58	15	21	44	1	3	2	481	65	16	31
Career			NBA		257	4601		6%	65%	28%		+6.0	-0.4	105	43	53	127	12	13	8	1036	132	31	68

Provided by Basketball-Reference.com: View Original Table
Generated 8/12/2018.

Figure 3 - https://www.basketball-reference.com/players/a/anderky01.html#all_advanced_pbp

Breaking it down more granularly, this same positive performance at both forward positions was also found in his 82games.com Net 48-Minute Production by Position positive PER compared to opponents shown in Figure 4.
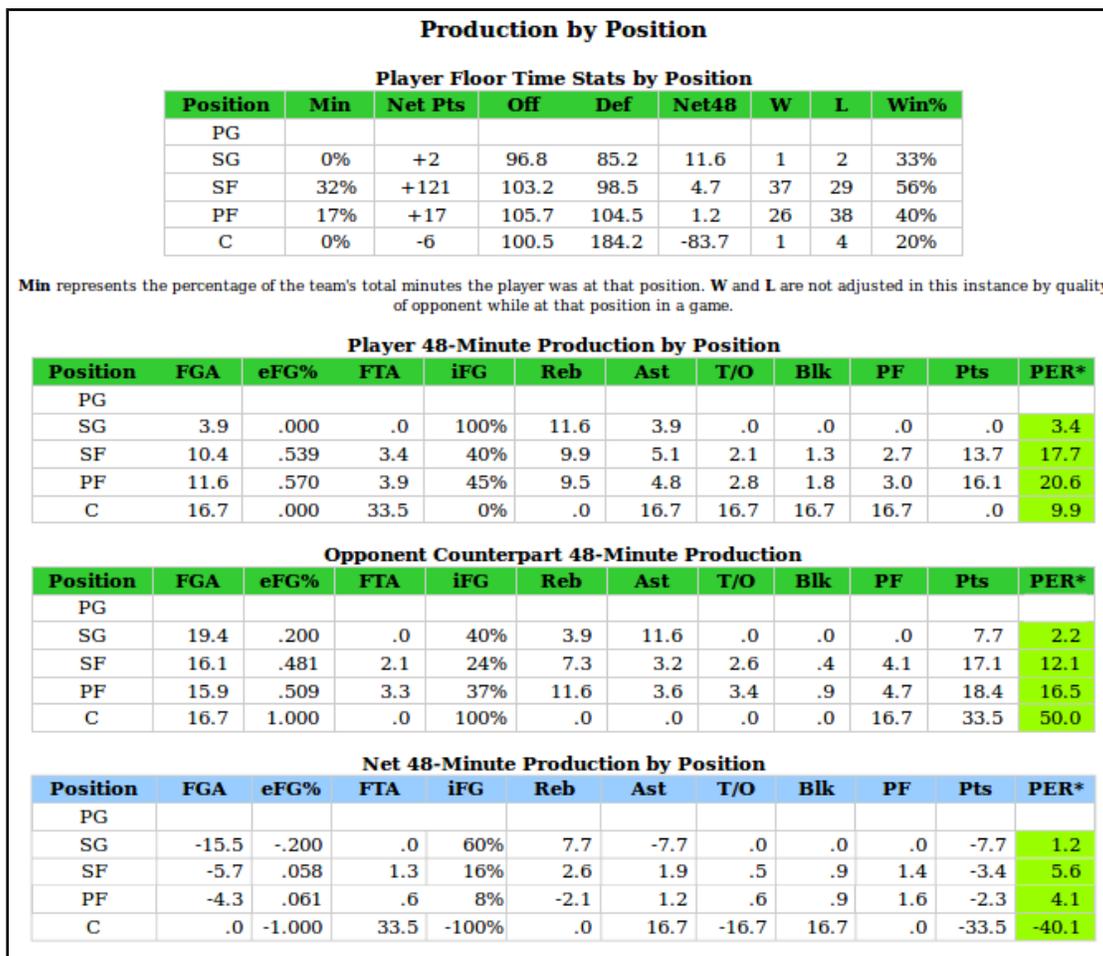
Production by Position

Player Floor Time Stats by Position

Position	Min	Net Pts	Off	Def	Net48	W	L	Win%
PG								
SG	0%	+2	96.8	85.2	11.6	1	2	33%
SF	32%	+121	103.2	98.5	4.7	37	29	56%
PF	17%	+17	105.7	104.5	1.2	26	38	40%
C	0%	-6	100.5	184.2	-83.7	1	4	20%

Min represents the percentage of the team's total minutes the player was at that position. **W** and **L** are not adjusted in this instance by quality of opponent while at that position in a game.

Player 48-Minute Production by Position

Position	FGA	eFG%	FTA	iFG	Reb	Ast	T/O	Blk	PF	Pts	PER*
PG											
SG	3.9	.000	.0	100%	11.6	3.9	.0	.0	.0	.0	3.4
SF	10.4	.539	3.4	40%	9.9	5.1	2.1	1.3	2.7	13.7	17.7
PF	11.6	.570	3.9	45%	9.5	4.8	2.8	1.8	3.0	16.1	20.6
C	16.7	.000	33.5	0%	.0	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	.0	9.9

Opponent Counterpart 48-Minute Production

Position	FGA	eFG%	FTA	iFG	Reb	Ast	T/O	Blk	PF	Pts	PER*
PG											
SG	19.4	.200	.0	40%	3.9	11.6	.0	.0	.0	7.7	2.2
SF	16.1	.481	2.1	24%	7.3	3.2	2.6	.4	4.1	17.1	12.1
PF	15.9	.509	3.3	37%	11.6	3.6	3.4	.9	4.7	18.4	16.5
C	16.7	1.000	.0	100%	.0	.0	.0	.0	16.7	33.5	50.0

Net 48-Minute Production by Position

Position	FGA	eFG%	FTA	iFG	Reb	Ast	T/O	Blk	PF	Pts	PER*
PG											
SG	-15.5	-.200	.0	60%	7.7	-7.7	.0	.0	.0	-7.7	1.2
SF	-5.7	.058	1.3	16%	2.6	1.9	.5	.9	1.4	-3.4	5.6
PF	-4.3	.061	.6	8%	-2.1	1.2	.6	.9	1.6	-2.3	4.1
C	.0	-1.000	33.5	-100%	.0	16.7	-16.7	16.7	.0	-33.5	-40.1

Figure 4 - http://www.82games.com/1718/17SAS10.HTM#bypos

While defense is a stronger part of his game than offense, these positive net numbers indicate his offense is good enough that he is a positive on the whole to have on the floor. His offensive value is most evident in his passing numbers. As a freshman Center at UCLA (Fig 2), his Assist Rate was 397th nationally and 12th in the Pac-12 Conference. He jumped as a sophomore point guard to 22nd nationally and top in his conference. Last year as forward in San Antonio his Assist % was in the 90th percentile last season as you can see in Figure 5.

Weaknesses

Beyond passing, Kyle Anderson has room to improve on the offensive end. He was in the bottom percentage of Turnover % (Figure 5) which is an issue for a player who plays as much as he

does, especially given his new contract.

OFFENSIVE OVERVIEW
The red/blue numbers show the player's percentile rank in that stat relative to their *position*.
Show Playoffs Stats

Year	Age	Team	Pos	GP	GS	MIN	MPG	Usage	PSA	AST%	AST:Usg	TOV%
14-15	21.1	SAS	Wing	26	8	316	12.2	24 14.1%	9 86.3	67 11.7%	84 0.83	69 10.4%
15-16	22.1	SAS	Forward	73	11	1048	14.4	42 15.0%	49 107.1	87 14.4%	94 0.96	38 13.4%
16-17	23.1	SAS	Wing	69	14	913	13.2	12 12.5%	32 103.9	64 12.3%	94 0.98	27 13.0%
17-18	24.1	SAS	Forward	74	67	1946	26.3	36 14.4%	70 116.5	90 14.4%	96 1.00	8 15.1%

Figure 5 - https://www.cleaningtheglass.com/stats/player/82#offensive_overview

Figure 6 shows his 3 point shooting was below average in the third percentile and his Free Throw % was in the bottom quarter of the league. With the emphasis on 3 point shooting in modern NBA, this is an area Mr. Anderson needs to improve upon. On the plus side his 2 point shooting was in the top 2 percentiles last season, a marked improvement from prior years.

SHOOTING: OVERALL
The red/blue numbers show the player's percentile rank in that stat relative to their *position*.
Show Playoffs Stats

Year	Age	Team	Pos	GP	GS	MIN	MPG	eFG%	2P%	3P%	FT%	ASTD% All	ASTD% Rim	ASTD% Mid	ASTD% Three
14-15	21.1	SAS	Wing	26	8	316	12.2	9 40.1%	12 39.4%	30.0%	66.7%	87 45%	55 54%	89 23%	1 100%
15-16	22.1	SAS	Forward	73	11	1048	14.4	40 49.6%	52 48.5%	73 37.9%	53 74.6%	85 56%	50 61%	71 45%	0 100%
16-17	23.1	SAS	Wing	69	14	913	13.2	26 47.8%	35 45.9%	58 37.1%	36 78.4%	48 67%	36 63%	35 56%	0 100%
17-18	24.1	SAS	Forward	74	67	1946	26.3	76 55.3%	80 55.8%	38 34.0%	25 71.1%	84 55%	70 52%	50 51%	0 100%

Figure 6 - https://www.cleaningtheglass.com/stats/player/82#shooting_overall

His sophomore year in college may give some hope for his long ball. He only shot 58 of them all year, but he made nearly half (48%).

Finally, despite all his impressive defensive numbers, the defensive tracking stats from NBA.com indicate his interior defense has room to improve. His DIFF% (DFG% - Opp FG%) was -1.6 for shots greater than 15 feet and -2.8 on 3 pointers indicating players shoot worse than expected

against him in those long range situations. Yet for shots of less than 10 feet it is 2.1 and for less than 6 feet it is 4.2. This weakness closer to the basket takes away from his positional versatility and needs to change if he is to maximize Return on Investment for the Grizzlies investment in him.

Contract Value

We have a pretty good idea how the Memphis Grizzlies valued Anderson, based on the 4-year, $37.2 Million dollar deal (per Basketball Insiders) they gave him. The Spurs either decided that was too much or simply that they would rather use their cap space in other ways. According to FiveThirtyEight's CARMELO projection system, the Grizzlies got a bargain (Figure 7). They estimated Anderson's value next year at $30 Million, or, roughly $21 Million more than he will make.

The fine print	2016	'17	'18	'19	'20	'21	'22	'23	'24	'25
Offensive +/-	-1.5	-1.9	-0.1	-0.7	-0.6	-0.7	-0.8	-1.0	-1.2	-1.6
Defensive +/-	+2.5	+3.3	+3.6	+3.0	+2.9	+2.9	+2.8	+2.7	+2.7	+2.6
Total +/-	+1.0	+1.4	+3.4	+2.3	+2.3	+2.2	+2.0	+1.8	+1.5	+1.1
Value	$8.3m	$10.8m	$40.3m	$30.0m	$32.8m	$32.9m	$30.5m	$27.8m	$25.7m	$19.8m
Minutes played	1245	1020	1978	1931	1957	1912	1791	1654	1552	1309

Figure 7 - https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/carmelo/kyle-anderson/

Comparing his contact to other recent Free Agent forwards in Figure 8, I feel the Grizzlies got a very reasonable deal. His annual average of $9.3M is below that of Maurice Harkless ($10M), Tony Snell ($10M), and James Johnson ($15M). I believe it is also a better deal than the Grizzlies gave Forward JaMychal Green last summer ($13.5M) and Chandler Parsons in '16 ($23.5M). It is very similar to the deal the Thunder gave Jerami Grant ($9.1M) this summer and both are 24.

I feel the Grizzlies could have signed him for a little less money. The Spurs at the time were unlikely to match with Kawhi Leonard still on the roster and I was not aware of much interest reported from other teams, but overall I believe the deal is fair for both sides. Based on Anderson's resume and potential I would have even gone up to $10M per year.

FA Year	Player	Pos	Type	OTm	NTm	Terms
2016	Maurice Harkless\harklma01	F-G	RFA	POR	POR	Reportedly agreed to 4-yr/$40M deal with Trail Blazers
2016	Chandler Parsons\parsoch01	F	UFA	DAL	MEM	Signed 4-yr/$94M deal with Grizzlies
2016	James Ennis\ennisja01	F	UFA	NOP	MEM	Signed 2-yr/$6M deal with Grizzlies
2016	Luol Deng\denglu01	F	UFA	MIA	LAL	Signed 4-yr/$72M deal with Lakers
2017	Andre Roberson\roberan03	G-F	RFA	OKC	OKC	Signed 3-yr/$30M deal with Thunder
2017	Andre Iguodala\iguodan01	G-F	UFA	GSW	GSW	Signed 3-yr/$48M deal with Warriors
2017	Tony Snell\snellto01	G-F	RFA	MIL	MIL	Reportedly agreed to 4-yr/$46M deal with Bucks
2017	Jonathon Simmons\simmojo02	G-F	UFA	SAS	ORL	Signed 3-yr/$20M deal with Magic
2017	JaMychal Green\greenja01	F	RFA	MEM	MEM	Signed 2-yr/$27M deal with Grizzlies
2017	James Johnson\johnsja01	F	UFA	MIA	MIA	Signed 4-yr/$60M deal with Heat
2018	Kyle Anderson\anderky01	F-G	RFA	SAS	MEM	Signed 4-yr $37.156MM contract
2018	Glenn Robinson\robingl02	G-F	UFA	IND	DET	Signed 2-yr $8.354MM partially guaranteed contract
2018	Jerami Grant\grantje01	F	UFA	OKC	OKC	Signed 3-yr $27.346MM contract third year is player option

Figure 8 - https://www.basketball-reference.com/friv/free_agents.cgi?year=2017

Performance Forecast

Some insight into how Anderson will fare in his first year with Memphis may be gleaned from how other players did in their first full season with the team. I chose James Ennis, Chandler Parsons, Tyreke Evans and Ben McLemore as four young players who came into Memphis after starting their careers elsewhere. Note that Ennis played 40 minutes of the prior year with the Grizzlies, but finished that season with the Pelicans. As you can see in Figure 9 the minutes for Ennis and Evans increased dramatically their first year with the team, while McLemore was steady with a slight decline and Parson's minutes dropped dramatically. Part of the reason for the drops of those two were injuries.
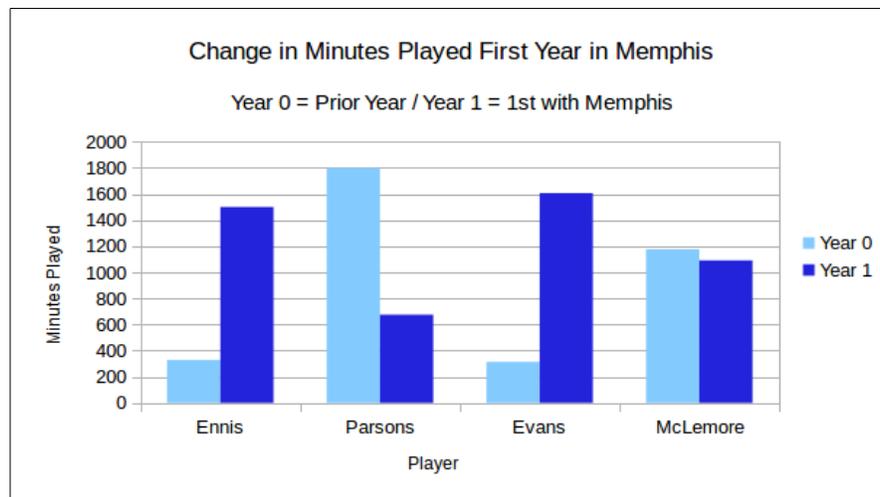

Figure 9 – Data from Basketball Reference

In recent years the Grizzlies have shown a willingness to play their offseason additions so I would

imagine this will be a career high in minutes for Anderson, barring an injury.

Change in PER First Year in Memphis

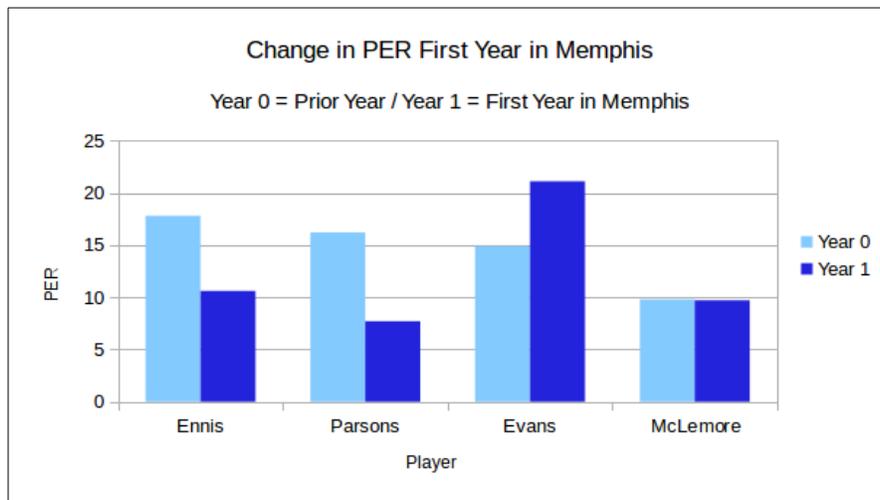Year 0 = Prior Year / Year 1 = First Year in Memphis

Figure 10 – Data from Basketball Reference

To get a sense of what the players did in those minutes, looking at changes in Player Efficiency Rating (Figure 10) can give some indication. Ennis and Parsons declined in PER while Evans increased dramatically and McLemore stayed about the same. Evans improved with not just more minutes, but also increased opportunities. I feel Anderson can follow a similar path as he will be expected to play and do more in Memphis as a result of the contract given him. I expect his offensive value to increase. On the Spurs he was a late first round pick fitting into a contending team. With the Grizzlies I imagine they are more likely to design part of the offense around him to make sure they get their money's worth.

On the defensive end I expect him to continue performing at an elite level and improve following his first season he got lots of minutes. Certainly going from the Spurs who finished 3rd in Adjusted Defensive Rating last year to the Grizzlies who finished 26th (per Basketball Reference) will possibly harm his individual defensive rankings. Yet the 'Grit 'n' Grind' Grizzlies have a reputation for strong defense and last year may have been an outlier with the Conley injury. The prior season the Grizzlies were 5th in defensive rating (the Spurs were first) and I believe Mr. Anderson will help them get back there.

Looking at Anderson specifically in the 2018-19 season, CARMELO predicts him to have the

11th best defensive +/- in the Association (+3) with a -.7 positive +/- combines for a projected 2.3 Total +/-, good for 33rd in the league. His projected rating is ahead of more famous and highly regarded players like Kristaps Porziņģis, John Wall, DeAndre Jordan and Gordon Hayward. ESPN.com predicts slightly less in the coming year with 3.7 Projected RPM Wins. He was ranked #85 by their staff after not being ranked in the top 100 the prior year, indicating they expect bigger things out of him than they did previously.

I did my own analysis to predict Anderson's +/- in the coming year. My data was the 257 games Anderson has played over his first four seasons (game logs via Basketball Reference). I used a Random Forrest Regressor to identify the most important predictors. As you can see in Figure 11 below FG, THREEP, THREEPA and BLK have amongst the lowest importance, so I did not include those as predictors in my predictive models.
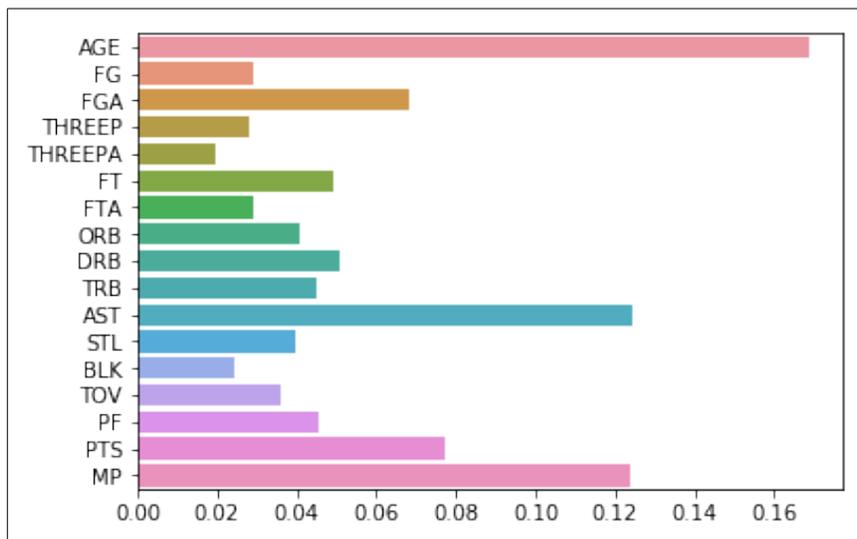

Figure 11 – Importance of Variables in Predicting +/- (Python Jupyter Notebook on Github)

To make the models I adapted the Dribble Analytics models to predict pro shooting performance based on college stats. I ran Linear, Ridge, and Support Vector regressions then averaged the results of the three. Based off how Anderson's numbers from last season, I made educated guesses (Figure 12) about how Anderson would fill out the stat sheet at the beginning of the season (Age 25), around the All Star

break (25.25), and before the playoffs (25.5). Beyond age the values below can be thought of as giving a range of how Anderson could fare in a good game, bad game and normal game.

AGE	FG	FGA	THREEP	THREEPA	FT	FTA	ORB	DRB	TRB	AST	STL	BLK	TOV	PF	PTS	MP
25	3	6	0	1	1	2	1	2	3	2	1	0	1	2	7	30
25.25	3	7	1	3	3	5	1	3	4	3	2	1	2	3	12	32
25.5	4	9	1	3	5	6	2	5	6	4	2	1	3	3	16	36

Figure 12 – Predicting Anderson's Game Performance at Different Points in the Season

Inputting those numbers into the models, I got the following forecasts for Anderson's +/-. At the beginning the year it is negative, -1.76 then at the All Star break it is 2.09, and at the end is 3.68 (Figure 13). The mean average of the three is 1.34. The FiveThirtyEight projection of 2.3 is higher than that, but falls within the range of the three predictions.
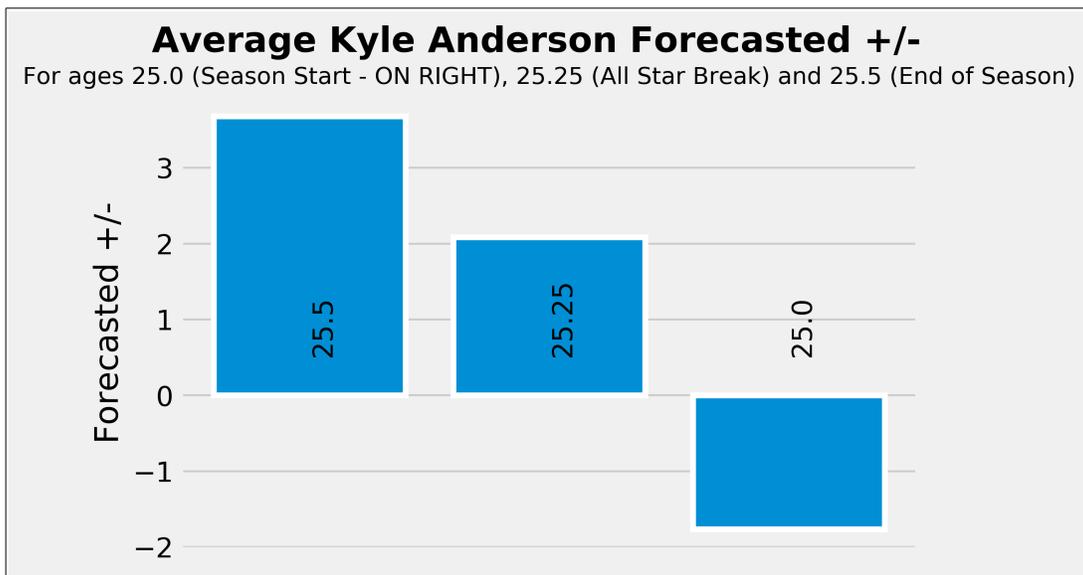

Figure 13 – Forecasting Anderson's +/- (Python Jupyer Notebook on Github)

Looking across all the different forecasts, I feel it is safe to say that if he does not get injured, with more minutes and opportunities in Memphis Anderson is in line for the best season of his career and will validate the investment the Grizzlies made.