

Production versus years of experience

Part II: How many years before an offensive defenseman hits his prime?

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Following up of part I, we will explore in this article the other group of skaters, the defensemen. Defensemen are more known to play an important defensive part but can also be responsible offensively. Since the offense is, of course, more applied to the forwards, the goals/assists stats of defensemen are generally lower. We will again look at the points per game (PPG) they get in a season. To find their prime, we will look at the years of professional NHL experience and see if there is a relation of the PPG with those years of playing. A comparison with the forward stats will also be done after.

Correction factor

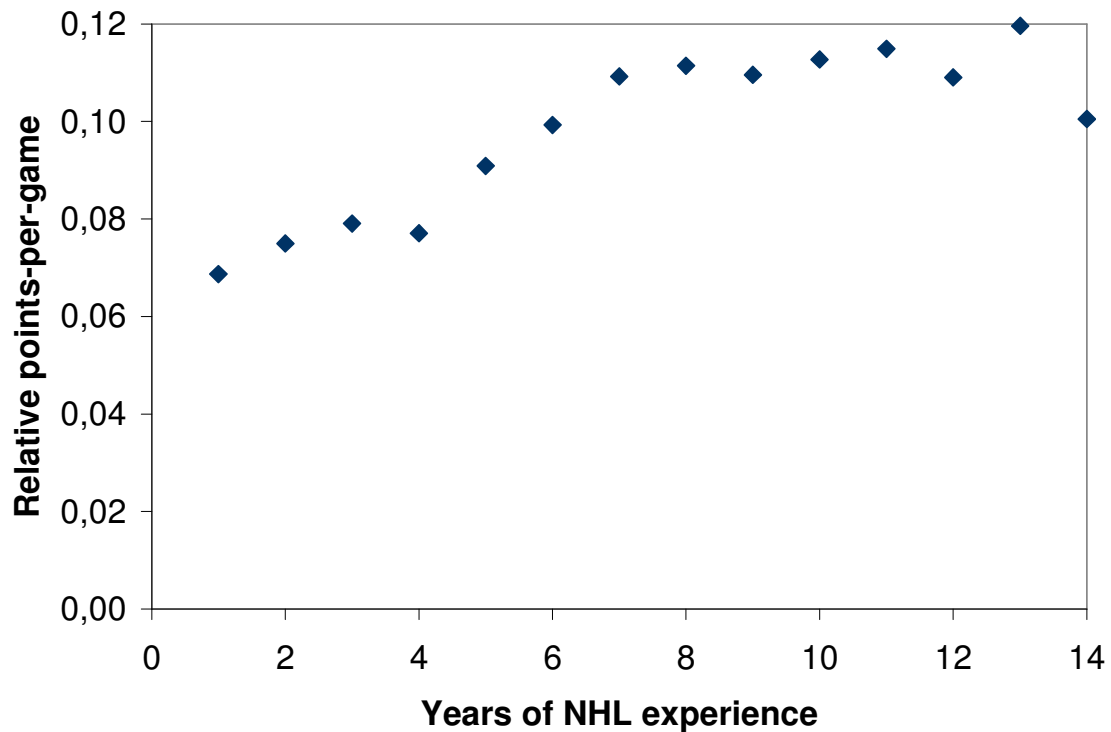
As discussed for the article on forwards, a corrector factor needs to be applied to compare the stats of a player that played during different seasons. We will take in account the same correction factor as done in part I, figure 1. The goal per game per NHL season statistic was chosen as a good representation of the variation of offense that occurs per season in the NHL.

Results

For the defensemen, the relative PPG versus the years of experience were done the same way as with the forwards. We considered in Figure 3, the defensemen that had higher than 0.53 PPG during the 2005-06 season. Rookies and those who didn't play 10 games during that season were not considered.

A trend quite similar to the one of the forward graph is obtained. From Figure 2 to the Figure 3, we notice that the data points are shifted towards the right side. Defensemen are known to take more time to develop than forwards. Their responsibility in their zone is more important than producing points. There is also more of a plateau after the 7th season to the end of the plot. Here, examples of greats like Niklas Lidstrom of the Detroit Red Wings and retired Al MacInnis comes to mind of defensemen that learned from their years of experience and produces constantly in terms of points due to it.

Figure 3: Defensemen production per years of NHL experience



Quick conclusion

We have shown that there is a similar trend for the defensemen production with NHL experience as with the forwards. Defensemen going on their 6th year of experience should be considered close to their prime. This is a delay of 2 seasons if we compare it to the forwards. The role of the defensemen, the number of game played and mostly their time on the powerplay should be considered along with Figure 3 to be at their prime offensively.