

Oklahoma City Thunder: Spreading the responsibility without Durant & Westbrook

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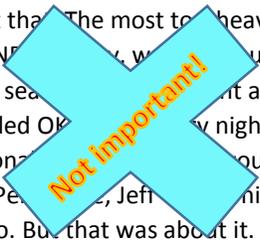


Reggie Jackson is congratulated by teammates (from left) Kevin Durant, Grant Jerrett and Steven Adams after the Thunder's victory in Boston. (AP Photo)

The Thunder has played nine games this season. And five players already have led the Thunder in scoring this season.

Russell Westbrook, Perry Jones, Serge Ibaka, Reggie Jackson and Anthony Morrow.

Think about that. The most top-heavy scoring team, perhaps in NBA history, with one player leading for most of the last five seasons. It's not just Durant and/or Russell Westbrook led Oklahoma City for most of the night. Back in the day, occasionally a player could rise up. Before the playoffs, Jeff Green could lead for a game or two. But that was about it.

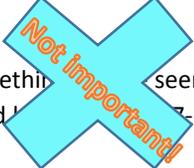


Now comes the great injury curse of 2014-15, and the Thunder scoring is spread around like jelly at the breakfast table. Four different scoring leaders in the first five games. Five in all. (repeat)

Westbrook was Westbrook at Portland, scoring 38 points but suffering a broken hand the next night. Perry Jones scored 32 points against the Clippers. Serge had 23 against Denver and 25 against Toronto. Jackson had 29 against Milwaukee. Morrow had 28 against Boston.

That's five players with at least 25 points in a game, and Durant has yet to suit out. (repeat)

Of course, when Westbrook and Durant go down, someone has to score. It's in the NBA by-laws. Teams are not allowed to lose 94-39. Teams will get up shots, and some of them will go in. But this is different. A team that has settled into the comfort zone of letting Durant and Westbrook do the heavy lifting, and everyone else take on supporting roles, now is sharing the responsibility.



Heck, it doesn't even have to be guys scoring 20 something. You've seen Nick Collison and Kendrick Perkins have their best offensive games in years. Jeremy Lamb had 27-point nights, though he's been awful since. Sebastian Telfair has had his moments.

If the Thunder can weather the absence of Durant and Westbrook, it's possible that the guys awaiting their return will be fortified. Jackson/Morrow/Jones and the like still will be supporting players, but maybe their subservient attitude will have grown a few fangs, and the Thunder will be better for it.

Simplify/Categorize/label:

Injured Players	Top Scorers
Westbrook and Durant	Westbrook, Jones, Ibaka, Jackson and Morrow