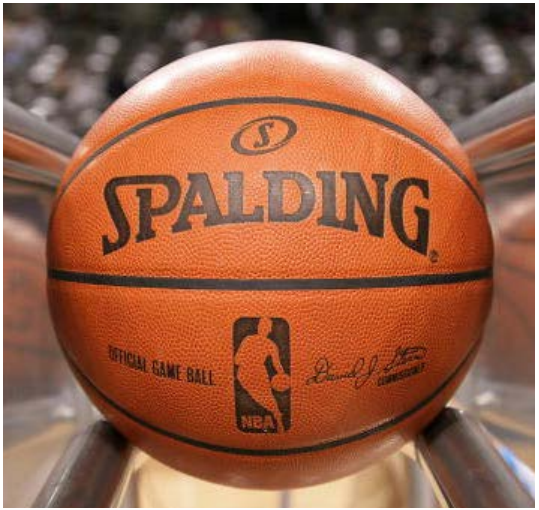
National Basketball Association: Scoring Big with Real-Time Statistics and SAP® HANA

The National Basketball Association (NBA) played its first game back in 1946, and the NBA has been generating excitement and loads of statistics ever since. Today, basketball fans have instant access to the NBA's vast database of statistics thanks to a Web site powered by the SAP HANA® platform.



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Executive overview

Organization
National Basketball Association

Headquarters
New York

Industry
Sports and entertainment

Products and Services
Global sports and media business built around professional basketball

Employees
1,100

Revenue
US$5 billion

Web Site
www.nba.com/stats

Partner
SAP® Services organization

BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION

The organization's top objectives

- Grow the game of basketball on a global basis
- Drive greater engagement among more than 380 million fans
- Maximize the use of more than 65 years of statistical data

The resolution

- Implemented the SAP HANA® platform to manage the NBA's Big Data
- Developed a single, interactive statistics Web site that is available to fans, the media, NBA teams, and players – www.nba.com/stats
- Teamed up with the SAP Services organization to ensure a speedy and smooth rollout of the Web site, which is powered by SAP HANA

The key benefits

- Repository for league's entire database of historical data and situational statistics
- Enhanced fan experience with instant access to all statistics
- Significant growth in number of visitors to the NBA Web site

Read more

"SAP HANA enabled us to build a groundbreaking Web site that I think is the best in sports."

Michael Gliedman, Senior Vice President and CIO, National Basketball Association

TOP BENEFITS ACHIEVED

Up to 20K
Concurrent queries of the statistics database

2X
More time spent by fans on NBA Web site

5 minutes
After each game, the statistics Web site is updated

See more metrics

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A virtual sports bureau for every fan

Who currently leads the National Basketball Association (NBA) in points per game? You can find the answer to that question – and in fact, the answer to nearly anything about the game of professional basketball – at www.nba.com/stats.

Today, millions of fans around the world visit this Web site to get their hands on basketball's latest statistics and more than 65 years' worth of historical data from the league. But until recently, this incredible resource wasn't available to the average fan. Mark Tatum, the NBA's executive vice president of global marketing partnerships, recalls the problem. "There's such a rich history of statistics in the NBA," says Tatum, "yet we weren't providing our fans a robust enough database because our systems couldn't handle it."

Back then, NBA executives wanted to further engage their loyal fan base with instant access to statistics and the ability to interact with this information. They wanted a Web site that provided every follower of the game a virtual sports bureau of their own.

Furthermore, league officials weren't satisfied with making the NBA stats site just pretty good. As senior vice president and CIO Michael Gliedman notes, "We would say to ourselves, how do we make this awesome?" The answer to that question was found in the SAP HANA® platform and its in-memory computing technology.

"Engaging with our fans is the most important thing that we can do . . . making sure that they feel close to the game."

Mark Tatum, Executive Vice President, Global Marketing Partnerships, National Basketball Association

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Teamwork makes it happen

Delivering the awesome Web site that NBA executives envisioned was a challenge. The NBA has over 380 million worldwide fans – that's more than the entire population of the United States. Making its vast collection of statistics available to all of them was impossible with the league's existing technology. "The site would have crashed in no time," says Steve Hellmuth, the NBA's executive vice president of operations and technology. "The fan experience would have been horrible."

That's why choosing SAP HANA to power www.nba.com/stats was such a slam dunk. The speed and performance of the in-memory computing technology from SAP makes it possible for the site to accommodate tens of thousands of concurrent users. "On a global basis, we already have 15 to 20 thousand people all connected to our database and computing statistics," says Hellmuth. And the platform's fast data loads let the NBA add new statistics immediately following a game.

When it came to implementing its best-in-class Web site, the NBA was all about collaboration. After all, as Hellmuth observes, "The number-one factor that determines the NBA champion every year is teamwork." So the NBA teamed up with the SAP® Services organization to ensure a smooth rollout of the new technology. "We couldn't have gotten to where we ended up in such a short period of time without them," notes Gliedman.

This teamwork resulted in a one-stop source for all NBA statistics that is now used by enthusiastic fans, the worldwide media, 30 NBA teams, and even players and coaches.

"For the very first time, fans have direct access to a league's entire history and its entire database of situational stats."

Steve Hellmuth, Executive Vice President of Operations and Technology, National Basketball Association

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The NBA's motto: "BIG"

Today, the statistics and video captured and used during NBA games flow back into the league's database. Fans can then use www.nba.com/stats to track every amazing point, rebound, and blocked shot in near-real time. "Everything a fan needs to know about their team is now immediately available," adds Hellmuth, "They can slice and dice the data and look at it however they wish."

The new site offers a personalized experience to anyone who follows the game. Media folks use it to develop compelling story lines, hard-core devotees research the perfect fantasy team, and the casual fan learns more about the sport. The average visitor now spends about twice as much time on the NBA's Web site as they did in the past. And with its global exposure, the site helps extend the NBA brand to consumers and fans around the world.

Gliedman sums it up best: "All of the power that's built into the site is really about letting the fans engage more with the sport."

KEY BENEFITS

Up to 20K
Concurrent queries of the statistics database

2X
More time spent by fans on NBA Web site

5 minutes
After each game, the statistics Web site is updated

>65 years
Of statistics available on Web site

>380 million
Global fans of NBA basketball

>215 countries
Enjoy NBA programming

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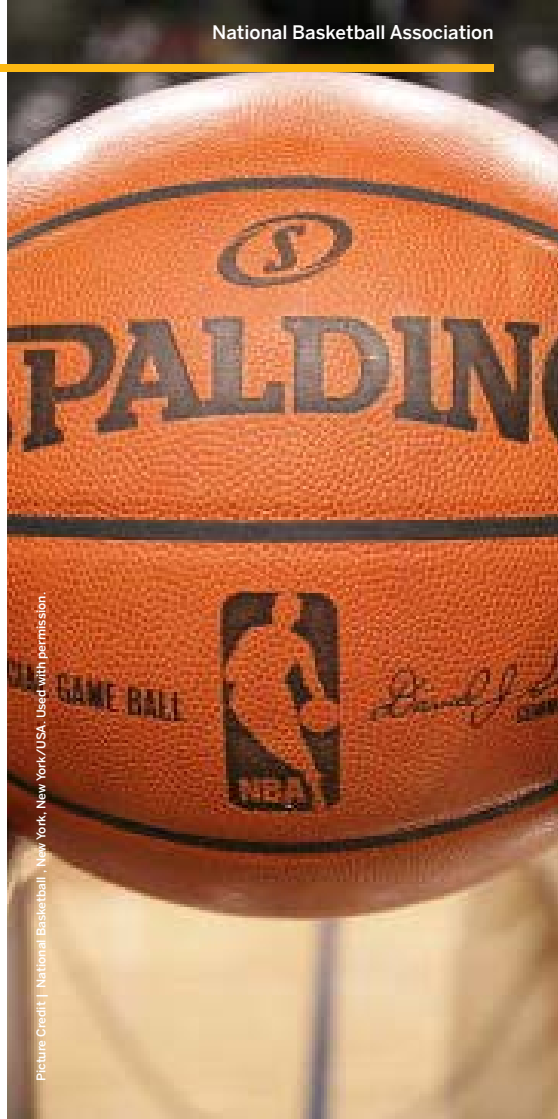
The future of the game

"The NBA's goals are, first and foremost, to grow and celebrate the game of basketball on a global basis," explains Tatum. This year alone, NBA programming will be seen in more than 215 countries and enjoyed in 47 languages.

Overall, the success of www.nba.com/stats contributed to NBA.com setting all-time records this season, with more than 9.5 billion page views. The Web site is expected to play an important role in keeping basketball's expanding audience fully engaged and close to the game. So what can you expect? "We're looking forward to taking this site even further," says Gliedman. This includes integrating more video content and making everything available to mobile fans through their smartphones and tablets.

Gliedman, Tatum, Hellmuth, and the entire team at the NBA accomplished exactly what they set out to do. They created a statistics Web site that is simply awesome.

Oh, and by the way, as for who leads the NBA in scoring – you'll have to check out the Web site to get the latest stats.



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