**James Harden and the Houston Rockets**

I chose James Harden and the Houston Rockets. The reason why I chose James Harden is because he is one of the best players in the NBA. I also wanted to highlight the difficulties he’s been experiencing in this year’s playoffs.

James Harden is proof point #1 that regular season basketball is different than playoff basketball. He is such a good player that a lot of his points come from isolation plays, pull up jumpers in transition or freelancing. The problem with this is that defensive game plans in the playoffs can easily cut down on the amount of good shots he can get in situations. This is evidenced by his poor FG % in this year’s series vs Portland. The lack of ball movement in the Houston offense is also easy to game plan against. The Rockets like to utilize Dwight Howard early but those offense sets are usually isolation plays which leaves the rest of the team standing on the perimeter. If teams don’t double Howard then the other players usually don’t touch the ball once it goes to him.

The Rockets strengths of having great one on one players is becoming their weakness in this year’s playoffs as they are not getting the ball in their best player’s hands off ball movement. Their best players are getting the ball mostly off isolation plays. The Portland coach has done a great job of game planning and now it’s up to Kevin McHale to counter act that game plan. Maybe they will need to run more sets for Parsons, Beverley, Lin and Asik.

The Rockets will be in every game with their offensive talent but they need to run actual plays where the ball moves before it gets to them instead of Harden in isolation on one of the wings or the top of the key.

**James Harden Strengths**

Great overall shooter, even when contested

Great In pick and roll

Great in isolation plays especially when he shoots a jumper

Solid 3 pt shooter

Drives both ways in isolation so it’s hard to game plan against. He’s at his best when he drive to the left and shoots a runner

Amongst league leaders in FT %

**James Harden Weaknesses**

Could improve his Post-Up game which will lead to higher percentage shot and trips to the foul line (see this year’s playoffs)

Only average on his jump shots with the play clock under 4 seconds

Needs to improve on defense (man to man and team)