A smiling man with a beard, wearing a grey t-shirt and a red cape, is posing like a superhero. He has his hands behind his head and is looking directly at the camera. The background is white with a faint red and white pattern.

P.K. Subban: Defensive Liability?

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How do we form opinions of defensive play?

- Most observers do not critically analyze the sports the watch.
- The bulk of media analysis is done on the fly without time for introspection.
- Fan opinion is frequently formed by commentary as opposed to observation.
- Highlight reels leave a greater impression and have a larger platform than analysis.

What makes good defense?

- The ultimate objective is to reduce goals against.
- Traditionally valued actions like body checks and blocked shots attempt to quantify efforts to reduce goals. Whereas turnovers are seen as bad defense.
- Logically, goals can be reduced more efficiently by limiting shot attempts themselves, which is best accomplished by increasing puck possession.
- The more you have the puck, the more likely you turn it over.
- Traditional measures of defense inherently reward not having possession.
- In general, players who allow fewer shot attempts against also allow fewer goals against.

Quantifying defense

Shot attempts:

- Shots on net
- Missed shots
- Blocked shots

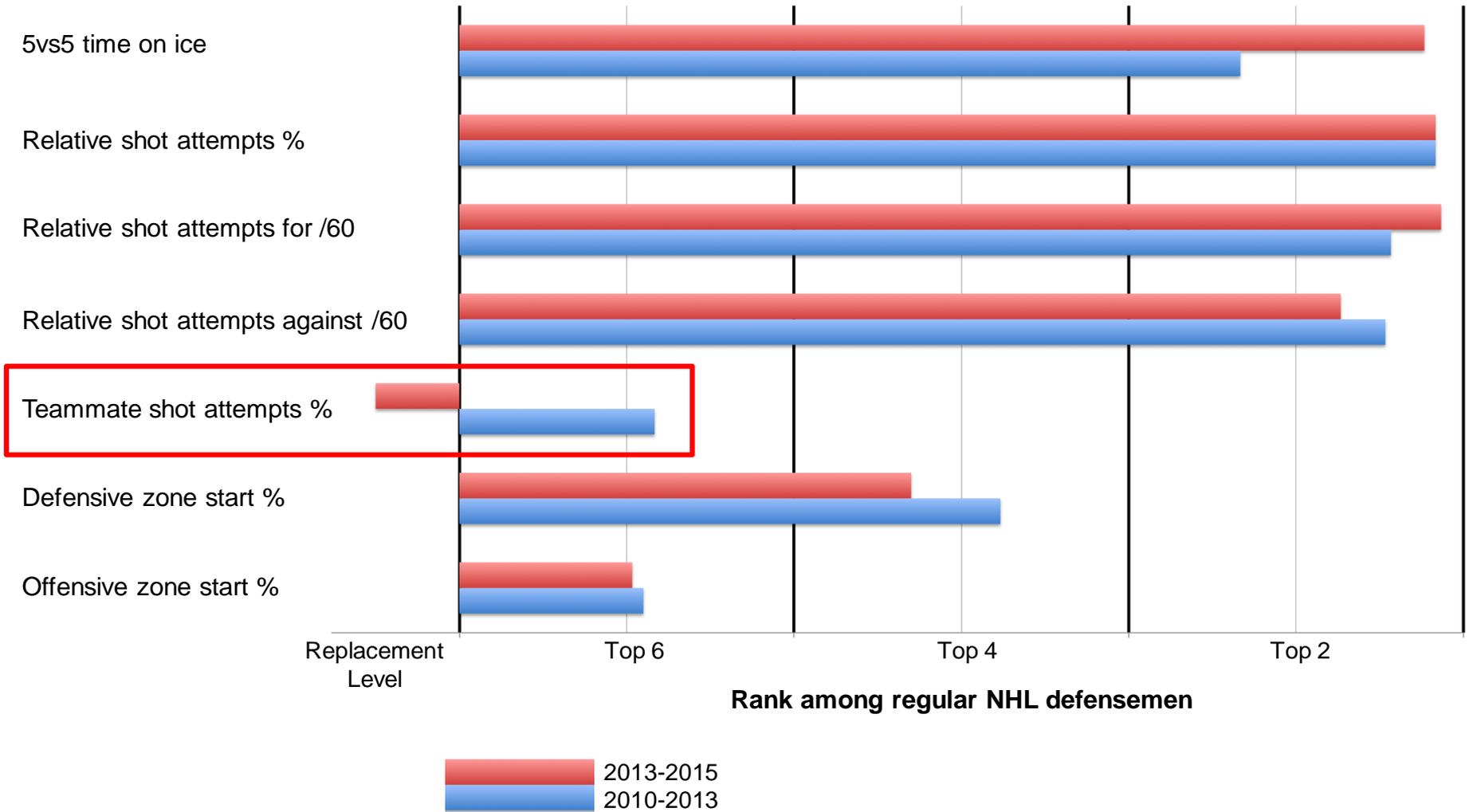
We can generate metrics to show Subban's defensive impact on his team using:

- Relative shot attempt differentials
- Relative shot attempts against per unit of ice time

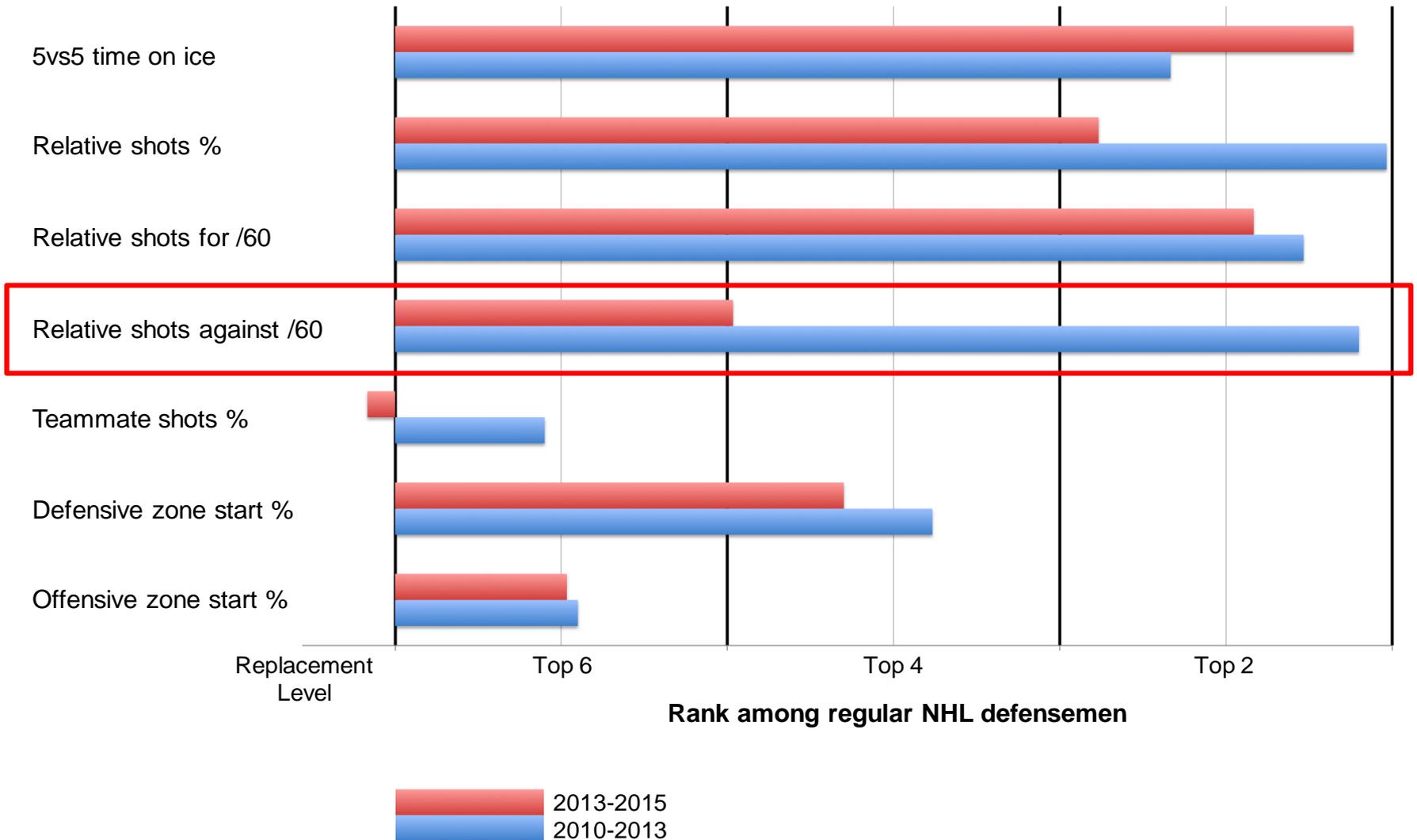
To quantify role of the player we use:

- % of shifts started in the offensive zone
- % of shifts started in the defensive zone
- Even strength time on ice

Ranking Subban against peers



Ranking Subban against peers



How does Subban achieve these results?

So what *does* achieve good defensive results?

Subban:

- Commits more turnovers.
- Effectively removes possession.
- Exits his own zone efficiently.
- Prevents opponents from entering his zone.
- Has dynamic offensive abilities that forces opponents to back off when he has the puck.

The statistics that track these events are still in their infancy but the statistics that measure their results are clear.

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