

How Did LeBron James Break the NBA All-Time Scoring Record? By Playing the Long Game

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Say you're [LeBron James](#) and your long-term goal is to score 38,388 points and break the [NBA all-time scoring record](#).

Scoring 30 points in a forgettable mid-season game early in your career was great, but was also just a drop in the 30,000-plus points bucket. Success has, until last night — when you [scored 38 points against Oklahoma City to become the all-time scoring leader](#) — was always a lagging indicator.

LeBron had to play the long, *long* game.

Fortunately, that's a game LeBron has always been willing to play.

Take May, 2003. LeBron is an eighteen-year-old phenom about to graduate from high school. Reebok, Adidas, and Nike all hope to sign him to a shoe deal. His first meeting is scheduled with Reebok, whose executives hoped to win the competition before it even starts.

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