Name: _____ Date: _____

Twelve Blocks in One Night

Reading level 8 (4th grade) · 595 words

Say his name like this: wem-ben-YAH-muh. Victor Wembanyama plays for the San Antonio Spurs in the NBA. Websites list him at 7 feet 4 inches tall. On May 4, 2026, he did what no player had done in a playoff game. He blocked 12 shots. This book follows that one night.

A basketball rim hangs 10 feet above the floor. The ring is 18 inches wide. By our arithmetic, a player listed at 7 feet 4 inches is 2 feet 8 inches shorter than the rim is high. To stop a shot up there, a player has to jump, reach and watch the ball.

So what is a block? The NBA says it is when a player shoots and a defender taps the ball, so the shot cannot score. The shot is stopped in the air. The stats table counts each one, in a column next to points and rebounds. A rebound is a catch of a missed shot.

There is a rule about when a defender may touch the ball. He may not touch a shot that is coming down with a chance to score. He may not touch a ball above the rim, in the tube of air over the basket. That rule is called goaltending. So a clean block has to come early, while the shot is still going up.

Before that night, Wembanyama had won a big prize. On April 20, 2026, he was named the NBA's Defensive Player of the Year. Defense is the job of stopping the other team from scoring. He got every first-place vote. That had never happened before. At 22, he was the youngest ever to win.

The playoffs came next. Game 1 of the second round was at home in San Antonio, against the Minnesota Timberwolves. Wembanyama played 39 minutes and 52 seconds. He scored 11 points and grabbed 15 rebounds. Then there were the blocks. He had 12 of them. Each one was a shot that did not count.

The old playoff record was 10 blocks in one game. Three players shared it: Mark Eaton in 1985, Hakeem Olajuwon in 1990 and Andrew Bynum in 2012. Wembanyama blocked 12. The NBA says the record covers the years since 1973-74. That is when blocks were first fully counted.

A record can come on a night that ends the wrong way. This one did. Minnesota won the game, 104 to 102. Wembanyama had 12 blocks, and his team still lost by two points. A block stops one shot. A team needs many good plays in a row to win.

There is a bigger list, too. The most blocks in any one NBA game is 17. Elmore Smith of the Lakers did it on October 28, 1973. Through November 4, 2026, Wembanyama's most in a regular-season game is 10. His 12 came in a playoff game.

The Spurs did not stop after that loss. They beat Minnesota, four games to two. Then they beat Oklahoma City in seven games to reach the NBA Finals. It was their first trip since 2014. Wembanyama had 78 blocks in his 22 playoff games. In June, the New York Knicks won the Finals, four games to one.

A new season started in October 2026. On November 4, the Spurs played Dallas at home. Wembanyama blocked 8 shots, scored 52 points and grabbed 24 rebounds. He played 34 minutes and 4 seconds, and he made 19 of 23 free throws, which are the shots taken from the line. The final score was 112 to 111, and the Spurs won by one point.

Questions

1. How many shots did Victor Wembanyama block on May 4, 2026?

A. 12
B. 8
C. 17

2. Why does a clean block have to come early in a shot?

A. The ball is too slippery late
B. The crowd gets in the way
C. A defender may not touch a shot that is coming down with a chance to score

3. The old playoff record was 10 blocks. In this book, what is a record?

A. A song played after a game
B. The best mark ever written down
C. A rule about touching the ball

4. What happened in the game where he blocked 12 shots?

A. The Spurs won by 10 points
B. The game went to two overtimes
C. Minnesota won, 104 to 102

5. How high is the rim above the floor?

A. 8 feet
B. 10 feet
C. 12 feet

Words to know

rim: metal hoop ring
block: stop a shot
goaltending: illegal touch
record: best mark

Answer key: Twelve Blocks in One Night

1. A. 12
2. C. A defender may not touch a shot that is coming down with a chance to score
3. B. The best mark ever written down
4. C. Minnesota won, 104 to 102
5. B. 10 feet