

PRO HOOPS DRAFTOLOGY 2024

A collective presentation of:
**FANTASYDRAFT HELP.COM, THE
FDH LOUNGE, AFTER FURTHER
REVIEW WITH JONES &
SPORTSOLOGY** under the banner
of **THE 21ST CENTURY MEDIA
ALLIANCE**

June 24, 2024

**RICK MORRIS/BEN CHEW/ RUSS
COHEN/JASON JONES**



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The FDH Lounge 2024 Pro Hoops Draft Preview Show:
<https://thefdlounge.com/podcast/mini-episode-1732-june-2024-2024-nba-draft-preview/>

Welcome! In these pages, you'll be able to read our rankings, both overall and by position. You'll be privy to a list of team needs. You'll be able to read rankings of the talent available in this draft. You'll be able to check out other excellent features, including links to prospect highlight videos. And you'll also be able to peruse a mock draft from FantasyDrafthelp.com and you'll be able to fill out one of your own! All this, and much more, here in PRO HOOPS DRAFTOLOGY 2024!

**This Draft Class Can Be Summed Up In
Two Words: Oy Vey!**

This draft class is, for lack of a more polite way of putting it, pretty unfortunate. In 2023, Victor Wembanyama was a player worth tanking for and San Antonio was rewarded for doing so. Conversely, the 2024 draft will probably feature a top player selected who might not be in the top five to seven picks in many other years.

Two of the strongest candidates for the top spot both emerge from France, C/PF Alexandre Sarr and SF Zaccharie Risacher, but that ends the similarities that either has with Wemby. There are a few other entities that boast more than one player in this class's top tier: the G-League (SF Matas Buzelis and SF/PF Ron Holland), Kentucky (SG/PG Reed Sheppard and Rob Dillingham) and UConn (SG/PG Stephon Castle and C Donovan Clingan).

Other strong candidates for the top ten include Serbian PG Nikola Topic, Tennessee swingman Dalton Knecht, Providence PG Devin Carter and Colorado swingman Cody Williams.

THE TOP 75 PLAYERS IN PRO BASKETBALL HISTORY

The NBA's 75th Anniversary has prompted a wave of Best-Of lists, but few with the substance to reinforce the selections. Authors Rick Morris, Ben Chew and Russ Cohen came together to create a list of the top 75 pro basketball players ever, with evidence to justify the placement of each -- as well as biographical details, comparisons of various legends, little-known-but-interesting tidbits, what-if scenarios and much more. Additionally, the book includes our year-by-year ranking of the top players in pro basketball and rosters for hypothetical "Olympic Dream Teams" had they existed prior to 1992. This is a book that is crafted for sports fans who are interested in learning more about the rich history of pro basketball.

Available on Amazon.com

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Centers

- 1 Alexandre Sarr
- 2 Donovan Clingan
- 3 Kyle Filipowski
- 4 Zach Edey
- 5 Kel'el Ware
- 6 Yves Missi
- 7 Adem Bona
- 8 Ulrich Chomche
- 9 Ariel Hukporti
- 10 N'Faly Dante

Point Guards

- 1 Reed Sheppard
- 2 Stephon Castle
- 3 Devin Carter
- 4 Rob Dillingham
- 5 Nikola Topic
- 6 Jared McCain
- 7 Isaiah Collier
- 8 Carlton Carrington
- 9 Tyler Kolek
- 10 Hunter Sallis

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football, hoops and
comic book franchises in
depth.**

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2023-24 Team UQB Rankings

FantasyDrafthelp.com and The FDH Lounge are expanding the UQB concept to team sports. Our rankings are a mashup of the following measures: a strength of schedule metric, offensive rating, defensive rating, EFG, TS%, Asst/TO ratio, 3% and a modified Win Share formula.

- 1 Boston
- 2 Oklahoma City
- 3 Denver
- 4 New Orleans
- 5 Minnesota
- 6 Indiana
- 7 Milwaukee
- 8 LA Clippers
- 9 Phoenix
- 10 Golden State
- 11 Dallas
- 12 Cleveland
- 13 New York
- 14 Philadelphia
- 15 LA Lakers
- 16 Sacramento
- 17 Miami
- 18 Orlando
- 19 Atlanta
- 20 Chicago
- 21 Houston
- 22 Utah
- 23 Brooklyn
- 24 Toronto
- 25 San Antonio
- 26 Washington
- 27 Memphis
- 28 Detroit
- 29 Charlotte
- 30 Portland

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**Did you stay away from players like who would
have tanked your team last year like Gordon
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**Did you end up with players who helped you
succeed last year like Chet Holmgren and Tyrese
Maxey? You're welcome!**

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Power Forwards

- 1 Alexandre Sarr
- 2 Ron Holland
- 3 Tristan da Silva
- 4 Bobi Klintman
- 5 Tyler Smith
- 6 DaRon Holmes II
- 7 Izan Almansa
- 8 Ulrich Chomche
- 9 Jonathan Mogbo
- 10 Alex Karaban

Small Forwards

- 1 Matas Buzelis
- 2 Zaccharie Risacher
- 3 Ron Holland
- 4 Dalton Knecht
- 5 Tidjane Salaun
- 6 Cody Williams
- 7 Tristan da Silva
- 8 Bobi Klintman
- 9 Tyler Smith
- 10 Ryan Dunn

Shooting Guards

- 1 Reed Sheppard
- 2 Stephon Castle
- 3 Dalton Knecht
- 4 Jared McCain
- 5 Cody Williams
- 6 Ja'Kobe Walter
- 7 Johnny Furphy
- 8 Kyshawn George
- 9 Terrence Shannon Jr.
- 10 Jaylon Tyson

Top 30 Overall

- 1 Reed Sheppard
- 2 Alexandre Sarr
- 3 Matas Buzelis
- 4 Stephon Castle
- 5 Zaccharie Risacher
- 6 Dalton Knecht
- 7 Ron Holland
- 8 Devin Carter
- 9 Donovan Clingan
- 10 Tidjane Salaun
- 11 Rob Dillingham
- 12 Nikola Topic
- 13 Jared McCain
- 14 Cody Williams
- 15 Ja'Kobe Walter
- 16 Tristan da Silva
- 17 Johnny Furphy
- 18 Kyshawn George
- 19 Bobi Klintman
- 20 Kyle Filipowski
- 21 Zach Edey
- 22 Kel'el Ware
- 23 Isaiah Collier
- 24 Terrence Shannon Jr.
- 25 Tyler Smith
- 26 Carlton Carrington
- 27 Ryan Dunn
- 28 DaRon Holmes II
- 29 Tyler Kolek
- 30 Jaylon Tyson

Position

Sch/Nation

Ht/Wt

- | Position | Sch/Nation | Ht/Wt |
|----------|------------|-----------|
| SG/PG | Kentucky | 6-3, 185 |
| C/PF | France | 7-1, 225 |
| SF | G-League | 6-10, 210 |
| SG/PG | UConn | 6-6, 215 |
| SF | France | 6-9, 200 |
| SF/SG | Tennessee | 6-6, 210 |
| SF/PF | G-League | 6-8, 205 |
| PG | Providence | 6-3, 195 |
| C | UConn | 7-3, 280 |
| SF | France | 6-9, 210 |
| PG | Kentucky | 6-3, 175 |
| PG | Serbia | 6-6, 200 |
| PG/SG | Duke | 6-3, 205 |
| SF/SG | Colorado | 6-8, 180 |
| SG | Baylor | 6-5, 200 |
| PF/SF | Colorado | 6-9, 220 |
| SG | Kansas | 6-9, 200 |
| SG | Miami | 6-8, 210 |
| PF/SF | Sweden | 6-10, 210 |
| C | Duke | 7-0, 230 |
| C | Purdue | 7-4, 300 |
| C | Indiana | 7-1, 230 |
| PG | USC | 6-4, 205 |
| SG | Illinois | 6-7, 225 |
| PF/SF | G-League | 6-10, 225 |
| PG | Pittsburgh | 6-5, 195 |
| SF | Virginia | 6-7, 215 |
| PF | Dayton | 6-10, 235 |
| PG | Marquette | 6-3, 195 |
| SG | California | 6-6, 215 |

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Check out the main site at [Sportsology.com](https://www.sportsology.com) and specific sub-sites for baseball, football, hockey, hoops, pro wrestling, video games, DVDs/movies and music.

Top 10 For The Next 10

The FDH Top 10 for the Next 10 is a list attempting to identify the best players in the league -- not necessarily in a pure fantasy sense -- over the course of the entire next decade. It's not a pure 25-and-under draft, but it skews heavily in that direction because most big-time stars are past their primes in their late 30s. Players who are both very young and very skilled already have the biggest edges.

- 1 Victor Wembanyama
- 2 Anthony Edwards
- 3 Luka Doncic
- 4 Shai Gilgeous-Alexander
- 5 Nikola Jokic
- 6 Tyrese Haliburton
- 7 Paolo Banchero
- 8 Jayson Tatum
- 9 Chet Holmgren
- 10 Alperen Sengun

Scottie Barnes
Cade Cunningham
Tyrese Maxey
Evan Mobley
Jalen Williams

Strength of Draft By Position

GREAT: none
VERY GOOD: none
GOOD: PG
AVERAGE: SG, SF
BELOW-AVERAGE: PF, C
POOR: none
HORRIBLE: none

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FDH Mock Draft

Team	Player	Position	Sch/Nation	Ht/Wt
1 Atlanta	Zaccharie Risacher	SF	France	6-9, 200
2 Washington	Alexandre Sarr	C/PF	France	7-1, 225
3 Houston	Dalton Knecht	SF/SG	Tennessee	6-6, 210
4 San Antonio	Reed Sheppard	SG/PF	Kentucky	6-3, 185
5 Detroit	Matas Buzelis	SF	G-League	6-10, 210
6 Charlotte	Stephon Castle	SG/PF	UConn	6-6, 215
7 Portland	Donovan Clingan	C	UConn	7-3, 280
8 San Antonio	Nikola Topic	PG	Serbia	6-6, 200
9 Memphis	Ron Holland	SF/PF	G-League	6-8, 205
10 Utah	Rob Dillingham	PG	Kentucky	6-3, 175
11 Chicago	Tidjane Salaun	SF	France	6-9, 210
12 Oklahoma City	DaRon Holmes II	PF	Dayton	6-10, 235
13 Sacramento	Ja'Kobe Walter	SG	Baylor	6-5, 200
14 Portland	Cody Williams	SF/SG	Colorado	6-8, 180
15 Miami	Devin Carter	PG	Providence	6-3, 195
16 Philadelphia	Jared McCain	PG/SG	Duke	6-3, 205
17 LA Lakers	Zach Edey	C	Purdue	7-4, 300
18 Orlando	Kyshawn George	SG	Miami	6-8, 210
19 Toronto	Kel'el Ware	C	Indiana	7-1, 230
20 Cleveland	Tristan da Silva	PF/SF	Colorado	6-9, 220
21 New Orleans	Yves Missi	C	Baylor	6-11, 229
22 Phoenix	Kyle Filipowski	C	Duke	7-0, 230
23 Milwaukee	Carlton Carrington	PG	Pittsburgh	6-5, 195
24 New York	Kevin McCullar	SG	Kansas	6-5, 205
25 New York	Ryan Dunn	SF	Virginia	6-7, 215
26 Washington	Bobbi Klintman	PF/SF	Sweden	6-10, 210
27 Minnesota	Isaiah Collier	PG	USC	6-4, 205
28 Denver	Baylor Scheierman	SG	Baylor	6-7, 205
29 Utah	Jaylon Tyson	SG/SF	California	6-7, 220
30 Boston	Cameron Christie	SG	Minnesota	6-6, 190

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We publish a series of guides such as this through the year as a partnership between Sportsology, The FDH Lounge, FantasyDrafthelp.com and other entities under the banner of The 21st Century Media Alliance. Fantasy Racing (mid-February), Fantasy Baseball (mid-March), NFL Draft (mid-April), NHL Entry Draft (mid-June), NBA Draft (mid-June), Fantasy Football (late July), Fantasy Hockey (mid-September), Fantasy Hoops (mid-October).

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Preview Of FantasyDrafthelp.com Ultimate Fantasy Hoops Stat For 2024-25

This is the FantasyDrafthelp.com statistic, the Ultimate Quantitative Baseline, based on the statistical principle of standard deviation from the mean. We utilize the standard fantasy categories: PPG, RPG, APG, ST, BL, TO, FG%, FT% and 3%. In each category, a spectrum is calculated from the best performance to the worst on a per-game basis. The numbers in each category are added together to create our statistic. An additional equalizer is injected to apply more points to each player at the positions of scarcer depth. What this stat truly does is to quantify beyond doubt how the stronger and weaker performances in each category add up to the absolute fantasy value for each player. As such, it establishes a baseline for performance that is more comprehensive than anything ever developed. A number over 1000 is considered elite. We have listed below the top 25 forwards and guards, top 15 centers and top 50 overall.

Forwards		Guards		Top 50 Overall			
1	Giannis Antetokounmpo 1481	1	SGA 1526	1	SGA 1526	26	T.J. McConnell 829
2	Kawhi Leonard 1106	2	Luka Doncic 1273	2	Nikola Jokic 1522	27	Jalen Brunson 826
3	Evan Mobley 1091	3	Tyrese Haliburton 1117	3	Giannis Antetokounmpo 1481	28	DeMar DeRozan 823
4	Paul George 967	4	De'Aaron Fox 1073	4	Luka Doncic 1273	29	Devin Booker 819
5	LeBron James 961	5	Donovan Mitchell 1002	5	Joel Embiid 1247	30	Obi Toppin 816
6	Lauri Markkanen 909	6	Scottie Barnes 932	6	Domantas Sabonis 1149	31	Alex Caruso 814
7	Jimmy Butler 860	7	Kyrie Irving 899	7	Anthony Davis 1134	32	Jalen Williams 809
8	Jayson Tatum 854	8	Aaron Wiggins 841	8	Daniel Gafford 1130	33	Herbert Jones 796
9	DeMar DeRozan 823	9	Fred VanVleet 835	9	Tyrese Haliburton 1117	34	Chet Holmgren 785
10	Obi Toppin 816	10	T.J. McConnell 829	10	Kawhi Leonard 1106	35	James Harden 780
11	Jalen Williams 809	11	Jalen Brunson 826	11	Evan Mobley 1091	36	Pascal Siakam 777
12	Herbert Jones 796	12	Devin Booker 819	12	De'Aaron Fox 1073	37	Zion Williamson 772
13	Pascal Siakam 777	13	Alex Caruso 814	13	Donovan Mitchell 1002	38T	John Collins 769
14	Zion Williamson 772	14	James Harden 780	14	Paul George 967	38T	Tyus Jones 769
15	John Collins 769	15	Tyus Jones 769	15	LeBron James 961	40	Tyrese Maxey 768
				16	Scottie Barnes 932	41	LaMelo Ball 764
				17	Lauri Markkanen 909	42	Damian Lillard 748
				18	Kyrie Irving 899	43	Dejounte Murray 743
				19	Al Horford 871	44T	Scotty Pippen Jr 740
				20	Jimmy Butler 860	44T	Mike Conley 740
				21	Jayson Tatum 854	46	Tobias Harris 730
				22	Aaron Wiggins 841	47	Jamal Murray 728
				23T	Fred VanVleet 835	48	Derrick White 726
				23T	Kristaps Porzingis 835	49	Bam Adebayo 724
				25	Isaiah Hartenstein 832	50	Grayson Allen 723

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The FDH Top 30 Players In The NBA

NOTE: These are the top 30 players in the NBA at the present time – averaging one per team in the league – by determination of FDH Managing Partner Rick Morris. Their ranking in last year's analysis is in parentheses. Players who were included last year, but not this year, are listed below.

TOP TIER

- 1 Nikola Jokic (1)
- 2 Luka Doncic (9)
- 3 Anthony Edwards (20)
- 4 Joel Embiid (4)
- 5 Shai Gilgeous-Alexander (12)
- 6 Giannis Antetokounmpo (2)
- 7 Stephen Curry (3)
- 8 Jayson Tatum (6)
- 9 Tyrese Haliburton (22)
- 10 Victor Wembanyama (NA)
- 11 Donovan Mitchell (15)
- 12 Jalen Brunson (16)
- 13 LeBron James (10)

SECOND TIER

- 14 Devin Booker (8)
- 15 Kevin Durant (7)
- 16 Jamal Murray (14)
- 17 Jaylen Brown (17)
- 18 Paolo Banchero (NA)
- 19 Tyrese Maxey (NA)
- 20 Paul George (NA)
- 21 Jimmy Butler (5)
- 22 Jalen Williams (NA)
- 23 Kyrie Irving (NA)
- 24 Chet Holmgren (NA)
- 25 Rudy Gobert (NA)

THIRD TIER

- 26 De'Aaron Fox (18)
- 27 Alperen Sengun (NA)
- 28 Domantas Sabonis (13)
- 29 Karl-Anthony Towns (30)
- 30 James Harden (27)

- Damian Lillard (11)
Bam Adebayo (19)
Anthony Davis (21)
Desmond Bane (23)
Darius Garland (24)
Klay Thompson (25)
Julius Randle (26)
Lauri Markkanen (28)
Evan Mobley (29)

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Links to Highlight Videos of Top Prospects

Here are links to some of the best players of the '24 Draft in action:

- Matas Buzelis <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ca4bsLAuwBM>
Devin Carter <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6-WGcKbdVw>
Stephon Castle <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvxAbR65XMY>
Donovan Clingan <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KghlkQ1DSFs>
Tristan da Silva <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDpiSvJ0tCs>
Rob Dillingham https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J3RIJ_dCToo
Ron Holland <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OZelo5FxmLs>
Dalton Knecht <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HnZKHnojSc>
Jared McCain <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=91yDHFZyAws>
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2023-24 FDH NBA All-Stars By Division

ATLANTIC DIVISION

PG Jalen Brunson
PG Tyrese Maxey
SG Cam Thomas
SG Derrick White
SF Jaylen Brown
SF Mikal Bridges
PF Jayson Tatum
PF Julius Randle
C Joel Embiid
C Kristaps Porzingis

CENTRAL DIVISION

PG Tyrese Haliburton
PG Damian Lillard
SG Donovan Mitchell
SG Zach LaVine
SF DeMar DeRozan
SF Khrist Middleton
PF Giannis Antetokounmpo
PF Evan Mobley
C Jarrett Allen
C Myles Turner

SOUTHEAST DIVISION

PG Trae Young
PG Jalen Suggs
SG Dejounte Murray
SG Tyler Herro
SF Franz Wagner
SF Miles Bridges
PF Paolo Banchero
PF Jimmy Butler
C Bam Adebayo
C Mitchell Robinson

SOUTHWEST DIVISION

PG Luka Doncic
PG CJ McCollum
SG Kyrie Irving
SG Jalen Green
SF Brandon Ingram
SF Desmond Bane
PF Zion Williamson
PF PJ Washington
C Victor Wembanyama
C Alperen Sengun

NORTHWEST DIVISION

PG Shai Gilgeous-Alexander
PG Jamal Murray
SG Anthony Edwards
SG Collin Sexton
SF Michael Porter Jr
SF Luguentz Dort
PF Jalen Williams
PF Karl-Anthony Towns
C Nikola Jokic
C Rudy Gobert

PACIFIC DIVISION

PG Stephen Curry
PG Devin Booker
SG Bradley Beal
SG Austin Reaves
SF Kawhi Leonard
SF Paul George
PF LeBron James
PF Kevin Durant
C Domantas Sabonis
C Anthony Davis

2024-25 NBA Predicted Standings

EASTERN CONFERENCE

ATLANTIC DIVISION

X-Boston 57-27
Y-New York 56-26
Y-Philadelphia 53-29
y-Brooklyn 36-46
Toronto 20-62

CENTRAL DIVISION

X-Cleveland 54-28
Y-Milwaukee 52-30
y-Indiana 50-32
y-Chicago 30-52
Detroit 20-62

SOUTHEAST DIVISION

X-Orlando 51-31
y-Miami 48-34
Charlotte 25-57
Atlanta 20-62
Washington 18-64

WESTERN CONFERENCE

SOUTHWEST DIVISION

X-Dallas 54-28
Y-Houston 46-36
y-New Orleans 43-39
Memphis 38-44
San Antonio 27-55

NORTHWEST DIVISION

X-Denver 58-24
Y-Minnesota 57-25
Y-Oklahoma City 56-26
Utah 30-52
Portland 17-65

PACIFIC DIVISION

X-Sacramento 50-32
y-Phoenix 44-38
y-LA Clippers 42-40
y-Golden State 40-42
LA Lakers 38-44

PLAY-IN ROUND

Indiana over Miami
Brooklyn over Chicago
Miami over Brooklyn
Golden State over Phoenix
New Orleans over LA Clippers
New Orleans over Phoenix

CONFERENCE QUARTERFINALS

1 Boston over 8 Miami in 7
2 New York over 7 Indiana in 7
3 Cleveland over 6 Orlando in 7
4 Philadelphia over 5 Milwaukee in 6
1 Denver over 8 New Orleans in 5
2 Minnesota over 7 Golden State in 4
3 Oklahoma City over 6 Houston in 6
4 Dallas over 5 Sacramento in 6

CONFERENCE SEMIFINALS

1 Boston over 4 Philadelphia in 6
3 Cleveland over 2 New York in 6
1 Denver over 4 Dallas in 6
2 Minnesota over 3 Oklahoma City in 6

CONFERENCE FINALS

1 Boston over 3 Cleveland in 6
1 Denver over 2 Minnesota in 7
NBA FINALS
Denver over Boston in 6

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[YouTube.com/](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)
[thefdhlounge](https://www.thefdhlounge.com)

The FDH Lounge Top 10 Songs Per Decade Playlist from the 1950s through the 2010s:

<http://thefdhlounge.blogspot.com/2021/02/the-fdh-lounge-top-10-songs-by-decade.html>

2024 NBA Draft Team Draft Needs

Atlanta: PF, SF, C
Boston: C
Brooklyn: PG, C, PF
Charlotte: C, SG
Chicago: SF, SG
Cleveland: SF
Dallas: SF, PF
Denver: SG
Detroit: PF, SF, C
Golden State: SG, C
Houston: SF
Indiana: SG
LA Clippers: C, SF, PG
LA Lakers: SF, PG, PF
Memphis: SF, PF
Miami: PG, PF
Milwaukee: SG
Minnesota: PG, SF
New Orleans: C
New York: C, SG
Oklahoma City: SG
Orlando: SG, C
Philadelphia: SG, PF
Phoenix: SF, C
Portland: SF, C, PF
Sacramento: SG, SF
San Antonio: PG, SF, PF, SG
Toronto: PG, C, PF
Utah: PG, SF
Washington: SF, SG, C, PG

Blank Mock Draft Worksheet

- 1 Atlanta
- 2 Washington
- 3 Houston
- 4 San Antonio
- 5 Detroit
- 6 Charlotte
- 7 Portland
- 8 San Antonio
- 9 Memphis
- 10 Utah
- 11 Chicago
- 12 Oklahoma City
- 13 Sacramento
- 14 Portland
- 15 Miami
- 16 Philadelphia
- 17 LA Lakers
- 18 Orlando
- 19 Toronto
- 20 Cleveland
- 21 New Orleans
- 22 Phoenix
- 23 Milwaukee
- 24 New York
- 25 New York
- 26 Washington
- 27 Minnesota
- 28 Denver
- 29 Utah
- 30 Boston

2024 Free Agency Preview

By Rick Morris/The FDH Lounge

As has been the case often in recent years, the top of the free agency class is complicated by the usual Kabuki Dance of superstar players with renewable options who play the “will he, won’t he” card to maximum effect. LeBron James and Paul George can become free agents, but it seems unlikely that LBJ at least will walk away. As for the latter player, well, James Harden is an unrestricted free agent and with Steve Ballmer’s nine-figure hoops palace about to open, the Clippers will do everything in their power to keep them both off the market.

From there, it’s a very-good-but-not-great class overall, with a notable group of players who will have to take pay cuts because they are no longer worth what they fetched on their last contracts. This group includes Klay Thompson, Tobias Harris, Gordon Hayward, Kyle Lowry, Buddy Hield, and Markelle Fultz. If we were to include club options likely to be declined, we’d add Evan Fournier to this discussion.

Other notable club options include Bruce Brown (certain to be renewed), Joe Ingles (could go either way depending on how Orlando continues its team-building), Mo Wagner (likely pick-up) and Jeff Green (likely pick-up).

Other notable player options include D’Angelo Russell (no way that he wants to chance the market), OG Anunoby (while the option may or may not be invoked, the Knicks are hot to sign him to an extension), Kentavious Caldwell-Pope (in the right place at the right time since Denver doesn’t want to lose any even borderline core pieces) and Gary Payton II (if he declines, Golden State will just end up having to re-sign him).

Other notable unrestricted free agents include Miles Bridges (coveted as a player but tainted by off-court crimes), Pascal Siakam (Indy can’t let him go), DeMar DeRozan (the Bulls can’t afford to let him go unless they belatedly face reality and rebuild), Gary Trent Jr., Jonas Valanciunas, Malik Beasley, Tyus Jones, Malik Monk and Isaiah Hartenstein.

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Recommended NBA Divisions Post-Expansion

With the strong rumors that Seattle and Las Vegas are likely to be brought in via expansion comes speculation about the format of the league once they are admitted. Here is the FDH recommendation for the new divisional structure.

EASTERN CONFERENCE	WESTERN CONFERENCE
Atlantic Division	Southwest Division
Boston	Dallas
Brooklyn	Houston
Charlotte	Las Vegas
Miami	Memphis
New York	New Orleans
Orlando	Oklahoma City
Philadelphia	Phoenix
Washington	San Antonio
Central Division	Pacific Division
Atlanta	Denver
Chicago	Golden State
Cleveland	LA Clippers
Detroit	LA Lakers
Indiana	Portland
Milwaukee	Sacramento
Minnesota	Seattle
Toronto	Utah

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Out With The Old (Era), In With The New

By Rick Morris/The FDH Lounge

In this space in 2023, we proclaimed “The Crossover in Eras is Ending.” In this space in 2021, we proclaimed “NBA (Mildly Increasing) Parity: It’s Fan-Tastic!” So, we’ve been on the topic the past few years about how the transition from one era to another one in the game was proceeding a little slower than usual. For example, in terms of the formation of what’s regarded as the modern NBA, people tend to think of the 1980s era as having begun when Magic and Bird were drafted in 1979 – and the Lakers winning the championship in 1980 just reinforces that notion. But the late 1970s were characterized by post-ABA-merger chaos, with the team that could have dominated the era, Portland, falling apart once Bill Walton got injured and Washington and Seattle being good-but-not-great champions who were not destined to stay at the top in the 1980s anyway.

Bookending the 1980s, Magic’s shock retirement in 1991 followed by Bird hanging it up due to back issues after the 1992 era are seen as cementing the end of the 1980s and the locking in as the 1990s belonging to Michael Jordan and the Bulls. Fair enough. From there, Jordan’s (second but still not final) retirement in 1998, followed by the Spurs and Lakers winning all of those titles (nine of 12 from 1999-2010 and with one team or the other in the Finals every year except 2006), is commonly seen as the start of the 21st Century NBA. Again, fair enough.

The fourth and final consecutive year that we thought we might see but failed to see a LeBron-Kobe Finals, 2011, appeared to mark at least a soft break between eras, as Kobe would never return to the Finals and LeBron was making the first of what would be eight consecutive Finals appearances (a streak that he ended, voluntarily, by heading West in the summer of 2018, because any contender in the East built around him would have been the favorite to go back to the championship series in 2019). But the Spurs lingering as conference champions into 2013 and 2014 and winning the 2014 title seemed to indicate that the league was going through a slower transition than usual at the top.

That transition ended definitively in 2014 when the Spurs’ time at the top ended just as a Gregg Popovich disciple, Steve Kerr, instituted his revolutionary offensive system at Golden State. His teams would make the Finals every time for the rest of the decade, against LeBron’s Cavs the first four years and Kawhi Leonard’s Raptors in 2019.

The seeds of what would be a prolonged transition period actually began in those Finals when Klay Thompson and Kevin Durant got injured and torpedoed their 2019-20 seasons, thus setting the Warriors up as lame duck Western Conference Champions. That set up a run from 2019-2021 with six different teams in the NBA Finals (Toronto, Golden State, LA Lakers, Miami, Milwaukee, Phoenix), the first time that had happened since those aforementioned chaotic days of 1976-78 (Boston, Phoenix, Portland, Philadelphia, Washington, Seattle). And this set the stage for a stat being quoted recently, with six consecutive new champions (since 2019: Toronto, the LA Lakers, Milwaukee, Golden State, Denver and Boston) for the first time since, you guessed it, 1975-80: Golden State, Boston, Portland, Washington, Seattle and the LA Lakers).

During this period of time, LeBron (with the Lakers in 2020) and Golden State still won championships, even as new faces were emerging at the top, such as the Greek Freak/Milwaukee in 2021 and The Joker/Denver in 2023. But even the Finals with Milwaukee had a twinge of the previous era, as Chris Paul’s quest for his first title was the defining storyline from the Phoenix perspective.

It’s been a fascinating time of cross-pollination between eras with the old and the new overlapping, but heading into 2023-24, it seemed inevitably to be coming to a close. The series that may signal the definitive end of the previous era came in the opening round of the playoffs, when Minnesota curb-stomped Phoenix’s latest attempt at a megastar-driven “Dream Team.” Indeed, the Wolves may have ended another era, that of the Banana Boat, going all the way back to Boston’s star-stacking of 2007-08. In today’s league, young teams such as Oklahoma City and Minnesota have the chance to dispatch teams with far greater experience, which definitely is a new development.

In this space in 2022, we proclaimed “As We Predicted, More Room at the Top in the 2020s.” This decade is already 1970s-like in terms of teams making and winning the Finals, so just think how we’ll look back at this decade compared to the other recent ones with a few consolidated teams at the top – considering that the likes of Oklahoma City, Minnesota, San Antonio, Cleveland, New York or Philadelphia could still join the party. Those who’ve always claimed that the league needs 2-4 dominant teams at the top to drive interest will be proven wrong as fans embrace the wider championship windows for more franchises.

THE TOP 75 PLAYERS IN PRO BASKETBALL HISTORY

The NBA’s 75th Anniversary has prompted a wave of Best-Of lists, but few with the substance to reinforce the selections. Authors Rick Morris, Ben Chew and Russ Cohen came together to create a list of the top 75 pro basketball players ever, with evidence to justify the placement of each -- as well as biographical details, comparisons of various legends, little-known-but-interesting tidbits, what-if scenarios and much more. Additionally, the book includes our year-by-year ranking of the top players in pro basketball and rosters for hypothetical “Olympic Dream Teams” had they existed prior to 1992. This is a book that is crafted for sports fans who are interested in learning more about the rich history of pro basketball. Available on Amazon.com

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