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with Additions and Subtractions
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POWER RATINGS & THE EARLY-SEASON ATS APPROACH

TEAM	PR	HC
San Antonio	95	4
NY Knicks	94	5
OKC Thunder	94	5
Boston Celtics	93	4
Philadelphia	92	4
Minnesota	92	4
Denver Nuggets	91	4
Houston Rockets	90	3
Cleveland	90	3
Miami Heat	89	3
Toronto Raptors	89	4
LA Lakers	88	4
Detroit Pistons	88	3
Atlanta Hawks	86	3
Indiana Pacers	86	3
Charlotte Hornets	85	3
Washington Wizards	85	3
Golden State	84	4
Portland	83	4
Dallas Mavericks	82	3
New Orleans	81	3
Orlando Magic	80	3
Utah Jazz	79	4
Phoenix Suns	78	3
Chicago Bulls	77	3
Brooklyn Nets	76	3
Sacramento Kings	75	3
LA Clippers	74	2
Milwaukee Bucks	73	3
Memphis Grizzlies	71	2

PR = power rating. HC = home court. A power play is a difference of five points or more between the market line and the power-rating line.

Why Betting With ATS Matters Early in the NBA and College Basketball Seasons

The first few weeks of basketball can offer valuable betting opportunities—but they also present some of the toughest handicapping challenges of the season.

New rosters, coaching changes, uncertain rotations and limited current-season statistics make it difficult to judge exactly how good a team is. A familiar name or last season’s record can influence the betting market long after a team’s personnel and style have changed.

That is why working with ATS can be especially valuable early in the NBA and college basketball seasons. The goal is to evaluate what a team can do now, determine how the matchup affects its chances, and decide whether the available line offers value.

Last Season’s Results Are Only a Starting Point

A team that won consistently last year may enter the new season with different strengths and weaknesses.

In the NBA, a trade can change who handles the ball, how a team spaces the floor and whether it can defend the rim. Losing a dependable reserve can also matter when the starters leave the game.

College basketball brings even more turnover. Transfers, freshmen and coaching changes can reshape nearly an entire rotation. A recognizable program may have considerable talent but still need time to establish its defensive assignments and offensive timing.

ATS’ approach looks beyond the name on the jersey. Personnel, experience, coaching and matchup fit help establish a more useful picture than reputation alone.

Early Scores Can Be Misleading

A comfortable opening-night win does not necessarily mean a team is ready to cover a large spread against stronger competition.

Was the opponent missing its best player? Did the winner shoot unusually well from three-point range? Did turnovers create easy baskets that may be harder to find in the next game?

The same questions apply after a disappointing loss. A team can play reasonably well and lose because open shots did not fall. Another can win while showing defensive problems that a better opponent will exploit.

ATS can help bettors evaluate the quality of a performance and resist making a large

adjustment based on one final score.

Rotations and Availability Matter Immediately

Early in the NBA season, minutes restrictions, returning injured players and changing bench roles can affect a team’s performance. Rest and travel become more meaningful when a coach is still determining which combinations work.

In college basketball, a talented freshman may be learning how to defend without fouling. A transfer may need time to adjust to a different offensive system. A team with several capable scorers may still struggle to create good shots together.

These details influence spreads, totals and the ability to finish close games. Following who is available—and how that player will actually be used—is an essential part of the early-season evaluation.

The Best Team Is Not Always the Best Bet

Picking a likely winner is only part of handicapping.

A strong favorite can win comfortably and still fail to cover. An overlooked underdog can lose the game while rewarding bettors who took the points.

ATS’ football message applies to basketball as well: look for where the line is wrong. That requires comparing the market’s expectations with the current roster, likely pace, offensive efficiency, defensive matchups and game conditions.

The decision must come back to the number being offered.

Discipline Helps Protect Your Season

Early basketball can tempt bettors to chase a loss, increase their stakes after one impressive win or wager on every televised game.

A selective approach gives the analysis time to develop. Consistent bet sizing also helps prevent one uncertain matchup from doing disproportionate damage to a bankroll.

Working with ATS offers a structured way to approach those decisions: research the game, identify the reasons for a wager, assess the price and maintain discipline. Every selection carries uncertainty, so managing the exposure matters alongside making the pick.

TEAM PREVIEWS

ATLANTA HAWKS

EAST | COACH Quin Snyder

2025-26 SU 46-36 | ATS 44-38-0

KEY ADDITIONS

Luguentz Dort, Aaron Wiggins, Dorian Finney-Smith

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

Zaccharie Risacher, Jonathan Kuminga, Buddy Hield

SEASON OUTLOOK

Jalen Johnson has become Atlanta's next star.

His ability to rebound, advance the ball and create for teammates allows the Hawks to attack before defenses get organized. CJ McCollum supplies experienced half-court scoring, while Nickeil Alexander-Walker and Dyson Daniels give Atlanta complementary perimeter skill. Onyeka Okongwu's mobility remains valuable alongside those active guards.

The Hawks also added Luguentz Dort, Aaron Wiggins and Dorian Finney-Smith to deepen the defensive options against strong backcourts and bigger wings. Wiggins offers another scoring option without requiring Atlanta to redesign its offense around him. Corey Kispert's shooting and Asa Newell's development give the returning bench different ways to contribute. They added another big guard in No. 8 pick Kingston Flemings, who will need to step up to get minutes. Atlanta is another team that could shock some people in the East, but they might be a big man from getting to the promised land for the first time.

BOSTON CELTICS

EAST | COACH Joe Mazzulla

2025-26 SU 56-26 | ATS 49-33-0

KEY ADDITIONS

Paul George, Mitchell Robinson, Mike Conley

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

Jaylen Brown, Nikola Vučević

SEASON OUTLOOK

Boston shocked the basketball world with the trade of Brown to rival Philadelphia.

That means this is Jayson Tatum's team again. Derrick White becomes especially important as a secondary creator, perimeter defender and steady decision-maker. Payton Pritchard supplies shooting and scoring when possessions stall, while Sam Hauser stretches defenses without needing

many touches. But PG13 is the key as long as he can stay healthy. He is an experienced scorer who can work alongside Tatum or run the team as a point forward. He also is a strong defender though age at 36 is a concern. Mike Conley, another aging player, can organize possessions and help younger players, while Mitchell Robinson adds offensive rebounding and rim protection. He's another good pickup if he can stay healthy and avoid the free throw line. No. 27 pick Chris Cenac Jr. is a longer-term frontcourt investment. Boston's success depends on replacing Brown's scoring collectively while preserving defensive cohesion.

BROOKLYN NETS

EAST | COACH Jordi Fernández

2025-26 SU 20-62 | ATS 38-43-1

KEY ADDITIONS

Julius Randle, Keon Ellis, Moritz Wagner

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

Nic Claxton, Ziaire Williams

SEASON OUTLOOK

Julius Randle gives a young team a reliable interior scorer and passer. Losing Claxton removes its best rim protector, making the paint defense uncertain. Michael Porter Jr. supplies the shooting that can keep Brooklyn competitive even while its young guards develop. His size allows him to finish over defenders and Randle will take some pressure off of him. Big guard Egor Dëmin, Nolan Traoré and Ben Saraf give Brooklyn several young ballhandlers to evaluate. Noah Clowney, Danny Wolf and Day'Ron Sharpe make frontcourt development another major storyline. No. 6 pick Mikel Brown Jr. becomes a major part of the backcourt's future. His progress should be judged by decision-making and efficiency as well as scoring. No. 28 pick Joshua Jefferson adds another young frontcourt option who can pass the ball. Brooklyn has more offensive possibilities, but their defense may not be where it needs to be to take a big jump.

CHARLOTTE HORNETS

EAST | COACH Charles Lee

2025-26 SU 44-38 | ATS 50-32-0

KEY ADDITIONS

Naz Reid, Grayson Allen, Royce O'Neale, Dennis Schröder

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

LaMelo Ball, Miles Bridges, Josh Green, Tre Mann

SEASON OUTLOOK

Wings Brandon Miller and Kon Knueppel become even more important following LaMelo Ball's departure.

Miller gives Charlotte a wing who can create shots, while Knueppel's shooting can punish defenses that collapse into the lane. Returning guard Coby White provides scoring and another player capable of initiating offense. Ryan Kalkbrenner and Moussa Diabaté give the frontcourt different interior options. Enter Naz Reid, who an elite backup center in Minnesota and now can play starter's minutes in Charlotte. He's a skilled big man who can score away from the basket, creating room for the guards and wings. Grayson Allen's shooting and Royce O'Neale's defensive versatility fit a roster that needs dependable contributions around its younger players. Dennis Schröder supplies experienced ballhandling and pressure on opposing guards. No. 14 pick Hannes Steinbach adds another frontcourt prospect, while No. 18 pick Christian Anderson enters the competition for guard minutes. The roster has useful shooting throughout, but replacing Ball's ability to create easy opportunities will require shared responsibility rather than a single replacement. But there also should be some improvement on the defensive end with him gone.

CHICAGO BULLS

EAST | COACH Tiago Splitter

2025-26 SU 31-51 | ATS 39-43-0

KEY ADDITIONS

Nic Claxton, Norman Powell, Buddy Hield

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

Anfernee Simons, Collin Sexton, Nick Richards

SEASON OUTLOOK

New head coach Splitter, who took over a difficult situation in Portland, now goes to another young and rebuilding team in Chicago.

Nic Claxton upgrades rim protection and Norman Powell offer efficient scoring.

TEAM PREVIEWS

continued from page 3

Chicago's defense could improve faster than its half-court offense. Josh Giddey has star potential and remains central to Chicago's offensive organization. His passing can create opportunities for cutters and shooters, but the Bulls need lineups that give him room to operate. Matas Buzelis is an important returning developmental player because his progress can influence both the offense and the team's ability to defend with size. Patrick Williams, Isaac Okoro and Jalen Smith provide additional options, though Chicago needs more reliable contributions across that group. Nic Claxton changes the interior defense with his mobility and ability to finish near the rim. Norman Powell gives Chicago an established scorer, while Buddy Hield adds shooting that should help discourage opponents from packing the paint. Claxton's limited shooting makes the selection of the other four players especially important. But there not a more talented option than No. 4 pick 6-10 Caleb Wilson, who is a major investment in the frontcourt's future. His athleticism is off the chart and he showed some perimeter shooting in the summer that wasn't evident at Chapel Hill. No. 15 pick Dailyn Swain adds another young wing. The Bulls' challenge is turning their collection of young forwards and veteran specialists into a coherent rotation.

CLEVELAND CAVALIERS

EAST | COACH Kenny Atkinson

2025-26 SU 52-30 | ATS 33-49-0

KEY ADDITIONS

Peyton Watson, Mario Hezonja, Khalifa Diop

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

Max Strus, Dean Wade, Dennis Schröder

SEASON OUTLOOK

Donovan Mitchell and James Harden lead this group that will need to show more in the playoffs because the Eastern Conference is not getting any easier. The key is Evan Mobley's development as he's just 24, but needs to continue to improve and add toughness. Jarrett Allen supplies screening, finishing and interior defense. The Cavs made an underrated pick up of wing Peyton Watson, who adds length and defensive versatility on the wing. Mario Hezonja offers another scoring option, and Khalifa Diop adds frontcourt depth. The starting lineup is

strong, but does the supporting cast supply enough shooting and perimeter defense around its established stars?

DALLAS MAVERICKS

WEST | COACH Dusty May

2025-26 SU 26-56 | ATS 36-46-0

KEY ADDITIONS

Santi Aldama, Zaccharie Risacher, Marcus Sasser

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

Klay Thompson, Khriston Middleton, Marvin Bagley III

SEASON OUTLOOK

Former Michigan coach Dusty May makes the jump to the NBA. He'll have a rising star in 6-11 (he grew) Cooper Flagg, who has more young forward talent beside him in Risacher, while Aldama adds skill and size. Dallas still needs dependable perimeter shooting after Klay Thompson's exit. The pace of Flagg's development and Kyrie Irving's health will swing the team rating. P.J. Washington and Naji Marshall provide experienced forward support, while Dereck Lively II and Daniel Gafford give Dallas interior finishing options. They also drafted a Michigan player in No. 9 pick Morez Johnson Jr., who joins a competitive frontcourt, who can rebound and defend at 6-10. No. 25 pick Sergio De LaRrea, acquired through draft trades, adds another young perimeter prospect. Dallas has accumulated promising pieces that should help them make a nice jump, but are they ready to explode in the always-tough West?

DENVER NUGGETS

WEST | COACH David Adelman

2025-26 SU 54-28 | ATS 44-38-0

KEY ADDITIONS

DeMar DeRozan, Marvin Bagley III

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

Peyton Watson, Tim Hardaway Jr.

SEASON OUTLOOK

Nikola Jokić is one of one. He's the closest thing to 7-3 Arvydas Sabonis in his prime, but is about four inches shorter and a lot less athletic. He's not only the best passing big man ever, but might go down as one of the best passers ever when it's all said and done. But he needs more help for the Nuggets to get another ring. Jamal Murray and Aaron Gordon can help carry the load but there are questions after them. Christian Braun and Cameron

Johnson are going to need to be more than supplemental players. The addition of the aging DeMar DeRozan can't hurt though his game has never translated to the three-point line. Marvin Bagley III provides another frontcourt option, and Alpha Diallo adds wing depth. Denver's offensive talent is strong, but defensively, they have to replace Watson and must provide enough defense and dependable production when Jokić rests.

DETROIT PISTONS

EAST | COACH J.B. Bickerstaff

2025-26 SU 60-22 | ATS 44-38-0

KEY ADDITIONS

John Collins, Isaiah Joe, Gary Harris

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

Isaiah Stewart, Tobias Harris, Caris LeVert

SEASON OUTLOOK

Cade Cunningham has become an MVP candidate and got some much-needed perimeter help this season in the addition of Joe and Harris. Jalen Duren, with his new deal, gives the Pistons a strong interior partner, while Ausar Thompson supplies defensive activity and transition opportunities. Ron Holland's development can add another athletic wing to that foundation. The challenge is ensuring those lineups have enough shooting to prevent defenses from crowding Cunningham. John Collins adds frontcourt scoring and another finishing target to replace the aging Tobias Harris. Isaiah Joe and Taurean Prince provide perimeter options that can help stretch the defense. Returning shooters Duncan Robinson and Kevin Huerter can help as shooters off the bench. They also added Ebuka Okorie with the 17th pick. He's 19-year old point guard from Stanford who could play some backup point guard. But for this team to go forward, they'll need to help out Cunningham and allow Thompson, Duren and the young wings to continue to flourish defensively.

TEAM PREVIEWS

GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS

WEST | COACH Steve Kerr
2025-26 SU 37-45 | ATS 35-47-0
KEY ADDITIONS

Georges Niang, Brandon Williams

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

Quinten Post

SEASON OUTLOOK

Stephen Curry remains the player opponents must account for on every possession, including when he does not have the ball. However, as he approaches 40 (he's 38), the injuries are likely to mount. Draymond Green's passing and defense is stellar. Jimmy Butler just turned 38 and is coming off ACL surgery in early 2026 so he's not likely to play until 2027. That's a huge loss because he can still fill up the stat sheet. To make matters worse, 7-3 Kristaps Porziņģis will miss training camp and the preseason due to an undisclosed health issue. He's one of their younger key players at 31. That means Brandin Podziemski and Moses Moody need to carry more responsibility around the veteran core. De'Anthony Melton, Gary Payton II and Al Horford offer additional defensive and positional flexibility. Newcomer Georges Niang can supply shooting, while Brandon Williams gives the backcourt another ballhandling option. No. 11 pick Yaxel Lendeborg is the most significant rookie addition. He's a big man who can create for others and is 24 years old. The roster has considerable experience, but a strong season also requires the younger supporting players to reduce the workload on its established stars, who are beginning to struggle to stay healthy.

HOUSTON ROCKETS

WEST | COACH Ime Udoka
2025-26 SU 52-30 | ATS 36-46-0
KEY ADDITIONS

Marcus Smart, Bogdan Bogdanović

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

Dorian Finney-Smith, Josh Okogie

SEASON OUTLOOK

Kevin Durant is still one of the top scorers in the game, but the key here is the return of point guard Fred VanVleet, after missing last season due to an injury. The veteran knows how to run a team. Alperen Şengün supplies another

offensive hub through his interior scoring and passing. Amen Thompson's athleticism and defensive versatility create opportunities to play faster, while Jabari Smith Jr. and Tari Eason give Houston size around those central players. Reed Sheppard's development is important to the backcourt's long-term balance.

Marcus Smart adds another experienced defender and organizer. He can help Houston operate more effectively in difficult stretches with his toughness. Bogdan Bogdanović provides a different skill set through perimeter shooting and secondary creation. No. 31 pick Bruce Thornton is a tough-minded older rookie who might be able to play right away. Houston's frontcourt depth gives it multiple ways to handle opponents, but the offensive fit remains important. The Rockets could go far as long as VanVleet can keep the ball moving and deliver offense when needed.

INDIANA PACERS

EAST | COACH Rick Carlisle
2025-26 SU 19-63 | ATS 40-42-0
KEY ADDITIONS

Kelly Oubre Jr., Larry Nance Jr.

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

Kam Jones, Micah Potter

SEASON OUTLOOK

Are the Pacers' back? Tyrese Haliburton's return after missing last season changes Indiana's outlook after a disastrous 2025-26 season. His passing and ability to advance the ball can create better opportunities for Pascal Siakam, Andrew Nembhard and the surrounding shooters. Siakam remains a dependable scorer, while Nembhard can organize possessions and handle difficult defensive assignments. Aaron Nesmith, Obi Toppin and T.J. McConnell give Indiana familiar supporting pieces. Jarace Walker has an opportunity to retain a meaningful role even as the team regains its primary creator. The biggest addition was the underrated 6-11 Ivica Zubac, acquired last season from the Clippers, who provides an interior partner whose screening and finishing can complement Haliburton. Veteran wing Kelly Oubre Jr. adds wing scoring and lengthy defense, while Larry Nance Jr. gives the frontcourt another versatile veteran.

LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS

WEST | COACH Tyrone Lue
2025-26 SU 42-40 | ATS 42-40-0
KEY ADDITIONS

Brandon Ingram, Grady Dick, Max Strus

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

Kawhi Leonard, John Collins, Bogdan Bogdanović

SEASON OUTLOOK

The Clippers are in disarray, for a change, after losing Leonard and five first-round picks after a yearlong investigation into salary cap circumvention involving Leonard. Darius Garland will need to take over this team on offense. His ability to initiate possessions is important to a roster that now distributes scoring responsibility across several perimeter players. Bradley Beal supplies another offensive option when healthy (he's averaged playing less than 40 games per season over his last three years) while Kris Dunn and Derrick Jones Jr. offer defensive support. Brook Lopez provides an experienced interior presence and a different offensive profile from a traditional rim-running center. Brandon Ingram was a solid pickup, who can create shots against set defenses. They picked him up along with Grady Dick and Max Strus, to add shooting. Rui Hachimura is an underrated forward who can score from outside and inside the arc. No. 5 pick Keaton Wagler gives the team an important young perimeter prospect, who is going to get a chance to play. The Clippers could possibly compete in the West because Ty Lue tends to get the best out of his team. But Garland needs to stay healthy.

LOS ANGELES LAKERS

WEST | COACH JJ Redick
2025-26 SU 53-29 | ATS 46-36-0
KEY ADDITIONS

Walker Kessler, Quentin Grimes, Collin Sexton

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

LeBron James, Deandre Ayton, Rui Hachimura

SEASON OUTLOOK

Luka Dončić is now the clear face of the Lakers' offense and team. He should be fine playing next to Austin Reaves, whose scoring and secondary playmaking remain essential. Both suffered injuries last season, they both

TEAM PREVIEWS

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can pass it and both can score the ball with anybody in the league. It's the defensive part that's a concern. Returning forwards Jake LaRavia, Jarred Vanderbilt and Dalton Knecht offer different combinations of defense, size and shooting.

The addition of big man Walker Kessler gives Dončić a new interior finishing partner and supplies rim protection at the other end. Quentin Grimes can contribute shooting and perimeter defense, while Matisse Thybulle offers a specialist for difficult defensive assignments. Collin Sexton adds another attacking guard. No. 24 pick Cameron Carr, acquired through a draft trade, adds a young perimeter player to develop. The Lakers must establish a rotation and bench when Dončić sits, making Reaves and Sexton particularly important. But the key is on the defensive end and of course, health.

MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES

WEST | COACH **Tuomas Iisalo**

2025-26 SU 25-57 | ATS 37-45-0

KEY ADDITIONS

Jerami Grant, Isaiah Stewart, D'Angelo Russell, Jordan Hawkins

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

Ja Morant, Santi Aldama, Kentavious Caldwell-Pope

SEASON OUTLOOK

Memphis has moved on from Ja Morant, which could be addition by subtraction, considering the fact that he wasn't on the court a lot in the last three seasons due to injuries and a suspension. In fact, he played a total of 79 regular season games in that span. While they are nowhere near as talented, Scotty Pippen Jr., Cam Spencer and Ty Jerome supply some perimeter options. Zach Edey gives the team interior size, and wings Cedric Coward, Jaylen Wells and GG Jackson provide different developmental possibilities. Jerami Grant comes from Portland to add an experienced scoring forward who can help stabilize possessions when the young players struggle. Isaiah Stewart, from Detroit, supplies physical frontcourt play, while Quinten Post offers a different offensive look through his ability to operate away from the basket. Those additions give Memphis more lineup choices, but the team still needs dependable guard creation. Edey will

play with another young big man in No. 3 pick Cam Booser, who is the future of the team. Spacing might be an issue though Booser has some three-point ability. They also added No. 21 pick Karim López, acquired through a draft trade. The Grizzlies have promising size and depth, but it may take some time for this team to become a contender again.

MIAMI HEAT

EAST | COACH **Erik Spoelstra**

2025-26 SU 43-39 | ATS 46-36-0

KEY ADDITIONS

Giannis Antetokounmpo, Bobby Portis, Klay Thompson

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

Tyler Herro, Jaime Jaquez Jr., Kel'el Ware

SEASON OUTLOOK

Giannis gives Miami some hope as a title contender.

The key is how he'll play alongside Bam Adebayo, who is a similar player but will need to play more on the perimeter. Both can rebound and dominate the paint on both ends of the floor. Andrew Wiggins provides another experienced wing, while Davion Mitchell supplies perimeter defense and ballhandling at the point. Nikola Jović and Pelle Larsson are returning players whose development can help the supporting rotation. With Herro gone, the Heat get even older with Klay Thompson and Tim Hardaway Jr, arriving, while Bobby Portis adds frontcourt scoring. Nick Richards gives Miami another interior option. The Heat have a powerful frontcourt, but their best offensive combinations must supply enough shooting to prevent opponents from concentrating entirely on the paint.

MILWAUKEE BUCKS

EAST | COACH **Taylor Jenkins**

2025-26 SU 32-50 | ATS 36-46-0

KEY ADDITIONS

Tyler Herro, Jaime Jaquez Jr., Kel'el Ware

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

Giannis Antetokounmpo, Bobby Portis, Gary Harris

SEASON OUTLOOK

This is a new identity after Giannis and a rebuilding one.

Herro supplies primary perimeter scoring, Jaquez brings secondary creation and Ware gives the frontcourt upside. But the key will be center Myles Turner, who can score inside and out,

but must provide more interior scoring. Kyle Kuzma remains a scoring option, while Ryan Rollins, Kevin Porter Jr. and Gary Trent Jr. give the backcourt several possibilities. The team needs more consistent offensive organization across that group. Caris LeVert adds another creator, and Kasparas Jakucionis provides additional backcourt upside. No. 10 pick Brayden Burries and No. 13 pick Nate Ament, acquired from Miami, give Milwaukee two prominent young prospects for the future. Milwaukee has more distributed offensive responsibility, but replacing Giannis' defense and ability to create easy points in the paint will require improvement from several players to compete for a play-in game.

MINNESOTA TIMBERWOLVES

WEST | COACH **Chris Finch**

2025-26 SU 49-33 | ATS 36-46-0

KEY ADDITIONS

LaMelo Ball, Jonathan Kuminga, Trey Lyles

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

Julius Randle, Naz Reid, Mike Conley

SEASON OUTLOOK

This will be one of the most interesting teams in the West.

Anthony Edwards remains Minnesota's primary scorer and the player most capable of changing a game through individual offense. But can he play with LaMelo Ball, who also needs the rock to create plays? Rudy Gobert anchors the interior defense, while Jaden McDaniels handles difficult perimeter assignments. Donte DiVincenzo is coming off an Achilles' injury and probably won't play until early 2027. Ayo Dosunmu can play the point off the bench. Terrence Shannon Jr. and Jaylen Clark offer additional development possibilities. LaMelo Ball adds a different type of creation through his passing and willingness to initiate offense quickly but the defensive end has never been his forte'. Having Gobert to protect the rim will help. Jonathan Kuminga adds another attacking forward, while Trey Lyles supplies a frontcourt option with a different offensive profile. Minnesota's challenge is maintaining frontcourt production after losing Julius Randle and Naz Reid. That's where Kuminga comes in and he should be able to play alongside Jaden McDaniels.

TEAM PREVIEWS

NEW ORLEANS PELICANS

WEST | COACH Jamahl Mosley

2025-26 SU 26-56 | ATS 45-36-1

KEY ADDITIONS

Bennedict Mathurin, Trendon Watford

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

Jordan Hawkins, Kevon Looney, Micah Peavy

SEASON OUTLOOK

Bennedict Mathurin offers downhill scoring on a team looking for more reliable offense.

This is a team that seems to be in perpetual rebuild and transition. At some point, Zion Williamson has to become a star or it's time to move on. His ability to attack the basket can create open shots for Trey Murphy III and force opponents into difficult defensive choices. Herb Jones provides crucial perimeter defense. Dejounte Murray and Jordan Poole can score and create some though both are probably not the future. Returning youngsters Jeremiah Fears and Derik Queen deserve substantial attention. Their progress can influence how the Pelicans distribute possessions between development and veteran-led offense. New Orleans has several offensive options, but the pieces must complement one another. Spacing around Williamson, dependable guard decisions and defensive rebounding are more important than simply assembling a long list of potential scorers. Having a draft pick this season would have been nice so last year's picks Fears and Queen need to keep improving.

NEW YORK KNICKS

EAST | COACH Mike Brown

2025-26 SU 53-29 | ATS 43-39-0

KEY ADDITIONS

Andre Drummond

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

Mitchell Robinson, Jeremy Sochan, Ariel Hukporti

SEASON OUTLOOK

The defending champions retain Jalen Brunson and much of their core, but it's not easy to repeat.

The Knicks do have one of the best starting lineups in the NBA. Karl-Anthony Towns supplies frontcourt scoring and shooting that can pull opposing centers away from the basket. OG Anunoby and Mikal Bridges provide size and defensive versatility on the perimeter, while Josh Hart contributes rebounding, movement

and connective passing. Anunoby's defense and toughness was crucial to New York winning its first title in 53 years.

Miles McBride offers defense and shooting, while Jose Alvarado can supply pressure and energy off the bench. Jordan Clarkson gives the Knicks another scoring option, although reserve possessions still need clear organization. Andre Drummond replaces Robinson and adds rebounding and interior depth, but is not the rim protector that Robinson is. The Knicks' strongest advantage is their chemistry and championship pedigree.

OKLAHOMA CITY THUNDER

WEST | COACH Mark Daigneault

2025-26 SU 64-18 | ATS 39-43-0

KEY ADDITIONS

None in free agency

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

Luguentz Dort, Aaron Wiggins, Isaiah Joe

SEASON OUTLOOK

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander and the core remain formidable, but three valuable perimeter rotation players are gone. They had to rely on the draft to get better. Oklahoma City posted the best record in the league, that was despite wing Jalen Williams missing most of the season. Chet Holmgren gives Oklahoma City shooting, finishing and interior defense, but he has to get over Wemby and the Spurs' mental block. Isaiah Hartenstein offers a more physical frontcourt option. Together, those players allow the Thunder to adjust their style without abandoning their central strengths. The good news is that they add some size in 7-3 Spanish center Aday Mara out of Michigan to provide some more rim protection and bench help.

Cason Wallace and Alex Caruso become especially important in the perimeter rotation following the departures of established wings. Ajay Mitchell, Jared McCain and Nikola Topić give the backcourt additional players whose development can influence the depth of the offense. The Thunder retain a strong core. Their main task is getting by the Spurs and the rest of the West.

ORLANDO MAGIC

EAST | COACH Sean Sweeney

2025-26 SU 45-37 | ATS 38-44-0

KEY ADDITIONS

Nikola Vučević

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

Moritz Wagner

SEASON OUTLOOK

This is a team that you just wait to explode, but their stars need to stay healthy.

Paolo Banchero and Franz Wagner can attack with size, but the offense works best when they receive the ball in advantageous positions rather than having to manufacture every possession. Desmond Bane is a shooter who can create some, while Jalen Suggs adds pressure at the other end and is an outstanding defender. The question is whether they have the talent to compete in the East with very few additions. Nikola Vučević returns to the Magic to give them an experienced scorer and passer to the frontcourt. He can help reserve lineups generate offense, although Orlando must account for defensive matchups when selecting his minutes. Orlando's improvement depends primarily on its returning perimeter players becoming more efficient together and staying healthy (especially Franz Wagner), with Vučević supplying another way to solve difficult half-court possessions

PHILADELPHIA 76ERS

EAST | COACH Nick Nurse

2025-26 SU 45-37 | ATS 43-39-0

KEY ADDITIONS

Jaylen Brown, LeBron James, Anfernee Simons, Dean Wade, Kentavious Caldwell-Pope

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

Paul George, Quentin Grimes, Kelly Oubre Jr., Andre Drummond

SEASON OUTLOOK

If you think the LA Rams had a great offseason...meet the Sixers.

Now, that doesn't automatically mean championship, but in terms of names, Philly has come to play with incredible additions. Tyrese Maxey remains central to Philadelphia's offense through his speed, scoring and ability to force defensive rotations. Joel Embiid supplies interior scoring and defensive size when available, which is always the issue with his banged-up knees. VJ Edgecombe's

TEAM PREVIEWS

continued from page 7

development is particularly important because the Sixers need younger players who can contribute around their veteran stars. But it starts with the addition of Jaylen Brown, which shook the NBA because it was a rare Divisional deal. Brown adds another major scorer who can attack from the wing. LeBron James brings passing and the ability to organize possessions as a point forward, giving Philadelphia several potential offensive initiators. The challenge is distributing responsibility so that Maxey's pace, Brown's attacking game and Embiid's interior offense support one another. But that's not all. They also added a scorer in Anfernee Simons, who supplies additional scoring, while Dean Wade and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope offer useful supporting skills as defenders. No. 22 pick Labaron Philon Jr. can develop behind the guards but his scoring ability could get him on the floor sooner than later.

PHOENIX SUNS

WEST | COACH Jordan Ott

2025-26 SU 45-37 | ATS 47-35-0

KEY ADDITIONS

Miles Bridges, Luke Kennard

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

Grayson Allen, Royce O'Neale

SEASON OUTLOOK

Miles Bridges comes over from Charlotte to add scoring and Kennard is a shooting specialist, but Allen and O'Neale were useful floor spacers and connectors. Devin Booker remains Phoenix's primary offensive star and the player who can create quality shots against difficult coverage. Jalen Green supplies another attacking guard, while Dillon Brooks gives the perimeter a physical defensive presence. Mark Williams provides interior finishing and rebounding. Ryan Dunn's development matters because Phoenix needs defensive contributions that do not force major offensive compromises. This is such a tough conference and Phoenix has several scoring options; its progress hinges on efficient possession-sharing and a dependable defensive structure around them.

PORTLAND TRAIL BLAZERS

WEST | COACH Micah Nori

2025-26 SU 42-40 | ATS 44-38-0

KEY ADDITIONS

Ja Morant, Jeremy Sochan, Micah Potter

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

Jerami Grant, Kris Murray, Matisse Thybulle

SEASON OUTLOOK

Deni Avdija gives Portland a forward who can rebound, advance the ball and contribute to offensive creation. It will be interesting to see how he plays with Ja Morant, who is a ball dominant player. Toumani Camara supplies valuable perimeter defense, while Donovan Clingan provides interior size and protection. Shaedon Sharpe and Scoot Henderson remain important young players who should keep getting better. Their progress must continue even as the roster gains more established guards. Morant's addition also comes at the point where Damian Lillard's return gives Portland another major scorer and Jrue Holiday provides experienced backcourt support. The roster has considerably more offensive possibility, but clear roles are essential to preventing the veteran additions from crowding out the younger players or weakening the defense. They'll go as far as their defense will take them.

SACRAMENTO KINGS

WEST | COACH Doug Christie

2025-26 SU 22-60 | ATS 36-46-0

KEY ADDITIONS

Ben Simmons

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

DeMar DeRozan, Devin Carter

SEASON OUTLOOK

Domantas Sabonis remains Sacramento's star through his screening, rebounding and passing. Zach LaVine supplies scoring and perimeter shooting, while Malik Monk gives the team another creator. Keegan Murray and De'Andre Hunter are important because the Kings need size and defensive contributions around their offensive players. Nique Clifford and Maxime Raynaud provide returning development opportunities. Ben Simmons has returned to the league and is worth taking a chance on since he's 6-10. He adds passing and defensive versatility, but his fit requires careful attention to spacing. Playing him with Sabonis can put considerable

pressure on the other three players to stretch the defense. No. 7 pick Darius Acuff Jr. gives the Kings an important young guard to develop. He should receive opportunities to organize possessions, with expectations extending beyond scoring totals. No. 29 pick Alex Karaban, acquired through a trade from UConn, adds another forward option. Sacramento is back on the clock with a team that is going to struggle so the key is to establish the younger players and trade some of the vets at some point.

SAN ANTONIO SPURS

WEST | COACH Mitch Johnson

2025-26 SU 62-20 | ATS 46-34-2

KEY ADDITIONS

Tobias Harris

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

No major veteran departure listed in NBA offseason tracker

SEASON OUTLOOK

Victor Wembanyama changes both ends of the floor through his interior defense and offensive versatility. His presence allows San Antonio to consider combinations that would be difficult for other teams to use. De'Aaron Fox supplies experienced guard shotmaking, while Stephon Castle and Dylan Harper give the backcourt substantial size and athleticism. Devin Vassell's shooting and scoring remain important to preventing defenses from concentrating entirely on the paint. Returning forwards Keldon Johnson, Harrison Barnes and Julian Champagnie provide different supporting options. Luke Kornet gives the interior rotation an experienced player who can perform a defined role. They added veteran Tobias Harris, who can finish possessions in iso situations. No. 20 pick Jayden Quaintance and No. 26 pick Tarris Reed Jr., acquired from Denver, deepen the young frontcourt. San Antonio can develop both without immediately depending on them. The most important question is who the Spurs bounce back from the loss in the Finals and whether they can continue improving in the tough Western Conference.

TEAM PREVIEWS

TORONTO RAPTORS

EAST | COACH Darko Rajaković
2025-26 SU 46-36 | ATS 42-40-0
KEY ADDITIONS

Kawhi Leonard, Kyle Anderson

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

Brandon Ingram, Grady Dick, Sandro Mamukelashvili

SEASON OUTLOOK

This is very much a sleeper team with Leonard back in the fold. He's still an elite defender and can hit the mid-range as well as anybody. Scottie Barnes is similar to Leonard as an outstanding two-way player who is very versatile. He can influence possessions through passing, rebounding and defense, but the Raptors also need efficient scoring around him. Immanuel Quickley provides guard creation, RJ Barrett attacks from the wing, and 7-foot Jakob Poeltl supplies screening and interior support. Kyle Anderson adds another skilled passer, although lineups containing several players who prefer operating inside the arc need careful spacing. Toronto has considerable size and passing ability. Its most useful improvement would be a more reliable supply of perimeter shooting and half-court scoring around Barnes and Poeltl.

UTAH JAZZ

WEST | COACH Will Hardy
2025-26 SU 22-60 | ATS 41-41-0
KEY ADDITIONS

Josh Green, Josh Okogie, Jaxson Hayes

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

Walker Kessler, Cody Williams

SEASON OUTLOOK

Losing Walker Kessler makes rim protection and defensive rebounding the central concerns. However, this is about the pick of Darryn Peterson, who might be a steal at 2. He's an offensive machine at 6-6 and is one of the purest offensive players in the draft. However, he struggled with calf issues at Kansas last season. But they also have Ace Bailey, a 6-10 wing, who can also score the ball along with 6-11 Lauri Markkanen so they shouldn't have too many issues on offense. Josh Green and Josh Okogie can guard the perimeter, but neither directly replaces that interior value. Then you add 6-11 Jaren Jackson Jr. and Keyonte George at the point, so their tanking days are over. Isaiah Collier, Kyle Filipowski and Brice Sensabaugh give the Jazz additional young players whose progress can influence the rotation. The pairing of Peterson with George could need some time to develop. The central challenge is selecting combinations that develop Peterson and Bailey while preserving enough shooting, defensive rebounding and structure to support Markkanen and Jackson.

WASHINGTON WIZARDS

EAST | COACH Brian Keefe
2025-26 SU 17-65 | ATS 33-49-0
KEY ADDITIONS

Deandre Ayton, Khris Middleton, Tre Mann

KEY SUBTRACTIONS

D'Angelo Russell, Jaden Hardy, Cam Whitmore

SEASON OUTLOOK

Washington won 17 games last season, but they were in tank mode, Trae Young played in just five games and Anthony Davis did not play after acquiring him from Dallas. Davis is still an elite big man, but he needs to play most of the 82 games to get his last big contract. Alex Sarr is another big man who can play center or power forward with Davis, but the key is the young core of rookie A.J. Dybantsa, Kyshawn George, Tre Johnson, Bilal Coulibaly, Bub Carrington and Will Riley, who will need to take a large jump in order for the team to get to the playoffs. They look like a potential play-in team, assuming Young and Davis can mesh with the rest of the team and they can stay reasonably healthy.

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SEASON PICKS & PREDICTIONS

INDIVIDUAL AWARD PREDICTIONS AND ODDS

(odds from DraftKings)

REGULAR SEASON MVP

Favorite-**Victor Wembanyama**, San Antonio +210

Pick: **Luka Doncic**, LA Lakers +550
He's in shape and LeBron James is gone. If he stays on the court, Doncic will average 46 points per game, while averaging near a triple-double since he should have the ball in his hands most of the time.

Longshot: **Jayson Tatum**, Boston +1800

Jaylen Brown went to Philadelphia with LeBron James so it's Tatum's team now. He's also fully recovered from the Achilles' tendon injury.

MIP (MOST IMPROVED PLAYER)

Pick: **Dylan Harper**, San Antonio +900 is the favorite and after his performance in the Finals, it's hard not to believe that he's going to become an elite player this season for the Spurs with his size and talent.

Longshot: **Collin Murray-Broyles**, Toronto +2200 is an undersized big man with very long arms who is relentless and fearless around the basket. With Kawhi Leonard back, the Raptors could be scary in the East.

DEFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Favorite-**Victor Wembanyama**, San Antonio -360 He's almost a lock, but there's no value in this pick.

Pick: **Ausar Thompson** +2500.

All-first team defender for the Pistons.

One of the premier defenders and while it's tough to be a lock-down defender in today's NBA, he might be the closest.

Longshot: **Cooper Flagg**, Dallas +25000. He's reportedly now over 6-11 in shots and 6-10.5 in bare feet at close to 230 pounds. With Kyrie Irving taking over most of the ballhandling duties, Flagg can now concentrate more on his defense and play some both forward spots along with even some small ball center.

COACH OF THE YEAR

Pick: **Erik Spoelstra**, Miami +1200.

For some reason, this feels like a comeback year for the Heat with the addition of Giannis Antetokounmpo, but they also picked up Klay Thompson and Tim Hardaway Jr. Sure, they are old, but Coach Spo is one of the best coaches in dealing with personalities.

PLAYOFF PICKS

NBA FINALS WINNER/WESTERN CONFERENCE WINNER

San Antonio Spurs Finals +270/WC +160

The young team finally realizes that winning the Western Conference finals doesn't mean as much as beating the Eastern Conference champ for the NBA title. Right now, they own the Thunder in terms of matchups and Wemby owns Chet Holmgren, normally a very good player unless he plays the Spurs.

EASTERN CONFERENCE WINNER

Philadelphia +380

LeBron James is a fourth option on a team with Jaylen Brown, Tyrese Maxey and Joel Embiid. James and Embiid will likely miss 20-25 games minimum due to age and bad knees. But the 76ers have depth and they also have an explosive young guard in VJ Edgecombe, who is their fifth option when everyone is healthy.

REGULAR SEASON WINS

OKC Thunder Under 62.5 -110

San Spurs Over 60.5 +100

NY Knicks Over 52.5 +100

Boston Over 51.5 +100

Philadelphia Over 51.5 -105

Detroit Under 49.5 -115

Denver Under 48.5 -110

Minnesota Over 48.5 +105

Cleveland Under 47.5 +100

Houston Over 47.5 -105

Toronto Over 46.5 -105

Miami Under 45.5 +100

LA Lakers Under 45.5 -120

Indiana Under 43.5 -105

Orlando Under 43.5 -105

Atlanta Over 43.5 -105

Portland Over 41.5 -120

Phoenix Under 40.5 -110

Charlotte Under 39.5 -120

Golden State Over 38.5 +100

Utah Under 36.5 +100

Washington Over 34.5 -105

Dallas Under 33.5 -115

Memphis Under 28.5 +100

LA Clippers Over 28.5 -105

Chicago Under 28.5 +100

New Orleans Under 28.5 -105

Milwaukee Under 25.5 -110

Brooklyn Over 23.5 -120

Sacramento Under 20.5 -115



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2025-26 FINAL CONFERENCE STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

#	TEAM	SU	ATS	O/U	HOME	AWAY	CONF	DIV
1	Detroit Pistons	60-22	44-38-0	38-43-1	31-9	28-13	39-13	12-4
2	Boston Celtics	56-26	49-33-0	30-52-0	30-11	26-15	36-16	10-6
3	New York Knicks	53-29	43-39-0	37-45-0	30-10	22-19	35-17	14-3
4	Cleveland Cavaliers	52-30	33-49-0	40-42-0	27-14	25-16	33-19	11-5
5	Toronto Raptors	46-36	42-40-0	32-50-0	24-17	22-19	33-19	5-12
6	Atlanta Hawks	46-36	44-38-0	41-41-0	24-17	22-19	27-25	9-7
7	Philadelphia 76ers	45-37	43-39-0	40-42-0	23-18	22-19	27-25	9-7
8	Orlando Magic	45-37	38-44-0	44-38-0	25-15	19-20	26-26	9-8
9	Charlotte Hornets	44-38	50-32-0	31-51-0	21-20	23-18	26-26	11-5
10	Miami Heat	43-39	46-36-0	46-36-0	26-15	17-24	27-25	10-7
11	Milwaukee Bucks	32-50	36-46-0	39-43-0	19-22	13-28	21-31	9-7
12	Chicago Bulls	31-51	39-43-0	38-44-0	18-23	13-28	19-32	4-12
13	Brooklyn Nets	20-62	38-43-1	37-45-0	12-29	8-33	14-37	3-13
14	Indiana Pacers	19-63	40-42-0	41-41-0	11-30	8-33	15-37	4-12
15	Washington Wizards	17-65	33-49-0	47-35-0	11-30	6-35	11-41	2-14

WESTERN CONFERENCE

#	TEAM	SU	ATS	O/U	HOME	AWAY	CONF	DIV
1	OKC Thunder	64-18	39-43-0	43-39-0	34-7	30-10	41-11	12-4
2	San Antonio Spurs	62-20	46-34-2	36-46-0	32-8	29-12	36-16	13-3
3	Denver Nuggets	54-28	44-38-0	52-30-0	28-13	26-15	36-16	11-5
4	LA Lakers	53-29	46-36-0	41-41-0	28-13	25-16	33-19	10-7
5	Houston Rockets	52-30	36-46-0	39-42-1	30-11	22-19	29-23	10-6
6	Minnesota	49-33	36-46-0	37-45-0	26-15	23-18	31-21	9-7
7	Phoenix Suns	45-37	47-35-0	36-46-0	25-16	20-21	29-23	10-7
8	Portland	42-40	44-38-0	42-40-0	24-17	18-23	29-23	7-9
9	LA Clippers	42-40	42-40-0	40-42-0	23-18	19-22	25-27	10-6
10	Golden State	37-45	35-47-0	48-34-0	22-19	15-26	24-28	7-9
11	New Orleans Pelicans	26-56	45-36-1	41-41-0	17-24	9-32	17-34	7-9
12	Dallas Mavericks	26-56	36-46-0	37-45-0	16-25	10-30	14-37	4-12
13	Memphis Grizzlies	25-57	37-45-0	43-39-0	13-27	11-29	19-33	6-10
14	Sacramento Kings	22-60	36-46-0	43-39-0	15-26	7-34	14-38	4-12
15	Utah Jazz	22-60	41-41-0	49-33-0	14-27	8-33	12-40	1-15

SU = straight up. ATS = covers-noncovers-pushes. O/U = oversunders-pushes. Other columns are straight-up records. Home/away splits exclude neutral-site games. Betting records: TeamRankings regular-season data.



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