



NBA PLAYOFF CONTENDERS! WHO WILL BE CROWNED CHAMPS? - BY BENTLEY - GRADE 8



Playoffs Are Here!

Playoff basketball is right around the corner and we are looking at what could be the most interesting playoffs of all time. The Celtics being overtaken by the Cavaliers is something that nobody expected. The Rockets are the two seed, the Lakers have Luka, the Nuggets are the five seed, Shai and the Thunder clinch the one seed, it is going to be an interesting playoff series, and these are the top teams I think will come out on top.

Houston Rockets:

The Houston Rockets this year are probably one of the most impressive teams of year. They have played so well on both sides of the ball and Alpren Segun is really impressing me this year. He has played very well and they have been really efficient this year.

The only reason I do not have the Rockets higher is because they are a very young team and they do not have much playoff experience at all. Give them two more years and they could seriously be the best team in the league.

Cleveland Cavaliers:

The Cleveland Cavaliers had a historic season this year, they are looking like one of the best teams of all time this year, with a very complete offense, and the Defensive Player of the Year in Evan Mobley, they are one of the best all around rosters in the league. Kenny Atkinson, who has proved to be a very good coach has introduced the most improved and evolved drop defense we have ever seen. The way that Atkinson has Mobley slide across the baseline defending the rim is one of the best strategies we have ever seen, plus he can score from every spot on the court. With the depth involving Max Strus and Ty Jerome, the Cavaliers have a great argument to become the 2025 NBA Champions.

Oklahoma City Thunder:

I hate to say it, but the Oklahoma City Thunder are probably the favorites across the league to win the championship. (Never for me, go Celtics.) As well as having the MVP favorite, the Oklahoma City Thunder are dominating the league, and have the best 2-way team in the league. Along with a lot of depth, the Thunder have a fantastic starting lineup.

Chet Holmgren being able to stretch the floor, Lu Dort's lock down defense, and Shai's "scoring" ability. (We all know he spends 90% of his time at the free throw line. He's a merchant.) Mark Diagneault, their coach, has been running a great offense all year, and the Thunder are looking very good with him as the coach. They are very good contenders.





Boston Celtics:

We all know, the Boston Celtics are gonna go back to back, and we can just leave this at the words, "Jayson Tatum." But I need to fill the page, so we are gonna deeply explain why the Celtics are gonna be on top again. The Celtics have one of the deepest rosters we have EVER seen. Every single person on the Celtics can shoot, and play defense. Two lockdown defenders in Jrue Holiday and Derrick White. The most versatile player in the league in Jayson Tatum, and arguably the best all around big man in the league in Kristaps Porzingus, and that is JUST the starting lineup. They have 3 of the top 10 3 point shooters in the league, and the best 6th man in the league. That's not all though, Al Horford, who can play so well at the age of 40 is still helping the Celtics so much. Baylor Scheierman, a rookie, had a breakout stretch towards the end of the season, JD Davison, a deadly piece of the bench, scoring at every level. Neemias Queta and Luke Kornet, being a great big man duo off the bench, the Celtics are such a deep roster.

Joe Mazzula, a very smart coach, uses his pieces so well. He uses Al Horford as a pinch on ball, which confuses every single team, causing turnovers. The positioning he is in makes him still able to rotate off of any screens. Down screens, flare screens, pop screens, any screen he can stay on it all. The mastermind of Joe Mazzula turned a mediocre defensive team into one of the best defenses in the league simply because of his smarts in defensive positioning. It is safe to say that the Celtics are going to go back to back. Oh, and I forgot, they also have last year's finals MVP.

Honorable Mentions: Denver Nuggets & Golden State

Golden State:

This is a pretty controversial mention, with them being the 6th seed, but the Warriors are looking very complete. The Jimmy Butler addition is the boost that they needed and Stephen Curry after the all-star break has been a top 5 player in the league. He is doing phenomenal right now and we all know playoff Steph Curry, unstoppable. In order for the Warriors to stay contenders they need to keep the core healthy and keep Quentin Post healthy.

Denver Nuggets:

Nikola Jokic. Nikola Jokic is arguably already a top 15 player of all time. He is 30 years old, averaging a triple double, and he could do it alone if he needed to. Along with Russell Westbrook who has had a great comeback season, and Michael Porter Jr. still being a great offensive player, the Denver Nuggets have a good say in being contenders for a finals spot. Jokic has proved he can do it before and he can do it again.

NBA PLAYOFFS!

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