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**T.E.N Sports NBA Power Rankings**

**By Gary Whittaker**

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1. Detroit Pistons. Not only are the Bad Boys are coming back with the same starting cast that won the championship, but they have improved their support cast. They may not win the most games this year, but they have the best bet (at the start of the season) to win the last.
2. Indiana Pacers. They lost to the Pistons in the Eastern finals. With another year under their belts, and the addition of Stephan Jackson from the Hawks, they may take advantage if some of the Bad Boys end up suspended (assuming Artest can keep his own cool).
3. San Antonio Spurs. Spurs will start the year third on our lists, only because a much stronger Western Conference will shave a few wins off their total this year. Both Ginobili and Parker are improving, while newly acquired Barry can be used to replace either in the event of a cold streak.
4. Phoenix Suns. Imagine a Maverick team that can bang the boards for rebounds. Nash must be drooling to work this high-octane offence with Amare Stoudemire, Shawn Marion and Joe Johnson. And don't worry about Nash tiring himself out. This time, he has the other free-agent acquisition in Quentin Richardson to take care of business while he catches his breath.
5. Sacramento Kings. Well, we have to start this season with what we see on paper. With that philosophy, the Kings round up the last of the elite class of teams this year. At the same time, they are a segway into the holes found in the rest of the league. How will Stojakovic play not that his best friend (Vlade Divac) is wearing a Laker jersey again? Can Webber actually play a full season? Only a breakdown can take this team out of the elite 5.
6. Minnesota Timberwolves. Okay, so they have the most dominant player in the game in K.G (that's right, I said it!). If age and injury to do factor in too greatly, Sprewell and Cassell, with a return to form from Szczerbiak could lead this team to their first ever championship. They know it is their last year together, and these hard-nosed players will want to end this season with a ring.
7. Dallas Mavericks. Instead of playing team defence, the Mavs figured the way to go was to add Dampier at center after his breakout season with the Warriors. Despite this move, Dallas figures it's form of defence will be to outscore the opposition into submission, with hopes that Dampier can pick up enough boards to be the difference maker. The problem with a team like the Mavericks is that they cannot surprise you. Too many players will be demanding the ball, and with a new point guard that loves to score his own points, Don Nelson will have a tough time of it this post season.

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8. Houston Rockets. T-Mac will be on a mission and he has the perfect ensemble of role players to complete it. Ward's job is simple, and he is good at it: Pass the ball to T-Mac. Ming and Howard, get the boards and score on 2nd hand chances. There will be a lot of him, as McGrady and Kobe will battle for the most shots taken in the league. Jackson's job will be to hit the open jay when McGrady is double-teamed.

9. Miami Heat. If I thought Shaq would play a full-season, the Heat would be ranked higher. This time, Shaq has got 2 star guards that will listen to him in Eddie Jones and Dwyane Wade (who has to try and avoid the dreaded sophomore jinx), and better support at forward in Haslem and Butler than he had in L.A. Miami traded away their depth to get him, so injuries should take it's toll during the season.

10. Denver Nuggets. 'Melo is back for his sophomore year, and this time he's got Kenyon Martin along side him. Nene was doing the job, but Denver struck gold with this free-agent acquisition. This may help the fragile Camby in the middle, but they did not improve their backcourt. Leonard can shoot, but

does not play D, meanwhile Boykins can give you a spark off the bench, but at 5-5, will not be giving you much help on defence.

11. Los Angeles Lakers. Blah, blah, blah...Kobe...blah, blah blah. Put up, or shut up...yeah, we know. This team will be interesting. When Divac was first in L.A, many questioned his ability. He will now return to the same criticism as he is about 2 years past his expiry date. Lamar Odom may be the key #2 key for this team, but the real factor will be to see if Caron Butler can fulfill the promise he showed when he first broke into the league.

12. Memphis Grizzlies. Basically, they are the New England Patriots of basketball. They reached 50 wins for the first time in their history due to great coaching and T-E-A-M play. They emphasised this point by picking up only a role-player in the off-season. They will, however, need Mike Miller to step it up if they don't want to get swept again in the play-offs.

13. Utah Jazz. The Jazz are back! If Boozer is the real deal, and Arroyo continues to improve, Jazz will be a popular music in the NBA this year. With Mehmet Okur, the Jazz at least have some kind of potential at center, and Kirilenko should have another monster season. They may start the season at unlucky 13, but I think they will finish higher.

14. Boston Celtics. Pierce and Payton along should be enough to win the Atlantic, and they have one of the better benches in the East. Ricky Davis can give average 15-20, McCarty can provide quality minutes, and Marcus Banks may be their point of the future. Mark Blount needs to give them more boards at center, but his FG% is crazy at 56.6%.

15. New York Knicks. They may question Marbury's character, but there is no questioning his talent, as he is arguably the best point guard in the league right now. Allan Houston is the consummate marksman, but if his name's can take the pounding, the newly acquired Jamal Crawford can easily step up, and Penny can fill any gaps left over. K. Thomas and Mohammed will both benefit from Marbury's highlight reel passes inside, with T.Thomas also taking care of business. The emotion shown by the Junk Yard Dog may be enough to even get a rise out of Vin Baker.

16. Golden State Warriors. Speedy Claxton and Derek Fisher can handle an offence. Look for Murphy and Dunleavy to bounce back from an off-year, as they will need to step up and help Foyle at center as they replace the departed Dampier. Richardson is their main go-to guy, and he should continue to get points at SG. In addition to Fisher, this team has strong veteran leadership from Clifford Robinson, Dale Davis and Calbert Cheaney.

17. Portland Trail Blazers. Should Golden State falter, Portland will be there to take their place. Zach Randolph is the undisputed #1 of this team, and they still have Abdur-Rahim coming off the bench!

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Damon Stoudamire can lead this offence, and Theo Ratliff is equally adapt on the defensive side of the game. Throw in Ruben Patterson, and you have a team that can surprise quite a few teams out there.

18. Philadelphia 76ers. No player has more guts than Allen Iverson. You need to break both his arms for him to stay on the bench. The problem is, Allen plays like he needs both arms broken. No matter how cold his shooting is, he will not stop. I do not understand why they just don't surround Iverson with a center, and 3 power forwards. The 76ers apparently thought that giving Allen a 2nd option on offence by way of Glenn Robinson, he might pass the ball a little more. Nope.

19. Los Angeles Clippers. We will be taking a chance with the Clippers. If the Lakers start off slow out of the gate, that may be all the incentive the Clippers need to finally get some respect in L.A. They are now the ONLY team in L.A to have 2 legit 20 point a game guys in Brand and Maggette. Kittles brings leadership and a winning attitude, while Kaman and Jaric are now entering their 2nd and 3rd years respectively. Depth may be an issue over an 82 game season however.

20. Bucks. Michael Redd took his place as a star player last year, to the surprise of many, but there is no reason why that should not continue again this year. Van Horn is also great for regular season points, but if he hits his cold streak, Desmond Mason can easily step in. T.J Ford is a legitimate point guard, but his injury problems may be an issue. If so, expect Mike James to do a decent job as his replacement.

21. Cleveland Cavaliers. King James made everyone on the Cav's better, including Boozer, who they lost unexpectedly in free agency. There is no reason why he cannot do the same thing with 3rd year prospect Drew Gooden. At SF, Ira Newble is only keeping the seat warm for Luke Jackson. If he can maintain the same 3-point % he had in college (44%), he should really help open up the offence for Cleveland this year.

22. New Orleans Hornets. Losing Jamal Mashburn for the season may be a big loss for most teams, but chances are he would have been a major problem, then help, had he played this year. With Mashburn out, Byron Scott may be able to coach these guys into respectability. Baron Davis is insane, and Jamaal Magloire has now become a force at center. P.J Brown is dirty, and capable of manning the PF position.

23. Orlando Magic. It will be interesting to see if Steve Francis can maintain his 16.6 PPG without a big man to creation some lanes for him. Grant Hill will try and start at SF this season (I challenge anyone to bet that he will play more than 60 games this season!). With rookie Dwight Howard also penciled in at starter, it will be up to the reserve core of Battie and Turkoglu to balance out this roster. The South East is very weak, and if Miami catches the injury bug instead of the Magic, they may actually win their division.

24. Washington Wizards. If this isn't the season for Washington to move up the rankings and be a legitimate contender, than Wizards fans should give up and wait for the Expos. The talk right now is for Kwame Brown and Brendan Haywood to step up, all they really need to do is improve defensively and on the boards. Gilbert Arenas will also need to improve on his turnovers, but between himself, Larry Hughes, and newly acquired Antawn Jamison should provide the 1-2-3 punch they need.

25. Chicago Bulls. Despite the emergence of Kirk Hinrich, everyone is wondering if Eddie Curry or Tyson Chandler will blossom this year, after 3 disappointing seasons. People seem to have forgotten that these two guys are still younger than most of the rookies starting this year. This time, they have a full season to learn from Antonio Davis, Othella Harrington and Mutombo and how to be a presence inside. Look for the Bulls to pull it together by the end of the season, and make a run at respectability.

26. Seattle SuperSonics. With Ray Allen and Rayshard Lewis, this team may move up the rankings,

but not much. Best change for this team would be if the feud between Ray Allen and Kobe Bryant sparks some competitive play leading up to, and just after their games with the Lakers.

27. Atlanta Hawks. This team will be interesting, if only to watch their 2 cornerstones develop into NBA players. Josh Childress is a tall SG, and if he can play defence, will cause major problems for his defence match-ups. Josh Smith has been compared to Dominique Wilkins. Playing in Atlanta, that will be a hard image to live up to.

28. New Jersey Nets. Management gave up on them, so why wouldn't Jason Kidd. Jefferson's dunks off a turnover will go down this year.

29. Raptors. The sorry, sad state of affairs brings shame on a franchise whose fans are crazy about basketball. Toronto is one of the most popular places to play in, simply because of the atmosphere. From Mighty Mouse, to Lenny Wilkins, T-Mac to Carter, it is becoming increasingly difficult for Torontonians to keep their love for the Raptors alive.

30. Bobcats. First year for an expansion team. If they beat the Raptors in the standings, I will burn my Raptors jersey.

Gary Whittaker is the editor of <http://www.tenwebzine.com>

Gary Whittaker is the editor of T.E.N Magazine, a social commentary magazine with balls! You can check out more articles at <http://www.tenwebzine.com>

## **NBA Basketball Betting**

**By Sebastien Veilleux**

Do you want to know a little secret? NBA basketball betting can make you a lot of money. NBA basketball is a game that has helped turn sports betting losers into happy sports bettors with larger bankrolls. It's really no secret to winning sports bettors—NBA basketball is the easiest game to make money at. The game itself gives sports bettors plenty of opportunity and the ability to win right up until the end. Unlike Football, Baseball and Hockey, NBA basketball does not have limited scoring. In those other games you might see a handful—or less—of scoring executions per game. If your side gets behind too much, it's over no matter how much time is left. However, in NBA basketball, your team is usually in the game until the end.

Think about it for a moment. If you were to bet a -8 point favorite in football and the game was tied with 6 minutes left and the other team had the ball, would you have a realistic shot at winning? The answer is probably not. However, let's apply the same situation to an NBA basketball game and chop 4 minutes off the clock—so there's 2 minutes left. Would you have a realistic shot at covering the 8 points? You bet! Teams must shoot the ball within 24 seconds and each made basket is worth 2 or 3 points. You would only need 3-4 baskets to make the 8 points. Granted, the other team can score too, but in the NBA, two minutes at the end of a game is an eternity when the teams are close.

Let's look at another scenario. Imagine that it's half time in Basketball and Football, it's the 5th inning in Baseball and it's the 2nd period in hockey. Which of these four following scenarios have the best outcome?

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1.The team you bet on in Baseball is down by 6 runs. 2.The team you bet on in Hockey is down by 3 goals. 3.The team you bet on in Football is down by 21 points. 4.The team you bet on in NBA Basketball is down by 22 points.

The answer, of course, is number four. Scores are hard to come by in the first three options. While comebacks happen sometimes, in the NBA, teams always go on runs. Each season is filled with games where a team was down 10,15, even 20 points and came back to win. There are many other games where the underdog was down by a lot and game back to lose by just a few points. With the NBA, you are almost always in the action right up to the end of the game. Can you say that about any other sport?

Finally, let's talk about NBA basketball totals. You might find that betting the total points in a game (under or over) is your thing and you would not be alone. There is a theory out there that those who can get a feel for totals betting are among the most successful sports bettors alive. You could debate that theory, but it does point out a very important idea. Totals betting in NBA basketball is full of winning opportunity and the sports books don't set them as well as the spread. Will this translate into more money in your pocket? That's for you to decide.

If you are not on fire right now for some NBA basketball action, check your pulse. NBA basketball presents one of the greatest opportunities open to sports bettors. Don't miss out of a great thing. Sports bettors and handicappers look forward to the NBA basketball season every year and now you know why.

Sebastien Veilleux is the founder of

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