

Five Predictions For the 2017-18 NBA Season

The NBA regular season tipped off last week. The NBA has become a sport where the offseason gets more attention than the regular season. With all the blockbuster trades and huge free-agent signings, it is not hard to see why this is the case. Now we get to see how all those offseason moves will pan out. Last season I made five predictions about the NBA and somehow all five ended up happening. I was on cloud nine. My head grew to twice its normal size, I was invincible. I even considered flying to Vegas to put my skills to the test.

Thankfully the Vegas trip never happened. I contented myself instead, by making five NFL predictions for this current season. A couple of those NFL predictions aren't looking so good this point and I have come crashing back down to earth. Apparently, I do not have the gift of prophecy.

Despite my recent failures I have decided to dust myself off and try again. What follows are five predictions for the 2017-2018 NBA season. Maybe I can recapture the magic from last year.

LeBron James will win the league MVP award. I think this will happen for a couple reasons. First, there seems to be a growing sentiment among sports media members that LeBron should win again. He has won the award four times, but his last MVP trophy was in 2013. He is still considered the best player in the world so many find it odd that he has not won this award in four years.[1. I would counter that the guys who have won the last four MVPs each deserved them.] The second reason I think LeBron will win is more practical. No matter how good Golden State is Steph Curry and Kevin Durant will

take votes from each other. Russell Westbrook won last year, but his Thunder team added two all-star players so while the team should be better his numbers will almost certainly go down. The same can be said for last year's runner-up James Harden after the Rockets added a future hall of famer in Chris Paul. Other contenders may emerge, but, if he stays healthy, LeBron's team should win plenty of games and his numbers should be MVP worthy.

The Milwaukee Bucks will win a playoff series. Their last series win was in 2001 so it's been a while. That is all about to change though. With Giannis Antetokounmpo[2. AKA The Greek Freak] they have a top ten player in the league. He may be a top-five player after this season. He should be a household name already, but his name is so hard to say and spell it has held him back.[3. If his name was John Smith and he played for the Knicks or Lakers you would be sick of hearing about him at this point.] He led the team in every major statistical category last season as a 22-year-old. The sky is the limit with this guy and they have built a decent team around him especially if Jabari Parker can come back from injury and regains his previous form. I expect 45-50 wins and a victory in the first round of the playoffs.

The Golden State Warriors will win 70 games this season. Only two teams in history have ever won 70 or more games in a season so to expect that out of the gate is a tall order. With the talent they have and the chemistry built by years of playing together 70 wins a real possibility. I don't think they will chase it like they did two seasons ago when they set the win record at 73, but it is hard to see them losing a lot this season.

Fewer players will sit out games due to rest this season. Despite criticism from some[4. Charles Barkley has apparently reached the stage in life where he complains about everything. Even decisions that make perfect sense. As a long time fan of his, all I can say is "You are better than that Charles!"] the league made a wise decision to spread the regular season out a bit. They are scheduling fewer games on consecutive nights and trying to avoid the dreaded four games in five nights stretches. This should mean coaches won't rest guys as often and it will be more likely that paying fans will get to see teams at full strength. If this works it is a win-win for everyone.

People will still complain when players do rest. I get the complaints, I really do. If someone pays the full price of a ticket only to find out that many of the players they came to see are not playing that can be a real bummer. At the same time, I totally understand why coaches rest players.[5. I find it interesting that in baseball it is a completely accepted part of the sport that players will sit out games to rest during the season, but when NBA teams started doing the same thing it signaled the rapid decline of Western civilization.] Up until about two years ago, the only team that routinely rested healthy players was the San Antonio Spurs. The Spurs also happen to be the most successful NBA franchise of the past two decades winning five championships and being a legitimate contender every year since 1997-1998. It is not a surprise that other teams started copying their techniques and strategies. Even with the schedule changes, this issue won't go away. Coaches will rest guys during the regular season in preparation for the playoffs and sports talk show hosts and fans will complain.

There you have it. I would love to get your feedback on these predictions and hear what others think may happen this season.