

Will The 2024 US Olympic Men's Basketball Team Win It All In Paris?

TEO CHOI

Following harrowing defeats to Canada and Germany in the semi-final and third-fourth-place matches in the 2023 FIBA World Cup, the United States basketball team faced scrutiny and doubt compared to the past. Traditionally, United States basketball was a powerhouse that would undoubtedly win every game. This was especially amplified when, in 1992, FIBA allowed NBA players to participate in the Olympics, creating the 'Dream Team,' starring Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson, and Larry Bird, among others. Now, what prompted this change? In a gold-medal game in the 1988 Seoul Olympics, the Soviets took home the win in a controversially officiated game. In 2008, the United States formed another "super team." Known as the 'Redeem Team,' this talented roster consisted of LeBron James, Carmelo Anthony, and Kobe Bryant. Again, what prompted this? A disappointing bronze medal in the 2004 Athens Olympics. Do we see a pattern now?

After the 2023 FIBA World Cup disappointment, there was a lot of chatter in the media

about whether the United States was 'that' team anymore. It seemed like all the other countries were getting better and younger, while the United States was stagnant. Take Canada, for example. Despite having far fewer NBA players compared to the United States, Canada has produced remarkable upsets. Led by up-and-coming star Shai Gilgeous-Alexander and supported by young players such as RJ Barrett and Dillon Brooks, Canada can be seen as a real threat.

It is obvious that the 2023 FIBA World Cup wasn't the United States' best performance. However, there was somewhat of a reason for this. This roster consisted mostly of young and emerging players. These players include Anthony Edwards, Tyrese Haliburton, Paolo Banchero, Mikal Bridges, and Jalen Brunson. While this team should still be able to do damage on the world stage, it definitely wasn't the best team Team USA could have produced.

Another thing that added fuel to the fire was a press conference by USA track star Noah Lyles. In this press conference, Lyles rebuked the term 'World Champion' used by NBA teams when they

win an NBA title. This debate had been going on for quite a while, but Lyles' comment was the culmination point. His "World champion of what, the United States?" comment ignited a flame in United States Basketball, and then began the assembling of one of the greatest teams ever.

This roster really began with LeBron James. Having rested from the Olympic games since 2012, the thirty-nine-year-old forward began recruiting fellow players for the 2024 Paris Olympic Games. The core of the roster really stems from LeBron James, Stephen Curry,

and Kevin Durant, who, upon hearing each other's commitments, were more than ecstatic. Being thirty-nine, thirty-six, and thirty-five, respectively, the 2024 games are probably their last time representing the country. The talented team also consists of young superstars like Bam Adebayo, Devin Booker, Anthony Edwards, Tyrese Haliburton, and Jayson Tatum, and established stars like Anthony Davis, Jrue Holiday, Joel Embiid, and Kawhi Leonard.

Despite this incredible team, even being coined the 'Avengers,' a gold medal is not guaranteed.

With the NBA becoming more and more global, there is increasing doubt about this team's ability to win it all. With teams like France, headed by Rookie of the Year Victor Wembanyama, Slovenia, represented by European sensation Luka Doncic, Serbia, led by MVP Nikola Jokic, Greece, Canada, and Germany all deemed as contenders, it will be interesting to see how Team USA performs in the upcoming 2024 Paris Olympic Games.



LeBron James celebrates after winning the gold medal in the 2012 London Olympic Games.

Leicester City Promoted To The Premier League After Winning The EFL Championship

ALEX LEE

After spending one year in the Championship, Leicester City will return to the Premier League for the 2024/25 season. Their promotion was made official

when Leeds United took a shocking 4-0 loss to Queens Park Rangers Football Club (QPR) and were mathematically unable to stop Leicester's return to the top flight. Securing promotion with two games to play, Leicester continued its strong form and finished

the season in first place.

While only gone for one season, Leicester is a completely transformed side compared to the team that was relegated in 2023. Their unfortunate departure from the top flight led to a mass exodus of Leicester's core, which included

James Maddison, Harvey Barnes, Yorui Tielemans, Jonny Evans, and Timothy Castagne. Dean Smith, who replaced former coach Brendan Rogers in April, also left shortly after their relegation, setting the stage for Enzo Maresca to take over as manager.

Tasked with rebuilding a shallow team lacking identity, Maresca first brought in Mads Hermansen, Conor Coady, and Harry Winks. He hoped this newfound talent would allow him to play his desired style of football – and it did. Hermansen completed more passes than any other Championship goalkeeper, fulfilling Maresca's vision of having the goalkeeper act as another outfield while in possession. Coady also allowed Maresca to play deep balls in behind the back line, while Winks slotted seamlessly into midfield, completing a league-high 348 passes into the final third last season.

These smart signings along with the club's already existing quality saw Leicester get out to an early lead at the top of the table, winning thirteen out of their first fourteen games. They entered 2024 boasting a ten-game unbeaten streak and a ten-point lead above second-place Ipswich Town.

A mid-season loss of form allowed Leeds and Southampton to put real pressure on Leicester as the season entered its final months. They even found themselves in third place at the start of April, but a convincing 5-0 victory against Southampton restored confidence within the team and propelled them towards a spot in the Premier League.



Leicester City players celebrating after confirming promotion to the Premier League.



Dominic Thiem Announces Retirement After 2024 Season

JACOB PLETKA

Dominic Thiem's name first surfaced in the tennis world when he won the Boy's French Open and the Junior Orange Bowl in the same year. He established himself as a top junior competitor in the professional circus, and in 2014, he broke into the top 100 rankings for the first time. Just 8 months later, he won his first ATP title in France. Overall, Thiem has accomplished what most would see as an outstanding career. This is, of course, without his major wrist injury in 2021, where he had to sit out for several months. This injury has now resurfaced and caused him to retire early at the age of 30. He hopes to end his career in October of 2024 in his home tournament, the ATP 500 Vienna Open.

One of Thiem's greatest athletic feats was his fourth Grand Slam final appearance, the US Open in 2020. Thiem started down two sets against one of his good friends, Alexander Zverev. It looked like it was all over, but Thiem continued to fight through three more grueling sets to win his first-ever Grand Slam in four hours. Saving several match points along the way, Thiem's ability to perform under pressure allowed him to become the first Austrian to win the US Open Grand Slam.

In 2021, Thiem looked to be a top competitor for future Grand Slam events. Unfortunately, he suffered a minor wrist injury which kept him off the ATP Tour for 10 months, plummeting his ranking to outside the top 350. Wrist injuries are common in the tennis community, but remain



Dominic Thiem after winning the 2020 US Open over Alexander Zverev.

difficult to overcome. Thiem's unorthodox style of standing far back from the baseline and hitting as hard as possible had taken a toll on his wrist. Thiem's struggle to get back to the top has been

the main factor in his decision to retire. Though he experienced some success in minor tennis tournaments from 2022 to 2024, nothing amounted to what Thiem knew he was capable of. He

made his final decision to depart the tennis world at the end of the 2024 season. We will miss him.

Thoughts On The 2024 Yankees: Future Champions?

BRANDON HORNE

As of May 25, 2024, the New York Yankees sit firmly atop the American League East division, with their 36-17 record, holding a 2.5 game advantage over the Baltimore Orioles. Furthermore, they hold the best record in the entire American League, one game over the Cleveland Guardians. One year ago, things were very different. The Yankees were in third place in the AL East, languishing behind the Rays and the Orioles. Their season would collapse when their biggest star, and 2022 MVP, Aaron Judge, would miss many months with a big toe injury. Towards the end of the year, the Yankees would flirt with a losing record, something they haven't done since 1992, over 30 years ago. Fans became irritated; ownership was angry, and nothing was improving. This was until December 6th, 2023, when the Yankees acquired superstar slugger Juan Soto in a mas-

sive trade with the San Diego Padres. This wound up being the bulk of their offseason, besides the signing of pitcher Marcus Stroman. Although the trade was clearly a major win for the Yankees, with Soto being a league leading hitter in a plethora of categories, the general belief was for the Yankees to repeat what they've done for the past 14 seasons: lose in the playoffs, or look promising in the regular season only to fall off and miss the playoffs altogether. However, as of May 25th, things seem different.

Despite the lack of reigning AL Cy Young winner Gerrit Cole due to injury, the Yankees are rolling atop the American League. The combination of Juan Soto, Aaron Judge, and Giancarlo Stanton, representing the very best of the so-called "Bronx Bombers," have combined for 43 total HRs, more than the Rays, Tigers, and White Sox have on their entire rosters. The pitching has been solid, with the young Luis Gil stepping into the ace role and perform-

ing admirably. Closing games have been strong as well, with the ever-reliable Clay Holmes delivering 14/16 saves. Overall, the Yankees look to be a strong team, equipped with the firepower and depth needed to potentially make the push for a 28th World Series victory.

Do I think they will achieve this? Well, the short answer is no. The

longer answer would be a maybe. If the Yankees can keep up their current pace and strength, it's very possible for them to challenge for a title. If they are unable to maintain the pace, it's also very possible for them to pose no threat. The real question is, will the Yankees be able to re-sign Juan Soto? His contract expires at the end of this

season, after all. If they can lock Soto up, and everyone remains healthy, I think there is a very strong chance for #28 to be theirs in the very near future. But as is so often quoted, "it ain't over till it's over," (Former Yankees catcher Yogi Berra), so we'll just have to wait and see what they can do.



New signing Juan Soto points to the crowd following a home run.



Top 10 Players Remaining In The 2024 NBA Playoffs

ADRIAN WERNER

1. Luka Dončić (Dallas Mavericks)

Luka Dončić has been a dominant force on the court, using his exceptional shooting and rhythm to lead his time. Averaging over 30 points per game, his scoring ability, court vision, and clutch performances are key components to the Mavericks' success. Luka's ball IQ and critical decision-making under pressure set him apart as one of the best in the league.

2. Anthony Edwards (Minnesota Timberwolves)

Anthony Edwards is an emerging superstar who combines athleticism with a scoring touch. Known for his explosive drives and high-flying dunks, Edwards brings intensity both offensively and defensively. His ability to take crucial shots and take over the game has been crucial for the Timberwolves' success.

3. Jayson Tatum (Boston Celtics)

Jayson Tatum's versatility and skill set make him a star player for the Celtics. Tatum is skilled

in scoring from all three levels and has also improved his playmaking and defense. His ability to make tough shots and lead his team is essential for Boston's goal of winning the NBA finals.

4. Kyrie Irving (Dallas Mavericks)

Kyrie Irving's incredible ball-handling, shooting, and scoring ability add another dimension to the Mavericks' offense. His experience and ability to stay calm during close games are invaluable, making him a reliable option for the Mavs.

5. Rudy Gobert (Minnesota Timberwolves)

Rudy Gobert's impact on the defensive end is unmatched. As a three-time Defensive Player of the Year, Gobert is a monster in the paint. His ability to block shots and rebound consistently makes him a cornerstone of Minnesota's defense.

6. Jaylen Brown (Boston Celtics)

Jaylen Brown is an efficient scorer, a strong defender, and versatile enough to guard multiple positions. Brown is capable of performing consistently well in crucial moments, which complements Jayson Tatum, forming a dynamic duo.



7. Tyrese Haliburton (Indiana Pacers)

Tyrese Haliburton has been a major part of the Pacer's success during the playoffs. His basketball IQ, vision, and ability to create opportunities for his teammates allow him to stand out. Furthermore, Haliburton's leadership on the court makes him a rising star with much more potential to develop.

8. Karl-Anthony Towns (Minnesota Timberwolves)

Karl-Anthony Towns' scoring ability and versatility as a big man are vital for the Timberwolves. He

can dominate in the paint and stretch the floor with his three-point shooting. Towns' rebounding and defensive improvements have also been crucial in the playoffs.

9. Kristaps Porziņģis (Boston Celtics)

Although he suffered a calf strain that has sidelined him since the first round, Kristaps Porziņģis provides the Celtics with a unique combination of shot-blocking and floor spacing. His ability to pick and roll and guard the rim gives Boston a significant advantage on the defensive end of the court.

10. Jrue Holiday (Boston Celtics)

Jrue Holiday's ability to create plays and play good defense makes him a critical component for the Celtics. Holiday is known for his ability to lock down opposing guards and make smart decisions with the ball, which are essential parts of winning the playoffs.

These 10 players have heavily impacted their team's success in both the regular season and playoffs. Without their help, these teams would be in a vastly different position today.

Should Shohei Ohtani Remain As A Designated Hitter?

SEBASTIÁN VERMUT

Shohei Ohtani has had a better season this year than last. That may sound crazy to say, but it's true. Through 48 games this season, he's hitting a 0.353 batting average, 0.424 on-base percentage, and an MLB-leading 1.077 on-base plus slugging percentage. To put it another way: he has 16 doubles, 13 home runs, and a whopping 67 hits. Despite not being the best player on the Dodgers right now (Mookie Betts is doing wild things at shortstop), comparing Ohtani's OPS+ from this year to his OPS+ from last year, we can see that 2024 Shohei is 18% better than 2023 Shohei. Where he was 84% better than the average MLB hitter in 2023, he is 102% better than his opponents this year.

Ohtani's improvement

could be due to many things. Notably, he is not pitching this year due to his recent Tommy John surgery, condemning him to designated hitter. Ohtani can focus solely on his offensive production without stressful pitching starts every fifth day to distract him from his hitting, and this focus shows. His Los Angeles Dodgers boast a 33-17 record, and his relentless bat has contributed, according to the wins above replacement statistic, three of those victories.

The Dodgers are in a situation where they may not even need Shohei to pitch next season. Their five-man starting rotation has been near flawless, so it seems unreasonable to slot Shohei ahead of aces like Tyler Glasnow, Walker Buehler, and Yoshinobu Yamamoto. Considering his success without pitching, the Dodgers may ask

Ohtani to remain at the designated hitter position.

Is this the right move? It's hard to say. I believe that the Dodgers will want to see how Shohei pitches after his second

UCL tear. Some pitchers never throw as well as they did before their first Tommy John, let alone their second. But, if Shohei continues to be able to rip 100-mile-per-hour fastballs past the Show's

best, he will likely continue to pitch. Only time will tell how he heals.



Shohei Ohtani looks out to his adoring fans at Dodgers Stadium in Los Angeles.



French Basketball Player Victor Wembanyama Wins Unanimous Rookie Of The Year

ISAAC TIOMKIN

With a name that most casual basketball watchers fail to pronounce, Victor Wembanyama has entered the league and has proceeded to lay the foundation for a stretch of dominance that only a generational talent can produce. His unanimous Rookie of the Year (ROTY) victory came as no surprise to most NBA viewers, due to his sheer talent and dominance as a freshman in the league. He has followed a line of dominant big men in the league to win the award uncontested, such as Ralph Samson, David Robinson, and Blake Griffin.

Standing at an imposing 7-foot-4, Wembanyama is the tallest of the bunch, an indispensable asset in the sport. His unique blend of height, length, and explosiveness has allowed him to guard entire teams alone. There exist abounding clips of Wembanyama sitting in the paint, bursting to the three point line, and dashing back into the paint to send a ball into the third row. In fact, he led the NBA in blocks at 3.6 blocks per game and

had a block percentage of 10.1%, the highest of any player since 7-foot-6 Manute Bol in the mid-1980s. In addition, he accrued 1.2 steals per game, a very impressive number for a giant expected to camp within the perimeter of the three-point arc. This led to a genuine case for Wembanyama in the Defensive Player of the Year (DPOY) race, where he lost narrowly to the four-time DPOY and fellow Frenchman Rudy Gobert.

Wembanyama was also an excellent scorer over the past season. His alien-like physique seems to make scoring a menial task for him, yet Wembanyama pushes himself to score in various ways. Most surprisingly, his off-the-dribble 3-point percentage was 41.3%, tying with elite guard and shot-creator Shai Gilgeous-Alexander. This only further highlights his capacity to craft his own buckets and his shiftiness at his monstrous size. His unanimous-ROTY-winner predecessors failed to even come close to such shot making. Greg Popovich, the San Antonio Spurs coach, played Wembanyama at power forward, a move unprecedented for



Victor Wembanyama led the NBA with an impressive 3.6 blocks per game.

a man of his size. In order to develop Wembanyama as the modern NBA prototype and to fully bring out his talents, he placed Wembanyama at a position less reliant on playing solely as the tallest man on the floor. This has forced him to bloom as an individual, something Wembanyama has visibly done effortlessly.

Despite Wembanyama's brimming and seemingly infinite potential and aptitude, there are

still several aspects of his game that he can improve in order to reach for yet greater heights. Unlike his fellow heavyweight Nikola Jokic, Wembanyama's passing has been subpar, averaging just under four assists. Although he may be able to run through forwards with his blinding acceleration and dominate guards with his size, he fails to see the open man, leading to a number of unintelligent shots. This is reflected

in his true shooting percentage (TSP) of 55.2%, a stat taking into account 2-point shots, 3-point shots, and free throws. Wembanyama's TSP is at around the league average, yet subpar for a forward, especially for one with production as elite as his own. He needs to raise his head and get his teammates more involved. That is winning basketball.

NBA Playoffs Round One Recap

BEN DEGANI

When it comes to the postseason, the NBA stands out for its unparalleled excitement, energy, and unpredictability. The first round alone has already been packed with thrilling moments and unexpected developments, setting the stage for an unforgettable playoff journey.

Starting things off with our two sweeps, the Oklahoma City Thunder surprised everyone by defeating the New Orleans Pelicans despite their inexperience. Led by Shai Gilgeous Alexander, the Thunder displayed their potential to be a conference final contender. The issue becomes how will they match up with more playoff experienced teams? In another notable sweep, the Minnesota Timberwolves convincingly triumphed over the Phoenix Suns. This series was particularly significant for Anthony Edwards, who described it as a "matchup of a lifetime" since Kevin Durant was his favorite player growing up. Despite the 4-0 score, the series featured intense, back-and-forth basketball, creating memorable moments be-

tween the two players.

The Boston Celtics took down the Miami Heat in a gentleman's sweep, marking the first time since the bubble that "Playoff Jimmy" didn't step up, raising questions about the Heat's future and their ability to perform in crucial moments. The Celtics, on the other hand, lived up to their hype as the best regular-season team in the NBA, showcasing their dominance and setting the stage for a promising postseason run. In another 4-1 victory, Nikola "the Joker" Jokic, fresh off his third MVP award, led the Denver Nuggets to a decisive win over LeBron James and the Los Angeles Lakers. This triumph not only highlighted Jokic's exceptional talent and leadership but also paved the way for future generations of basketball, signaling a potential shift in the NBA's landscape.

The Cleveland Cavaliers and Orlando Magic played one of the least-watched playoff series in NBA history, despite it being a seven-game nailbiter. Meanwhile, the Indiana Pacers managed to get past an injury-ridden Milwaukee Bucks team, who were missing key players Giannis Ante-

tokounmpo and Damian Lillard, the core of their offense.

The Dallas Mavericks took care of business in six games in a thrilling series against the Los Angeles Clippers. Despite the average age of their players being relatively high, the Mavericks demonstrated that they can still be a competitive team in the playoffs. Their experience and skill were on full display, proving that age is just a number when it comes to postseason performance.

Finally, the New York Knicks defeated the Philadelphia 76ers in six games. There was a lot of speculation leading up to this matchup about Joel Embiid and the potential for an upset in the first round. However, the Knicks made the tactical short-term decision to play their starting rotation for 40 minutes a game, with Jaylen Brunson delivering MVP-level basketball to clinch the series.

As the first round of the NBA playoffs comes

to a close, the stage is set for even more intense and thrilling matchups in the second round. With surprising sweeps, tactical victories, and standout performances, the competition has only just begun. The teams that have advanced now face even tougher challenges, and the excitement and unpredictability of the postseason are sure to continue. Fans can look forward to more high-stakes battles as the journey to the championship heats up.



The New York Knicks defeated the Philadelphia 76ers to advance to the Eastern Conference semifinals.



Diego Elias Makes History By Winning The CIB PSA World Championships

WILL WEISSMAN

Diego Elias' triumph on May 18 marked a monumental moment for South American squash. The Peruvian was the first player from his continent to win the CIB PSA World Championships, one of the year's most significant tournaments. The event boasted the largest purse of any tournament that year and netted Elias a take-home prize of over \$90,000.

Diego Elias' first place represented a fundamental moment for South African squash, but his record-breaking run was not without its challenges. His journey to the top started in the quarter-finals, where he faced former World No. 1, Egypt's Karim Abdel Gawad. After a tough match, Elias emerged victorious, setting the stage for a showdown with current World No. 1 Ali Farag from Egypt in the semi-finals. Elias had won just three out of 25 matches against Farag, and had gone without a win against the World No. 1 for six months.

Farag began the first game with his textbook style of play: deep shots to the back of the court, forcing long rallies. Elias, known for his

quick and aggressive style, took the initiative by attacking the ball and putting pressure on the Egyptian. His strategy paid off, and Elias took the first game 11-5. In the second game, Farag showed his own aggression, but Elias used high lobs and variation in shot speed to absorb these attacks. A brilliant cross-drop kill from Elias at 5-5 at a critical midpoint in the game and an error from Farag at 10-8 boosted the Peruvian to a 2-0 match lead.

Despite a strong start, Elias faced a setback in the third game as Farag's passive play style began to pay off. Elias' legs began to slow, and he fell to a 3-0 point deficit. After a few long, physical rallies and an error from Elias, Farag was back in the match. Elias, however, was far from defeated.

The Peruvian kept his composure in the fourth game, pouncing on Farag's attacking shots and disrupting the World No. 1's steady rhythm. After more sublime squash from Elias, he found himself with three match balls on the reigning World Champion. The two underwent another testing rally before Far clipped the top of the tin, making Di-



Diego Elias Plays a shot against Karim Abdel Gawad in the CIB PSA World Championships on May 15, 2024.

ego Elias the first South American World Championships Finalist.

To truly cement himself in the history books, Elias still had to win the championship match, where he faced Egypt's Mostafa Asal. Unlike Farag, Asal played extremely aggressively from the start of the match, hitting deceptive drops from all corners of the court. However, Elias' quickness to the front allowed him to retrieve the Egyptian's attacks and settle into the first game. Asal failed to establish the deep length and

build the rallies, which allowed Elias to play relaxed and controlled. After three hard-fought games, Diego Elias defeated current World No. 3, Mostafa Asal, to add another title victory to his already outstanding career.

With an incredible run against some of the world's top players, the Peruvian became the first non-Egyptian player to win the PSA World Championships since 2015.

"It's going to [be] huge, it's going to be massive in Peru for all the people supporting me all

these years. To be honest, I don't know how I feel right now, I haven't processed it yet and I'm just very happy," Elias said after the match.

As one of the only Peruvian squash players on the PSA tour, Diego Elias' recent victory is undoubtedly a significant source of inspiration for striving South American squash players. His success marks a huge moment for squash, allowing the game to gain more exposure in countries around the world.

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