# SPORTS SPECTRUM:
## NBA TRADE DEADLINE STANDOUTS

**by Seth Wallen**
CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT
HE/HIM/HIS
savannah.wallen@uconn.edu

**Milwaukee Bucks: Winners, but not for long**

Many people were on high alert, feeling increased pressure to trade star player Giannis Antetokounmpo at the deadline. With the Bucks losing games, Antetokounmpo has been sending mixed signals about whether he wants to leave, and Milwaukee fans have been caught in the media circus since at least 2023 when the team was eliminated in the first round.

The current roster is not confidence inspiring. They recently acquired Cam Thomas after he was waived by the Nets for more scoring punch, but this, along with UConn alum Andre Jackson Jr. receiving little meaningful playing time, creates a roster surrounding Giannis that is a mix of scorers who struggle to defend and defenders who can't score. For many, it's okay for him to leave.

The team has taken a noticeable step back in quality, and multiple injuries, especially to Damian Lillard (whether due to blood clots or his Achilles tear last year), have caused it to fall out of the top tier of contenders and face first-round exits in consecutive years.

Unlike stars like Kevin Durant and LeBron James, there wouldn't be a clear reason for Milwaukee fans to dislike him. Durant left for the Warriors—not only bringing them into a new era of dominance, but that was the team that had beaten them in the playoffs just months earlier. James, however, had the narrative that he quit on his hometown team in 2010, despite front office moves that backfired. Milwaukee's best chance to handle this situation gracefully will be in the offseason when teams are more flexible.

**Clippers, Cavs, and Pacers.**

After being the preseason Eastern Conference favorites following Jayson Tatum tearing his Achilles, the Cavaliers haven't had the best start. They've finalized their roster, and adding a veteran guard who can do a bit of everything, especially on offense, will help them a lot, particularly next to Donovan Mitchell. Darius Garland had been somewhat of a liability due to injury concerns, so this trade more or less benefits Cleveland.

The Pacers, however, are on a completely different level from last year, currently having one of the worst records in the league. With a significant need at center, they filled it by acquiring Ivica Zubac, a key piece, while the Clippers received some young players. It appears that the Clippers aimed to get younger, focusing on this after their early-season struggles. Although they're leaving their future uncertain, there's no long-term commitment after next season. One reason James Harden requested a trade is that the Clippers didn't offer him a two-year extension–outside their current time frame.

**Mavericks have a Bad Trade Age Worse**

In the year since they traded Luka Doncic, the team, its fanbase and its franchise have experienced a perfect storm of cursed retribution until they got locked out, won the draft lottery and gained the ability to draft Cooper Flagg. Despite that, they haven't been doing so well, and with Anthony Davis injured, it seemed to be getting worse.

I thought it was the best deal they could have made; they essentially gave up Anthony Davis for Khris Middleton, AJ Johnson, Malaki Branham, Marvin Bagley III, the 2026 first-round pick from the Thunder, a 2030 first-round pick from the Warriors, and three second rounders. Later, the trade was expanded to include the Hornets, to which Branham was rerouted, and Tyus Jones was sent from Dallas.

Middleton, aside from natural near-end-of-career regression, along with Jones, have expiring contracts this year. Meanwhile, Johnson and Bagley are two players who averaged less than 10 minutes per game on the Wizards.

You can think of it this way: Dallas traded Doncic for salary cap space, two players who averaged less than 10 minutes, and three first-round picks that, upon closer inspection, are like early seconds.

The Oklahoma City Thunder is very likely to finish the season, for the second year in a row, with the best overall record in the league, meaning that pick will be the last in the first round. The 2029 Lakers first-round pick included a year ago will most likely be no earlier than 20, given the Lakers stay around .500 and are in the upper tier of team records in the league. The last first-rounder, the 2030 Golden State pick, is conditional. If it falls between pick 21 and 30, the Mavericks get to keep it. If it goes any higher, 20th or earlier, it is turned into a second-round pick.

In essence, that's six second-round picks.



**Giannis Antetokounmpo dunking during an NBA game. Antetokounmpo has continued on with the Milwaukee Bucks following the trade deadline.**

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