Sports

Photo of the Day | Men's Basketball :D



The UConn men's basketball team warms up before their game against Wagner University on Nov. 9, 2026 at M&T Bank Center at Gampel Pavilion. This was the men's team's first game in the renovated stadium. PHOTO BY NORA MARIANO, ASSOCIATE PHOTO EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

SPORTS SPECTRUM: FRONT OFFICES AND THEIR PRODUCTS

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Entering this NBA season, both the Miami Heat and Charlotte Hornets were coming off a series of blockbuster acquisitions and departures. The Heat added Giannis Antetokounmpo, while the Hornets traded LaMelo Ball away to Minnesota for Naz Reid and a 2033 second-round draft pick.

However, both teams find themselves toward the bottom of the Eastern Conference, marked by historically bad performances, and both front offices seem to be routinely dodging accountability.

To begin: The Miami Heat were not expected to look this bad.

Their offense has always felt like pulling teeth, since their central player, Bam Adebayo, is not known for creating his own shot in isolation. Because both Adebayo and Antetokounmpo play in ways that aren't expected to space the floor, the team is dependent on midrange jumpers. This makes the offense predictable and easy for opponents to defend, especially compared to the high-volume 3-point shooting seen in the modern NBA.

However, what was not expected to look this bad was their defense. Prior to their game against the Utah Jazz on Tuesday, the Heat were allowing opponents to score a staggering 121.1 points a game, fifth worst in the league, coupled with a 116.8 defensive rating, which is the seventh worst in the league.

Notably, their role players, particularly Andrew Wiggins, stood out in their game against the Dallas Mavericks, where he played as he did back in Minnesota. Other players on the team, like Bobby Portis and Klay Thompson, often exacerbate these issues, especially on defense. Nevertheless, they're still needed on the roster and can't easily be traded.

Because everyone else on that roster has effectively worsened their trade value, they are left with either trading Giannis — the player they just got — or trading Adebayo, the player who has been considered "Mr. Miami" ever since Dwyane Wade retired.

Miami has put itself in a situation it can't pivot its way out of unless everyone starts playing better.

However, their upcoming schedule is not promising: They play both the Cleveland Cavaliers and the New York Knicks twice, alongside other teams that, barring injuries and mid-season free falls, will make the playoffs.

There is a real chance, fluke barring, that they may be 7-16 before their game against the Bulls on Monday, Dec. 14.

Charlotte, on the other hand, was never meant to enter playoff conversations, but after having the best offensive rating for 50 games last season and finishing with a 119.4 (fifth best in the league), one would've thought they'd continue their hot streak.

However, trading Ball turned into an all-exposing nightmare: Prior to their Nov. 9 game against the Cavaliers, the Hornets only scored an average of 96.3 points per game — the worst in the league — and such a historical anomaly that you would have to go back to the 2011-12 season, when there were about 91.3 possessions per 48 minutes of basketball played.

In full fairness, Coby White isn't that bad of a player, but his responsibility is now to be the primary ball handler on a team with a near 1:1 turnover-to-assist ratio, ranking last in the league in both assists (21.5) and turnovers (19) per game. It's highly unrealistic to ask someone like him to do that, especially when he has never done so in his NBA career, and not to the degree this Hornets team needs him to.

This league has become far more defense-oriented over the last two to three years, and if you aren't an elite ball handler, it's going to be very hard to combat that — but the general manager insisted that they had to build a team that did not include Ball.

Unfortunately, neither of these teams can easily pivot, and the fault lies with the front offices.

Front offices often mitigate blame entirely through the product they put on the court. For example, the 2019-20 New York Knicks, months after being forced to trade Kristaps Porzingis and swinging and missing on both Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving, managed to cultivate a roster with four power forwards and no functional point guards. None of them shot above 35% from 3-point range.

Pairing that backcourt with a frontcourt logjam systematically broke the roster the moment they had to play together. After starting the season 2-8 and losing to the Cleveland Cavaliers by 21 points, head executive Steve Mills said, "We believe in the plan that Scott [Perry] and I put together and the players that we've assembled."

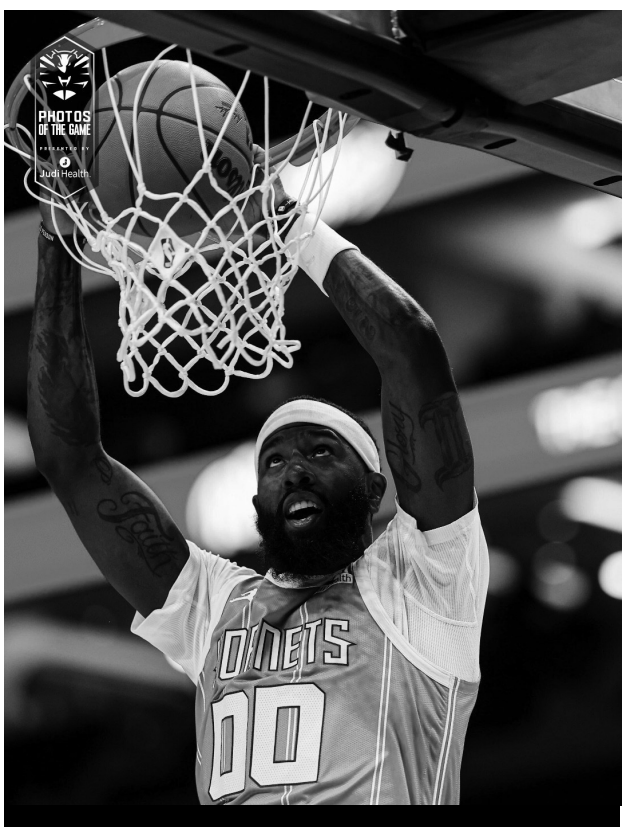
They finished the season 21-45 with the second-worst points per game (109) in the league.

Miami, like Golden State, has been operating under the assumption that Erik Spoelstra can coach top 10 units out of thin air, using heat culture as a substitute when they swung and missed on numerous stars, like Antetokounmpo the first time or Damian Lillard. Even then, they focused on star chasing instead of stabilizing a core around Adebayo, and it has resulted in a 0-4 start to the season and an outlook that looks worse if nothing changes.

The main reasons Ball was traded from Charlotte often boil down to injury concerns, even though sophomore Kon Knueppel was injured to begin the season. League perception of Ball has long been negative, despite him being a net positive influence on a Minnesota team even without Anthony Edwards.

The front offices of teams like this love games like the Cavaliers vs. Hornets matchup, where players like Naz Reid and Grayson Allen can combine for 52 points, despite Reid having to be benched a couple of games prior.

At the end of the day, when a team's problems come down to the players, those teams' front offices have to be held accountable for the funk wafting up from the floor.



NBA Charlotte Hornets player dunks the ball on the court. The Hornets have had roster changes entering this season.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @HORNETS ON INSTAGRAM



NBA Miami Heat player walks on the court. The Heat have had roster changes entering this season.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @MIAMIHEAT ON INSTAGRAM