



# WCHSMUN2019 BACKGROUND GUIDE

# Table of Contents

<b>Letter from the Chair</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Committee Overview</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Topic 1: Rule and Format Changes</b>	<b>5</b>
Overview	5
Current Issues	6
Bloc Positions	9
Questions to Consider	10
Suggested Reading List	11
<b>Topic 2: Expansion and Relocation</b>	<b>12</b>
Overview	12
Expansion	13
Relocation	15
Potential Cities	16
Questions to Consider	18
Suggested Reading List	19
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>20</b>

## Letter from the Chair

Dear delegates,

Welcome to WCHSMUN 2019! My name is Roy Han, and I am very excited to be your head chair for the NBA committee this year. Assisting me this year is your vice chair, Clement Lin, and rapporteur, Naman Srivastava, and together we hope to create an unforgettable experience. We encourage all delegates to speak and actively participate, but our top priority is to establish an inclusive and supportive atmosphere; therefore, no delegates will be forced to speak throughout the duration of the conference.

This year at WCHSMUN, we will be allowing delegates the use of personal computers, laptops and technology for the duration of the conference; we feel that this will improve the platform for resolution writing and allow delegates to focus on the issues at hand. We also believe that this will allow the committee to move forward in a timely manner, allowing greater opportunity for debate and dialogue. We would like to remind delegates that the use of technology is a privilege, and thus, it will only be allowed if used responsibly.

The NBA committee will follow standard specialized agency MUN procedure. A set agenda of **12** will be used, meaning that the order of the topics to be discussed is topic 1, then topic 2. Please be advised that this means that there will not be a primary speakers' list. Along with a clear comprehension of the background guide, we recommend that delegates also be generally familiar with their team's record and past legacy. NBA standings will be provided to display each team's relative success/position this season.

Each topic will require unique solutions and innovative debate, and so we wish you the best of luck during your research and preparation. I look forward to welcoming you to the first session of the NBA!

Sincerely,  
Roy Han  
Head Chair  
NBA Committee

## Committee Overview

The National Basketball Association (NBA) was founded in New York on June 6, 1946, and has transitioned to the most popular basketball league in the world through mergers with other leagues such as the National Basketball League and American Basketball Association.<sup>1</sup> However, the success of the NBA has forced many changes to play styles, technicalities, and the very meaning of basketball. Thus, in an effort to improve the game and the league in the face of change, rule and format modifications have become paramount. The process of their monitoring, modification, and implementation are therefore a key focus of this committee.

Furthermore, as the league continues to increase in popularity, there is more discussion for expansion teams and relocation to bring elite basketball to even more cities. The National Hockey League recently introduced the Las Vegas Golden Knights, due to high demand, and thus far the team has been a tremendous success.<sup>2</sup> Subsequently, pressure has been placed by fans on the NBA to make a similar expansion. The NBA may benefit from a similar expansion, as new member cities could provide practical exposure to basketball, but the presence of large logistical, economic, and geographical complications has made this matter contentious.

Another byproduct of the NBA's success is a large international fanbase; with NBA ambassadors overseas, hosting international events is also a priority to continue a global legacy. Factors such as the rapid growth of internet broadcasting have made this a time-sensitive issue for the league. In addition, the NBA has recently seen an influx of international basketball players over the recent years, and ambassadors such as Luka Doncic have entire countries behind them,<sup>3</sup> which provides incentive, danger, and urgency to the topic at hand.

The history of the NBA is one of turbulent, but steady growth. It is of the utmost priority that this legacy is able to weather the new internal, regional, and global challenges to grow and enhance the game of basketball for the players, fans, and everyone involved in the league.

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<sup>1</sup>"NBA Merges with ABA," *History.com*, Published November 16, 2009, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/nba-merges-with-aba>.

<sup>2</sup> Ben Mcgrath, "The Pure Delight of the Vegas Golden Knights, the Most Successful Expansion Team Ever." *The New Yorker*, Published May 31, 2018,

<https://www.newyorker.com/sports/sporting-scene/the-pure-delight-of-the-vegas-golden-knights-the-most-successful-expansion-team-ever>.

<sup>3</sup>Hayden Grove, "Slovenia Native Luka Doncic Delights Large Group of Slovenian Fans in Cleveland on Saturday Night (video)," *Cleveland.com*, Published February 12, 2019,

<https://www.cleveland.com/cavs/2019/02/slovenia-native-luka-doncic-delights-large-group-of-slovenian-fans-in-cleveland-on-saturday-night-video.html>.

# Topic 1: Rule and Format Changes

## Overview

Rule changes such as the 24 second shot clock in 1945-1955 and the implementation of the 3 point line in 1980-1981 have dramatically changed basketball's dynamic.<sup>4</sup> These changes were made in response to the slow pace of the game, which was created by teams whose strategy was to 'freeze' the ball until time ran out.<sup>5</sup> Many contentious rules have been added in order to similarly target non-entertaining strategies, gimmicky win conditions, and certain overly common player archetypes.

While this may have helped the league all around, players such as Wilt Chamberlain were greatly affected by this change. Chamberlain was unquestionably the NBA's best player in the late 50's, as his stature allowed him to dominate rebounds, free throws, and successfully completing slam dunks without a running start.<sup>6</sup> However, the change in the lane size from 12 to 16 feet in 1964-1965 resulted in a forced change of play style, resulting in a string of playoff losses for Chamberlain.<sup>7</sup> The game might have seen interesting developments due to this change, but rule changes also have the ability to have a drastic negative impact on players and teams.

Various adjustments similar to the ones mentioned above, major or minor, are consistently made to the NBA in order to adapt with the constantly changing style of play. That being said, while rule changes are consistently being proposed to the NBA Board of Governors, only a small portion of these adjustments are implemented. However, a predominant set of issues have been debated time and time again, with constant new arguments delaying any final verdict from the Board. The biggest challenge for delegates will be to find rule changes that appeal to all the teams, yet still benefit their own team in some way or another. The end goal of resolutions should be to appeal to as many teams as possible, while accounting for the maintaining fair play for all the players, and enhancing the fan experience.

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<sup>4</sup>Chris Cabrera, "NBA Rule Changes Over the Years." *Barrystickets.com*, Published August 29, 2013, <https://www.barrystickets.com/blog/nba-rule-changes-over-the-years/>.

<sup>5</sup>Alex Sachare, "24-Second Clock Revived the Game," *Indiana Pacers*, Accessed March 12, 2019, <https://www.nba.com/history/24secondclock.html>.

<sup>6</sup>"Wilt Chamberlain's NBA Records," *Indiana Pacers*, Accessed March 12, 2019, [https://www.nba.com/encyclopedia/wilts\\_records.html](https://www.nba.com/encyclopedia/wilts_records.html).

<sup>7</sup>"Wilt Chamberlain: An Appreciation," *Indiana Pacers*, Accessed March 12, 2019, [https://www.nba.com/history/wilt\\_appreciation.html](https://www.nba.com/history/wilt_appreciation.html).

## Current Issues:

### *Playoff Seeding*

Of the previous 18 seasons, the West have maintained a winning record in 17 of them; in that period, the West has a 57% win rate against teams from the East.<sup>8</sup> This disparity becomes even more obvious during playoffs, such as the recent finals sweep in 2018. While the Western playoff bracket was challenging for almost every team, the East was much less competitive allowing the Cleveland Cavaliers to reach the Finals, highlighted by the 4-0 sweep.

A potential change in playoff seeding would allow the teams to have a more proportional chance of winning the championship, creating a more exciting playoffs. One of the widely considered ways to change the format is to remove conferences altogether.<sup>9</sup> This would cause the true top teams of the NBA to make the playoffs, which is not the case with conferences. Another potential idea would follow the format of the NHL, where divisions still exist but conferences are removed.<sup>10</sup>

That being said, these changes could cause schedule overlap, more travelling, and a greater imbalance for small markets. The current 82-game schedule is already gruelling, with many players struggling to get through the entire season without suffering injuries due to fatigue.<sup>11</sup> While shortening the season could be a potential solution, it comes with the drawback of generating less revenue for the NBA. This leads to a likely increased length of the season with seperated games, but this dramatically increases team cost and decreases fanbase interaction.

The current conference format requires teams play 4 games against each team in their own division, 4 games each against 6 other conference teams, 3 games against each of the remaining teams in their conference, and lastly 2 games against each team in the opposing conference.<sup>12</sup> If the playoff bracketing is changed, such as the removal of conferences, a different format for game scheduling would have to be created.

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<sup>8</sup>Tom Ziller, "3 Steps to Fixing NBA Conference Imbalance Forever," *SBNation.com*, Published July 16, 2018, <https://www.sbnation.com/2018/7/16/17575340/nba-playoff-seeding-conference-imbalance-proposal>.

<sup>9</sup>Ben Golliver and Rohan Nadkarni, "History Says East-West Is Ruining the NBA Playoffs," *SI.com*, Published March 7, 2018, <https://www.si.com/nba/2018/03/07/nba-finals-format-adam-silver-rockets-warriors-cavaliers-east-west>.

<sup>10</sup>"Stanley Cup Playoffs Format, Qualification System," *NHL.com*, Published March 13, 2018, <https://www.nhl.com/news/stanley-cup-playoffs-format-qualification-system/c-711015>.

<sup>11</sup>Tom Haberstroh, "Memo to NBA Owners: The 82-game Season Is Already a Thing of the past," *ESPN*, Published April 05, 2017, [http://www.espn.com/nba/story/\\_/page/presents19071734/end-82-game-nba-season](http://www.espn.com/nba/story/_/page/presents19071734/end-82-game-nba-season).

<sup>12</sup>"How the NBA Schedule Is Made," *11th Anniversary*, Accessed March 12, 2019, <https://www.nbastuffer.com/analytics101/how-the-nba-schedule-is-made/>.

## *Draft Lottery & Tanking*

With the recent rise of the Golden State, many teams are attempting to build matching 'super teams'; these are formed by recruiting various top players in the league to form a powerful lineup. The OKC Thunder, Houston Rockets, Boston Celtics, and Philadelphia 76ers are all following this path to try and improve their teams.<sup>13</sup> Typically, only teams from larger markets such as New York or Los Angeles have the ability to do this, because they have a larger fanbase and therefore a larger source of revenue. As a result, some teams in smaller markets are unable to make the playoffs. This causes fanbases to lose interest and decrease the revenue of the NBA.

The previous draft lottery system favoured teams that do poorly in picking order.<sup>14</sup> Thus, weaker teams would improve based off of drafting one very talented basketball player. In response, 'tanking' was created. Tanking in the NBA is defined as a team doing less than everything they can to win. This includes limiting the minutes of good players, drawing up bad plays, and generally making purposeful bad decisions<sup>15</sup>. Teams try to lose, in hopes of drafting a superstar and rebuilding around them. While there is no section in the NBA official rulebook that bans tanking, it is heavily looked down upon due to the unsportsmanlike nature of the act.<sup>16</sup>

In an attempt to solve the issue, the NBA has split the odds of attaining the number one draft pick between the bottom teams.<sup>17</sup> While the reward for losing is lesser, there is still much to be desired. Nevertheless, teams are still trying to tank their way to the bottom of the NBA.

This highlights the potential necessity that tanking plays in the NBA. The draft lottery is often considered to be the ticket to the top which is what poor performing teams need. When their seems to be no other solution for their failures, it may be best for the manager to look towards the long term benefit of having a young elite player. Through tanking, teams are able to still maintain hope that there is a better future to come rather than completely give up because they know they can't and won't win for many years to come.

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<sup>13</sup> Andre Snellings, "NBA Superteam Rankings: Who Has the Most Star Power?" *ESPN*, Published August 17, 2018, [http://www.espn.com/nba/story/\\_/id/24380606/nba-superteam-rankings-warriors-rockets-celtics-teams-most-star-power](http://www.espn.com/nba/story/_/id/24380606/nba-superteam-rankings-warriors-rockets-celtics-teams-most-star-power).

<sup>14</sup> "2016 NBA Draft Lottery: How the Drawing Process Works & Lottery Odds," *Indiana Pacers*, Published May 17, 2016, <https://www.nba.com/news/draft/nba-draft-lottery-what-will-happen-2016/>.

<sup>15</sup> Mark Deeks, "Who Actually Tanks in the NBA, Though?" *SBNation.com*, Published January 10, 2014, <https://www.sbnation.com/2014/1/10/5266770/nba-draft-lottery-tanking-gm>.

<sup>16</sup> John Friel, "5 Reasons Tanking Must Be Eliminated in the NBA," *Bleacher Report*, Published October 02, 2017, <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/1160643-5-reasons-tanking-must-be-eliminated-in-the-nba#slide5>.

<sup>17</sup> "NBA Board of Governors Approves Changes to Draft Lottery System," *Indiana Pacers*, Published September 28, 2017, <https://www.nba.com/article/2017/09/28/nba-board-governors-approves-changes-draft-lottery-system>.

## Video Review

During intense moments of close games, controversial or missed calls such as the block or charge foul can often decide which team wins. A block or a charge foul is called when the attacker makes contact with the defender, such as a collision. In most cases, the collision is a blocking foul but in certain instances, a charge can be called. A charge is when the defender has established their position and “beats the attacker to the spot” where the collision occurs.<sup>18</sup>

The lines between a block and a charge have become increasingly blurred, creating confusion. As the speed of play in basketball continuously increases and many new tactics are employed, it becomes difficult to decide whether the defender or the attacker was in the wrong. For example, in game 1 of the 2018 NBA finals, the referees called a blocking foul on LeBron James instead of a charge on Kevin Durant.<sup>19</sup> The NBA rulebook states that a block-charge call is only reviewable in the last two minutes of the fourth quarter if the referees “are not reasonably certain as to whether the defender was inside or outside of the restricted area.”<sup>20</sup>

The wording of the rule creates controversy and room for error, as there is no way to judge the certainty of a referee. In the case of the 2018 NBA Finals, even though the contact clearly occurred outside of the restricted area, the play was still reviewed.<sup>21</sup>

Following the Finals, commentators supported the idea of total elimination of the rules surrounding blocks, charges, and video review; this would allow the referee total control and adaptability.<sup>22</sup> However, this model has been criticized due to the possibility of biased calls. In contrast, proposals have been made to further define the rules. Defining charges could be based on the torso of the defender in relation to the attacker.<sup>23</sup> Of course, this complicates the job of the referee, slowing down the pace of the game.

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<sup>18</sup>“THE NBA RULE AUTHORITY,” *2017 NBA Collective Bargaining Agreement: Principal Deal Points* | NBA Official, Published January 23, 2012, <https://official.nba.com/the-nba-rule-authority/>.

<sup>19</sup>Kristian Winfield, “Here’s Why Referees Changed LeBron James’s Charge on Kevin Durant to a Block,” *SBNation.com*, Published June 01, 2018, <https://www.sbnation.com/2018/5/31/17416184/lebron-james-charge-kevin-durant-overtuned-block-foul-cavs-warriors-game-1-nba-finals>.

<sup>20</sup>“NBA Official,” *2017 NBA Collective Bargaining Agreement: Principal Deal Points* | NBA Official, Accessed March 12, 2019, <https://official.nba.com/rule-no-13-instant-replay/>.

<sup>21</sup>Kristian Winfield, “Here’s Why Referees Changed LeBron James’s Charge on Kevin Durant to a Block,” *SBNation.com*, Published June 01, 2018, <https://www.sbnation.com/2018/5/31/17416184/lebron-james-charge-kevin-durant-overtuned-block-foul-cavs-warriors-game-1-nba-finals>.

<sup>22</sup>Satchel Price, “The Difference between a Block and a Charge,” *SBNation.com*, Published October 28, 2014, <https://www.sbnation.com/nba/2014/10/28/6419373/nba-block-charge-rule-official>.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*



## Bloc Positions

### *High-Tier Teams (Contenders)*

Contending teams are those in contention for the NBA championship. As of now, they are in support of any changes that would maximize their chances at succeeding in the playoffs. Playoff seeding has clearly benefited the east in recent years, as seen by the competitive Western Conference Finals in 2018 between the Golden State Warriors and Houston Rockets, and the sweep in the finals. Since the seeding is determined within each conference, the current playoff seeding does not account for potential disparities in team skill between each conference. Many critics and fans stated the Western Conference Finals were in essence the NBA Finals.<sup>24</sup> Thus, contending teams should be especially considerate of these kinds of issues, and there should be an active divide between western and eastern conference teams. Other issues that could help maximize the success of these teams if addressed can include schedule and rest, to preserve star players, and video review, especially to maintain a fair postseason.

### *Mid-Tier Teams (Playoff Hopefuls)*

Playoff hopefuls are teams that are in the playoff race and can potentially participate in the postseason, but have an unlikely chance of winning more than one series. Playoff seeding is an important issue, but will not have season changing implications due to their unlikely probability of making a deep playoff run. However, this may still be relevant when considering conference disparities, as playoff hopefuls in the western conference could be considered contenders in the eastern conference.<sup>25</sup> In general, playoff hopefuls do not express a clear stance on issues, and thus delegates with these teams should not feel restricted in any significant manner in terms of which areas to debate and potential solutions. These teams should take actions that enable them to improve their potential postseason, or rebuild effectively to set up their futures.

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<sup>24</sup>Kizito Madu, "Rockets vs. Warriors Was the Ultimate NBA Playoff Series," *SBNation.com*, Published May 29, 2018, <https://www.sbnation.com/2018/5/28/17402690/rockets-vs-warriors-game-7-nba-playoffs-2018-war>.

<sup>25</sup>Martin Rogers, "NBA's Wild, Wild West Overpowering East: 'It's Not Even Close'," *USA Today*. Published December 06, 2018, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/columnist/martin-rogers/2018/12/06/nba-western-conference-overpowering-eastern-conference/221759002/>.

### *Low-Tier Teams (Not in Contention)*

Teams that are not in contention are very unlikely to make the playoffs. This means that tanking is an issue defended by low-tier teams, in efforts to quickly revitalize their roster with young, promising stars. The Philadelphia 76ers displayed that this tactic eventually does pay off, racking up consecutive lottery picks for many years before becoming a contending team.<sup>26</sup> However, it is clear that the 76ers are now a team stacked with many stars, and have the potential to go deep in the playoffs. This is a primary issue that should be defended by these teams, especially with the high quality of the next draft class of the NBA, featuring high profile players such as Zion Williamson and RJ Barrett, who could revolutionize a team on their own.<sup>27</sup> Overall, low-tier teams should be focusing on issues that impact their ability to improve their team.

### Questions to Consider:

1. Of the three issues presented, which is the most pressing for your team? Is change required at all? Why or why not?
2. Is your team in win-now mode or a rebuilding stage, or somewhere in between? How does this influence your priorities between the present and future?
3. Which stakeholder should have the greatest valued opinion over issues in the NBA? (e.g owners, players, fans)

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<sup>26</sup>“Philadelphia 76ers Draft Picks,” *Basketball Reference*, Accessed February 4, 2019, <https://www.basketball-reference.com/teams/PHI/draft.html>.

<sup>27</sup>Scott Davis, “Here are the top 30 prospects in the 2019 NBA Draft,” *Business Insider*, Published March 9, 2019, <https://www.businessinsider.com/top-2019-nba-draft-prospects-2019-3>.

## Suggested Reading List:

*How Playoff Seedings Currently Works*

<https://www.thoughtco.com/about-the-nba-playoffs-326009>

*Current Conference Format and Schedule*

<https://www.nbastuffer.com/analytics101/how-the-nba-schedule-is-made/>

*Debated Changes to Playoff Seedings*

<https://www.cbssports.com/nba/news/its-time-for-the-nba-to-change-its-playoff-format-heres-how-it-can-and-will-happen/>

*How the Draft System Currently Works*

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/leighsteinberg/2018/06/21/behind-the-scenes-the-nba-draft-process-for-dummies/>

*The Effects of Tanking*

<https://nypost.com/2019/02/16/adam-silver-tanking-has-corrosive-effect-on-nba-teams/>

*Block and Charge Fouls*

<https://www.sbnation.com/nba/2014/10/28/6419373/nba-block-charge-rule-official>

*How Video Review Works*

<https://www.nba.com/official/instant-replay-guidelines.html>

*Debated Changes to Video Review*

<https://www.theperspective.com/debates/sports/let-watch-instant-replay-used-sports/>

## Topic 2: Expansion and Relocation

### Overview

Throughout the development of the NBA, expansion and relocation has been a common theme. In the inauguration of the league in 1946, there were 11 teams; the New York Knicks and Boston Celtics are two teams that have been essentially unchanged since this time, and are two of the most successful franchises in league history.<sup>28</sup> Since 1961, the number of teams has steadily grown, reaching over 20 teams by the 1980s as the popularity of the league grew exponentially.<sup>29</sup> The league consisted of solely American teams until 1995, when the Toronto Raptors and Vancouver Grizzlies were added to the league.<sup>30</sup> However, the two teams have since gone in opposite directions; while the Raptors have been successfully integrated into the league and are now contenders in the eastern conference, the Grizzlies never gained traction, and relocated to Memphis in 2001 without recording a single winning season and an abysmal 0.220 win percentage over six seasons.<sup>31</sup> Since then, the Toronto Raptors have been steady teams that have made multiple postseason appearances.

In addition to expansion, debate surrounds relocation. Teams such as the Charlotte Hornets and Brooklyn Nets have all been discussing relocation in one form or another.<sup>32</sup> These teams share similar arguments, noting low ranking, abysmal attendance, and secondary importance to other sports teams.<sup>33</sup> While these issues need to be addressed, there is also the question of exactly how relocation will benefit a team. For example, the Nets were quite successful when they first relocated, but have since dropped to the bottom of the NBA standings.<sup>34</sup> The Nets' manager has noted that players leaving during relocation is the prominent issue, but the addition of new rules to curb this issue would result in heated debate in both conferences.

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<sup>28</sup>“A Chronology of the Teams in the NBA,” *National Basketball Association*, Accessed February 12, 2019, <https://www.nba.com/celtics/history/NBATeamsChronology.html>.

<sup>29</sup>“1980-81 NBA Season Summary,” *Basketball Reference*, Accessed February 1, 2019, [https://www.basketball-reference.com/leagues/NBA\\_1981.html](https://www.basketball-reference.com/leagues/NBA_1981.html).

<sup>30</sup>“1995 NBA Expansion Draft,” *Basketball Reference*, Accessed January 31, 2019, [https://www.basketball-reference.com/draft/NBA\\_1995\\_expansion.html](https://www.basketball-reference.com/draft/NBA_1995_expansion.html).

<sup>31</sup>“Memphis Grizzlies,” *Basketball Reference*, Accessed February 1, 2019, <https://www.basketball-reference.com/teams/MEM/>.

<sup>32</sup>Nienke van Rijn, “Teams Most Likely To Relocate,” *We Are Basket*, Published September 22, 2018, <http://wearebasket.net/teams-most-likely-to-relocate/>.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

## Expansion

One of the most important factors in determining expansion cities is the assessment of the basketball fanbase in the potential city. It is important to predict whether the city will be able to consistently attract fans to NBA games, and a strong connection between the city and basketball is a good sign of this. Suitable arenas are also extremely important to the viability of an expansion team, and current NBA arenas have maximum capacities around 17 to 20 thousand.<sup>35</sup> If a venue does not already exist, it must be seen if the city is capable of constructing an appropriate arena for the team. Identifying potential owners, and competition with other NBA or sports teams also must be considered when assessing cities. The actual process of making these assessments has no formalized procedure; the only requirement is the submission of a request to the NBA Board of Governors.<sup>36</sup> Previous assessments have included fanbase willingness, calculations of cost influx, and prospective ownership groups.<sup>37</sup>

From a business facing perspective, the issue of cost is another important factor. Separate from the choice of city, a proper stadium infrastructure is required. In the case of Seattle, the refurbishment of their arena will cost an estimated \$564 million on the low end.<sup>38</sup> In addition, the costs of expansion fees would negatively impact broadcasters. The more teams within the league, the smaller the share of each team's TV money, while the contracts of each individual player would see little to no change.<sup>39</sup> As of now, the current model of expansion makes little monetary sense. That being said, suggestions have been made regarding the methods of expansion fees. Instead of a prospective ownership group directly paying the league, the fee could be provided evenly between NBA team owners to be distributed between players and coordinators.<sup>40</sup> Little research has been done on the topic, while many team managers publicly express personal opinions. However, consensus on the issues of funding must be reached if an expansion team is to be seriously considered.

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<sup>35</sup> "NBA Arenas ranked by seating capacity, from largest to smallest," *Geoshen*, Last Updated May 30, 2018, <https://geoshen.com/posts/nba-arenas-ranked-by-seating-capacity>.

<sup>36</sup> Tom Ziller, "The NBA might really add new teams. Here's what it would take," *SBNation*, Published February 13, 2017, <https://www.sbnation.com/2017/2/13/14596586/nba-expansion-louisville-seattle-adam-silver>.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Andrew Joseph, "Ranking the 8 best cities for NBA expansion," *Forthewhen*, Published October 4, 2018, <https://ftw.usatoday.com/2018/10/nba-expansion-cities-options-seattle-vegas-london-vancouver-franchise-kevin-durant-sonics>.

<sup>39</sup> Tom Ziller, "The NBA might really add new teams. Here's what it would take," *SBNation*, Published February 13, 2017, <https://www.sbnation.com/2017/2/13/14596586/nba-expansion-louisville-seattle-adam-silver>.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

## Expansion Draft

The most recent NBA expansion team was the Charlotte Bobcats that was introduced in the 2004 season, becoming the 30th NBA team. The expansion draft was held on June 22, 2004, in which the Bobcats selected 19 players from other teams. The most important rules of the draft were as follows:

1. The Bobcats may select no more than one player from each team
2. Each of the 29 NBA teams may protect a maximum of eight players on its roster
3. The Bobcats can only select players left unprotected by an NBA team<sup>41</sup>

There are a few problems with the expansion draft that should be discussed by the delegates. In its inaugural season, the Bobcats recorded a 0.220 win percentage, winning only 18 out of 82 games, placing second last in the eastern conference.<sup>42</sup> Now known as the Charlotte Hornets, the team has recorded three winning records in fifteen seasons, never placing higher than sixth in the eastern conference.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, the Hornets continue to have low attendance numbers, despite having the 13th largest NBA arena.<sup>44</sup>

Restricting essentially all of the starting players in the league as well as valuable role players and young talent, if the draft rules were to remain it is very likely the team would suffer a similarly slow start to its franchise when fan retention is a high priority. This was seen with the Vancouver Grizzlies, which only lasted 6 seasons, due to low attendance, lack of talent, and player boycotts, never finishing higher than 12th in the western conference.<sup>45</sup> However, it is also important to ensure that an expansion draft would not drastically change the landscape of the current NBA, so delegates must find an appropriate balance when considering potential changes to the expansion draft rules to allow a smooth integration of new teams into the league.

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<sup>41</sup> "Summary Of Expansion Draft Rules," *Indiana Pacers*, Published May 11, 2012, [https://www.nba.com/hornets/news/draft\\_central\\_expansion\\_rules\\_summary.html](https://www.nba.com/hornets/news/draft_central_expansion_rules_summary.html).

<sup>42</sup> "Charlotte Hornets Franchise Index," *Basketball-Reference.com*, Accessed March 12, 2019, <https://www.basketball-reference.com/teams/CHA/>.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> "NBA Attendance Report," *ESPN*, Accessed March 12, 2019, <http://www.espn.com/nba/attendance>.

<sup>45</sup> "Memphis Grizzlies Franchise Index," *Basketball-Reference.com*, Accessed March 12, 2019, <https://www.basketball-reference.com/teams/MEM/>.

## Relocation

Relocation of NBA teams has been much more common recently compared to expansion teams. The reason for relocation has almost always been financial problems, poor attendance, or the sale of the team to a new owner. Examples include the Seattle SuperSonics' relocation to Oklahoma City, the Charlotte Hornets to New Orleans, and the Vancouver Grizzlies to Memphis in 2001. Many relocations occurred during the 1970s and 80s, giving rise to current NBA teams such as the Sacramento Kings, Los Angeles Clippers, and Utah Jazz, depriving Kansas City, San Diego, and New Orleans of their teams.<sup>46</sup>

The Seattle SuperSonics were relocated to Oklahoma City despite having a rich history, featuring legends such as Gary Payton and Shawn Kemp, as well as promising young players such as Kevin Durant.<sup>47</sup> The franchise had been facing financial problems despite a loyal fan base, as it was unable to secure funds from the city for upgrades to the KeyArena, and was sold to Clay Bennett. Although Bennett initially agreed to keep the team in Seattle, he was unable to find the funds for a new arena, and moved the team to Oklahoma City, which caused backlash from the SuperSonics fans.<sup>48</sup>

Most of the other franchises that relocated did not cause the same anger that occurred during the Oklahoma City relocation, due to the lack of a large, loyal fanbase. The Vancouver Grizzlies, Kansas City Kings, and San Diego Clippers lasted for only six, ten, and six seasons respectively, and all suffered from poor attendance. In fact, the Grizzlies only averaged an attendance of about 13,737 fans per game in their last season, despite the General Motors Arena being capable of holding 19,193 fans.<sup>49</sup> From these teams, it can be seen that consistent low level of play often results in decreasing fan interest, which causes financial problems and can end with the relocation of the team.

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<sup>46</sup> "NBA & ABA Team Index," *Basketball-Reference.com*, Accessed March 12, 2019, <https://www.basketball-reference.com/teams/>.

<sup>47</sup> Kevin Nesgoda, "History of the Seattle Supersonics," *Sonics Rising*, Published December 25, 2014, <https://www.sonicsrising.com/pages/history>.

<sup>48</sup> Chicco Nacion, "A Tale of Two Cities: As Thunder Thrive, Sonics Fans Remember," *CBC news*, Published May 31, 2016, <https://www.cbc.ca/sports/basketball/nba/okc-fans-looks-ahead-seattle-look-back-1.3607915>.

<sup>49</sup> Perry Schwartz, "NBA: A Case Study of the Vancouver Grizzlies," *Bleacher Report*, Published October 3, 2017, <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/578763-the-vancouver-grizzlies-a-case-study>.

Currently, there are not any teams dominating the center of discussion regarding relocation. It is not appropriate to only consider attendance numbers, as they usually somewhat reflect solely the success of the team. However, the New Orleans Pelicans and Memphis Grizzlies are two teams that could be considered for relocation. Each franchise have had relatively mediocre tenures in their cities, and both are also two of the five least valuable franchises in the league.<sup>50</sup>

They have failed to establish a solid fanbase, and have perennially low attendance rates, even during their winning seasons. It may be in the interest of these kinds of franchises to pursue a more attractive market in other cities, and it is up to the delegates to decide which teams could be worth relocating.

## Potential Cities

### *Seattle*

Seattle has always been one of the most frequently considered cities for an NBA team, ever since the SuperSonics relocated to Oklahoma City. Seattle has a large and loyal basketball fanbase, who have continued to fight for their team to come back to their city. On June 16, 2008, the grassroots movement "Save Our Sonics" organized a rally protesting the relocation of the team, which had over 3,000 participants.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, the KeyArena is now being renovated with a cost of \$850 million, and will likely open in 2021, addressing the venue problem that the team experienced at the time of relocation.<sup>52</sup> Seattle was also recently approved for an expansion NHL team, which will become the 32nd team and play in the new arena in the 2021 NHL season.<sup>53</sup> There is a high demand for sports in Seattle, and if the logistics of an NBA team can be managed, the city would likely welcome a team with open arms.

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<sup>50</sup> Andrew Lynch, "Every NBA Franchise's Current Value, Ranked from 30 to 1," *FOX Sports*, Published February 15, 2017, <https://www.foxsports.com/nba/gallery/nba-teams-worth-value-forbes-valuation-021517>.

<sup>51</sup> Dan Raley, "3,000 Rally Loud and Proud to Keep Sonics in Seattle," *Seattlepi.com*, Published March 23, 2011, <https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/3-000-rally-loud-and-proud-to-keep-Sonics-in-1276771.php>.

<sup>52</sup> Geoff Baker, "Days after Groundbreaking, KeyArena Could Be Getting a New Contractor as Renovation Costs Soar," *The Seattle Times*, Published December 09, 2018,

<https://www.seattletimes.com/sports/hockey/a-switch-in-general-contractors-mulled-as-keyarena-renovation-aims-to-hit-2021-reopening-target/>.

<sup>53</sup> "NHL Approves Expansion," *NHL Seattle*, Accessed March 1, 2019, <https://www.nhlseattle.com/>.



## Las Vegas

Las Vegas is a hot spot for entertainment in the United States, and recently became home to the Las Vegas Golden Knights of the NHL, which reached the Stanley Cup Finals in its first season.<sup>54</sup> The colossal fan response has been cited as the prime condition for a new NBA team, carrying over hype to ensure good attendance numbers.<sup>55</sup> Las Vegas also held the 2007 NBA All-Star Game, even without an NBA team of its own. Furthermore, it currently holds the Las Vegas NBA Summer League, which is the official summer league of the NBA, in which all 30 NBA teams participate, where they try out different rosters that generally comprise of rookies, sophomores, and G-League players.<sup>56</sup> This makes Las Vegas a hub for NBA stars, meaning the accommodations, arenas, and community support are already prevalent in the city.<sup>57</sup>

## Vancouver

Once home to the Vancouver Grizzlies, many believe that Vancouver is still viable of housing the second Canadian NBA team. Although not as large as Seattle, Vancouver still has a basketball fan base, along with the Rogers Arena. The NBA Canada Series has shown that there is still demand for basketball in Vancouver, and if a new team could have more success than the abysmal performance of the Grizzlies in the late 90s, there may be potential for a team in Vancouver.<sup>58</sup> In addition, Vancouver has one of the most diverse populations in North America, with an especially large Chinese population.<sup>59</sup> The implementation of a new team in Vancouver could potentially strengthen the international appeal of the NBA. That being said, local officials and prospective owners are wary of the previous failure of the Vancouver Grizzlies.<sup>60</sup> Curbing public opinion, along with attracting a new team manager, would be predominate issues.

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<sup>54</sup>"2018 NHL Stanley Cup Playoffs Summary," *Hockey-Reference.com*, Accessed March 12, 2019.

[https://www.hockey-reference.com/playoffs/NHL\\_2018.html](https://www.hockey-reference.com/playoffs/NHL_2018.html).

<sup>55</sup>Nienke Van Rijn, "Teams Most Likely to Relocate," *We Are Basket*, Published September 20, 2018,

<http://wearebasket.net/teams-most-likely-to-relocate/>.

<sup>56</sup>Paul Kasabian, "NBA Summer League 2019 to Be Held July 5-15 in Las Vegas," *Bleacher Report*, Published January 18, 2019,

<https://bleacherreport.com/articles/2816450-nba-summer-league-2019-to-be-held-july-5-15-in-las-vegas>.

<sup>57</sup>Nienke Van Rijn, "Teams Most Likely to Relocate," *We Are Basket*, Published September 20, 2018,

<http://wearebasket.net/teams-most-likely-to-relocate/>.

<sup>58</sup>Mark Suleymanov, "NBA Canada Series 2018: Raptors to Play in Vancouver, Montreal," *Sporting News*, Published June 28, 2018,

<https://www.sportingnews.com/ca/nba/news/nba-canada-series-2018-schedule-toronto-raptors-brooklyn-nets-portland-trailblazers-vancouver-montreal/12b9n0v0fjktm1p6ndgz2kownx>.

<sup>59</sup>"Vancouver Population 2019," *Total Population by Country 2018*, Accessed March 12, 2019,

<http://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/vancouver-population/>.

<sup>60</sup>Nienke Van Rijn, "Teams Most Likely to Relocate," *We Are Basket*, Published September 20, 2018,

<http://wearebasket.net/teams-most-likely-to-relocate/>.

## *Mexico City*

Mexico City has held 8 NBA games since 2014 as a part of the NBA Global Games, and the Mexico City Arena has a maximum capacity of 22 300, larger than any arena currently housing NBA teams.<sup>61</sup> While a team in Mexico City could serve as a large step towards continuing the international footprint of the NBA, it may also be overly ambitious. Certain NBA players may be against living in Mexico City, and unlike cities like Seattle, it is uncertain as to whether the team would be able to establish a solid fanbase. Furthermore, Mexico City is a full two-hour flight from the closest NBA stadium.<sup>62</sup> The logistical and economic problems of long and expensive flights may prove too large a burden to bear. However, Mexico City is one of the largest cities in the world, and without any professional American teams, the only competition would be from Mexican football leagues. There could be enormous potential for an NBA team in Mexico City, but it could also be a trainwreck. Establishing a team there would be a high-risk, but potentially high-reward decision.

## Questions to Consider:

1. Why were the Vancouver Grizzlies unable to become a successful franchise like the Toronto Raptors? What is essential to establishing a sustainable new team?
2. Should the NBA focus more on expansion or relocation?
3. How could expansion and relocation benefit or harm the NBA?

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<sup>61</sup> Alfredo Mancilla, "Arena Ciudad De México Is the Country's Basketball Crown Jewel," *ESPN*, Published January 12, 2017, [http://www.espn.com/blog/onenacion/post/\\_id/6699/arena-ciudad-de-mexico-is-the-countrys-basketball-crown-jewel](http://www.espn.com/blog/onenacion/post/_id/6699/arena-ciudad-de-mexico-is-the-countrys-basketball-crown-jewel).

<sup>62</sup> Nienke Van Rijn, "Teams Most Likely to Relocate," *We Are Basket*, Published September 20, 2018, <http://wearebasket.net/teams-most-likely-to-relocate/>.

## Suggested Reading List:

*Summary of Draft Expansion Rules*

[https://www.nba.com/hornets/news/draft\\_central\\_expansion\\_rules\\_summary.html](https://www.nba.com/hornets/news/draft_central_expansion_rules_summary.html)

*How to Assess Expansion Cities*

<https://repository.usfca.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1009&context=ess>

*Expansion Fees*

[http://www.espn.com/nba/story/\\_/id/10442963/nba-commissioner-adam-silver-talks-expansion](http://www.espn.com/nba/story/_/id/10442963/nba-commissioner-adam-silver-talks-expansion)

*Seattle*

<https://deadspin.com/report-potential-nba-expansion-to-seattle-may-not-happ-1829578230>

*Vancouver*

<https://dailyhive.com/vancouver/nba-team-cost-canucks-owner-2018>

*Mexico City*

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/15/sports/nba-mexico-city.html>

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