

## Banner 18 Or Bust?

By Jesse Almeida 11/6/23

After a long and dreadful summer with the Red Sox, the wait is finally over. The Boston Celtics are back in action. The best team in Boston is back center stage and expectations have not been this high since 2008. The team is looking very different since the C's game 7 loss to Miami in the Eastern Conference Finals. You rarely see teams give up many pieces of their roster and get better from it. But that is exactly what the Boston Celtics did. There were definitely a couple pieces that left in which Celtics fans were hurt. The overall picture of the moves though made this team better and have solidified them as one of the favorites to win it all.

One of the biggest things that the Celtics needed was to add veteran presence to the coaching staff behind Joe Mazzula. Many fans were calling out the Celtics to fire Mazzula. But in his first season with little to zero preparation and experience, Joe got the Celtics within a game back to the NBA Finals. After a full offseason to prepare for the upcoming season, Joe has that first season under his belt and a staff that can propel him in certain situations in game. The first coach hired was Sam Cassell. Cassell brings championship pedigree to the C's as he won 3 championships. One of them was with Boston in 2008. Sam is one of the most respected coaches in the league, which helps him connect with the players and will also be there for them. Cassell's last coaching job came from Philadelphia which will also help the C's when facing Embiid and Maxey. Another hire for the C's was Phil Pressey. Phil was hired as a player enhancement coach. Pressey was a point guard for the Celtics at one time in his career and will help monitor and help the development of the guards on the C's. The final key hire in the coaching staff was Charles Lee becoming the lead assistant. Charles Lee was last the assistant coach for the Milwaukee Bucks. Lee spent his entire coaching career under Mike Budenholzer. Which means that he has experience in the NBA as a coach. Along with this, the biggest key is that Lee is coming from the Bucks. Meaning that he knows how to slow down Giannis, and the players he coached. Experience was added to this coaching staff along with taking these coaches from teams that are going to be key when facing contenders in the east.

As for the roster, major moves were made to add more top end talent for the Celtics. The first move that the Celtics made was one that blew Celtics fans away. The Celtics went out right before the NBA draft and traded for Kristaps Porzingis or as known as the Unicorn. KP had his best season in his career last year with the Washington Wizards. Porzingis had 23.2 points per game, with 8.4 rebounds a game, 2.7 assists per game, and 1.5 blocks a game. The shooting

percentages were spectacular for Porzingis as he shot nearly .500 from the field, and .385 from three. The Celtics needed a big this offseason and they got one of the best stretch bigs in the game who can post up, and use the pick and roll to create open shots for himself, and someone whose defense has been underrated in the league. The shocking part was who Brad Stevens gave up to get the Unicorn. Brad ended up doing a three team deal between the Wizards, and the Grizzlies. Ended up getting Danilo Gallinari, Mike Muscala and the 35th pick from the Celtics and Tyus Jones from Memphis. Memphis would end up getting Marcus Smart who was known as the longest tenured Celtic and the heart and soul of the team. It was a very emotional trade for Celtics fans, however it was a deal that definitely favored Boston and a deal that just had to be done.

After small signings in the offseason for the back end of the bench, fans thought that Brad made his splash and he was done. This was true until the Milwaukee Bucks went out and traded for Damian Lillard. As the details came out, there was a player in that deal that everyone in the league would do whatever it took to get them on their team. This player was going to be a part of a separate deal to send him off to a contender and Brad Stevens jumped on this opportunity immediately. Once it was official that Dame was a Buck, Milwaukee was the favorites to win it all. But then a few days later, the Boston Celtics made another blockbuster move for the second time in the offseason. Brad ended up trading Malcolm Brogdon, Robert Williams, and 2 first round picks to the Portland Trail Blazers in exchange for Jrue Holiday. One of the Celtics other biggest needs was that Boston needed a playmaking guard. Not only did they get that in Jrue, but they also got a guy who can shoot the ball better than Smart, gives up the ball much less than Smart, and is an all star talent. On the defensive end, Holiday is no joke as the 6'5" point guard is one of the best defensive guards in the NBA. The Jrue is a 2x all star, a 5x all defensive player, a gold medal winner, and a NBA Champion in 2021. Last year with Milwaukee, Holiday averaged 19.3 points a game, 7.4 assists a game, 5.1 rebounds a game, and had over a steal a game. Holiday shot .479 from the field, and .384 from three. Jrue is also well liked in the locker room where he has 3 teammate of the year awards in 4 seasons. His energy and competitiveness is remarkable. Jrue will leave it all on the court and do what needs to be done in order to get his team the win.

The Celtics this offseason lost Marcus Smart, Grant Williams, Robert Williams, and Malcolm Brogdon. The part about this that is beyond belief is that Boston still got better this

offseason. The Celtics top 6 players on their roster got more talented this offseason, and in the postseason, it comes down to your best 7-8 players vs your opponents best 7-8 players. Boston should be one of if not the best teams in the NBA at the end of the regular season, either the 1 or 2 seed in the east. As for the playoffs the Celtics should be back in the Eastern Conference Finals, and honestly should be winning banner 18 this season.