

What is Going On With the Celtics?

By Jesse Almeida written on 3/2/21

The Boston Celtics have been known as a team that has been in the hunt for a championship for the last 6 years. The Celtics have made it so close to just be in the NBA Finals many times but could not seal the deal. With the roller coaster type year that Boston has had so far at this point, you have to think in the back of your mind how do the Celtics get to that next level?

Right now at this moment, the Celtics are an 18-17 team, and 4th in the Eastern Conference. Thankfully other than Brooklyn, Philadelphia, and Milwaukee, every other team is close to the .500 mark. This is the only reason Boston is in the middle of the pack at the moment because let's just say that the Celtics were in the Western Conference, they would be out of the playoffs. This issue could be very simple or this issue could be a very difficult one to solve. But one thing that we do know is that the Celtics have lacked effort, more so late in games. For example on February 21st, the Celtics lost to the Pelicans after being up by 24 at one point in the 3rd Quarter. There is just no reason for that to happen whatsoever. Remember how we felt when Houston blew that 28 point lead to us a few seasons ago? Yeah well we were on the opposite end of the stick this time. It was embarrassing. To make it worse two days later the Celtics lost to a below .500 Mavericks team in the final minutes of the game. Even though Boston had three good wins in a row, it has been bad loss after bad loss. Even Danny Ainge himself has made this claim. Danny says, "The intensity level hasn't been there. I don't know how to explain it. Our team isn't playing well. They don't play hard all the time. I don't have an explanation. It's been frustrating for the players and the coaches." This responsibility falls on the players obviously, however this one falls on the staff as well.

Let's start with Brad Stevens. It is the job of the coach to motivate his players and keep them in focus all the time. Some of these games have been clear as day that the Celtics are not focused, and when they do get back into focus they are already behind the 8 ball. The ball movement has not been there at all and this could be due to the fact that Marcus Smart is out. What we have been seeing is a ton of iso basketball being

played. The ball is not moving around and it makes it easier for opponents to defend because the iso makes it clear as day who is going to take the shot. The Celtics are 13th in 3 point percentage at 36.7%, however they are ranked 22nd in the NBA in points per game with 111.1, 16th in total field goal percentage at 46.4%, and 27th in the NBA in assists per game at 22.3. The defense has done its job so far as opponents only score 110.4 points a game against the Celtics. That is 7th in the NBA. The defense has been there for the Celtics but the offense has not been able to click. Brad needs to get the offense going and change the pace of play outside of Jayson Tatum and Jaylen Brown because the Celtics are much better offensively than they have shown.

Now we move on to Danny Ainge, known as “trader Danny”. You can not blame Danny for the way that the players have underachieved so far, however you can make the debate on past decisions that put them in this spot right now. Staying put at the previous trade deadlines when the Celtics clearly had some needs to fulfill is a reason that they have not been an over the top team the last couple years. Last year they needed scoring off the bench and a big to protect the paint and they made zero moves and the lack of those needs showed in the Eastern Conference Finals. The year before last year they needed that center that could match up against Giannis and some veteran presence and Danny did nothing. The Celtics ended up knocked out by Giannis and the Bucks in the second round. For the last couple years, Danny had multiple assets, and draft picks to get them the pieces they needed to put them over the top and decided to keep them. The lack of improving the roster with needs during the seasons has cost the Celtics at least 1 but you could argue 2 trips to the NBA Finals. If Danny Ainge does not do anything by the deadline or does not pick up anyone during the buyout market this year, questions will come up about Danny’s job moving forward.

So that brings us to what do the Celtics need to do before or on the trade deadline. The Celtics have a 5 million dollar trade player exception from Enes Kanter along with a 28.5 million dollar trade player exception from Gordon Hayward. They have their own first round picks that they can throw into a deal along with young assets that could be a part of a deal as well. The biggest thing the Celtics need is scoring. The C’s need someone who knows how to score the ball. Some names that come to mind for names like that are John Collins, Victor Oladipo, Andre Drummond, and Nikola Vucivic.

All of these names give you scoring inside or on the 3 point line other than Drummond who is more of an in the paint scorer and right now has 17.5 points a game. The Celtics will be active in the buyout market and should consider some free agents as well. Drummond who I predict will hit the buyout market should be a name the Celtics should be all over if he gets bought out. Blake Griffin even though he is only averaging 12.2 points a game could be another player that will be in the buyout market that the C's should consider. Another thing the Celtics lack that not alot of people are talking about is that tough mentality. What I mean by that is players like Marcus Smart, Patrick Beverley. They are missing that player who will do anything to grind out a win, and that player is in the free agent market. Isaiah Thomas. This would be a perfect fit for Boston because you know the type of player Isaiah is. He never gives up and he would bring that toughness mentality to this team along with scoring off the bench. With how he played on team USA, it is not only clear that he deserves another chance in the NBA, but it is clear that he belongs on an NBA roster. It might be time for IT to phone home.

Sources:

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