

This is Celtics Basketball  
By Jesse Almeida 2/16/22

When a team does not look as good as they should, you always have the right to criticize them for underachieving. When your team is hyped up to be one of the best, you feel so ecstatic to watch your team play at the beginning of the year. But when they do not play to their potential, you feel disappointment. Well, that has been Celtics fans for the last  $\frac{2}{3}$  seasons, and you could even say up to January. I personally have dragged the C's to the mud for their play. It was not fun to do even though it was entertaining for podcasts, but as a Celtics fan, did I want to rip on them? No, I wanted to see the Celtics play the right way, compete, and to be one of the better teams in the league. Finally, I feel like I can safely say that the Celtics are back and are a team to watch out for.

As of recently, the Celtics were on a 9 game winning streak. The Celtics last game before the All Star break was a loss to a bad Detroit team who just played better than the Celtics. Does it hurt? Yes. Should you be disappointed after that performance? Absolutely. However, we're the C's missing key players? Yes. Most importantly it was their 2nd game of a back to back just coming back from Philly, and it was their 3rd game in the last 4 days. So, even though the Celtics did not play well against the Pistons, they definitely deserve a pass. Other than that, the Celtics have been blowing the doors off of bad teams, and beating good teams as well. In their last 21 games which dates back to January 8th against the Knicks (Which I attended and Jayson Tatum signed my jersey), the Celtics are 16-5, and currently in 6th place in the Eastern Conference. Seeds 1-6 in the NBA are guaranteed a playoff spot and do not have to play in the "play in" tournament, while seeds 7-10 play in the tournament for the final 2 spots. The Celtics went from being a borderline "play in" team to currently owning a playoff spot. How did this happen?

Something that has been expressed over a period of time is that the Celtics needed to move the ball more and not play so much "iso" or in simpler terms 1 on 1. They needed to make the right play by passing the ball around to find an open shooter, use the pick and roll to have options, or attack the basket to either get the easy bucket, or to create more open shots rather than dribbling the ball for too long just to take a contested shot. The Celtics needed more of a variety of ways to score because they were too predictable, and they have drastically improved offensively. The ball is moving alot more, the players are making the right plays, and everyone looks together.

The trade deadline passed and Brad Stevens made two key moves that will help the C's now and in the future. The first trade that he made was a shocking deal but one that will be looked at as a perfect fit. The Celtics made a trade with San Antonio to acquire Derrick White Point Guard/Shooting Guard in exchange for Josh Richardson, Romeo Langford, and a first round pick. What made this deal interesting is that Josh Richardson was a good fit in Boston off of the bench. He was shooting well for the season and it had fans wondering why Brad made this move? It's simple, Derrick White is an overall better player. He can score at 16 points a game, along with 6 assists a night, and he is one of the better defending guards in basketball. Is he a better shooter than Richardson? No, but he is a much better playmaker, defender, and is way more consistent than Richardson. The Celtics needed someone who is more consistent, and does not need the ball in his hands to succeed. White fits those categories. He has looked great in the first few games that he has played in so far and the best part is that he will be in Boston for 3 more seasons after this one. Derrick White has been a great fit in Boston. The next trade Brad made was another shocker but an upgrade at the backup center position for sure. Brad made a trade with Houston for Daniel Theis in exchange for Dennis Schroder, Enes Freedom, and Bruno Fernando. Theis is much better than both Freedom and Fernando, however trading Schroder for Theis does hurt a little. Personally, I thought Schroder was playing well for the Celtics and gave them a scoring spark off of the bench, and in my opinion you could have gotten a better return for Schroder. However Theis does have control as well as he signed a 4 year deal last off-season. The Celtics improved their roster while getting under the tax so they can open up other options in the off-season, while at the same time making improvements for the future.

The Celtics are looking to be heading in the right direction. Brad made some crucial upgrades that will help the C's now and in the future. Jayson Tatum and Jaylen Brown have been improving driving to the basket more, and moving the ball around. Marcus Smart has finally bought into his role as the point guard. The defense looks better than ever, and the Celtics have had great production off of the bench. The Celtics can easily finish somewhere in the 4-6 range in the east if they keep this up, and if they continue to play like they have been, the Celtics have a chance to make some noise in the postseason.