

FANTASY

NBA Fantasy: 5 breakout players for 2025-26 season

Opportunity knocks for Matas Buzelis, Sam Hauser, Andrew Nembhard, Kevin Porter Jr. and Jaylen Wells this season.

Mike Barner, RotoWire.com

August 27, 2025 9:53 AM



In 30 games with the Bucks, Kevin Porter Jr. averaged 11.7 points, 3.9 rebounds, 3.7 assists and 1.3 steals in 19.9 minutes per game.

As we prepare to enter the month of September, it's not too early to be thinking about your fantasy basketball drafts for next season. Identifying potential breakout players can be key. Last season, [Josh Hart](#) and [Payton Pritchard](#) were among the players who took

their fantasy games to another level. Let's highlight five potential breakout players for this upcoming campaign.



Matas Buzelis, Chicago Bulls

2024-25 Season: 8.6 PPG, 3.5 RPG, 1.0 APG, 82nd Current Yahoo Fantasy Rank

The Bulls continue to make the Play-In Tournament, but haven't been able to emerge from it victorious. Chicago still has [Nikola Vučević](#) and [Coby White](#) to lead the way and they have some respectable depth with [Kevin Huerter](#), [Tre Jones](#), [Zach Collins](#) and [Isaac Okoro](#) on the roster.

The Bulls might have hit on Buzelis, who they selected with the 11th pick in the 2024 draft. His rookie averages of 8.6 points, 3.5 rebounds, 0.9 blocks and 1.2 3-pointers don't jump off the page, but he didn't play much early in the season. After he became a starter in February, he averaged 13.0 points, 4.5 rebounds, 1.1 blocks and 1.7 3-pointers over 31 games. He shot 47.3% from the field, 80.6% from the free-throw line and 34.9% from behind the arc during that span.

Buzelis should be primed to enter this season as the Bulls' starting power forward. There is no reason to believe that he can't average around 30 minutes a game in that role, if not more. With his ability to block shots and hit 3-pointers, he is someone to target in drafts.



Jaylen Wells, Memphis Grizzlies

2024-25 Season: 10.4 PPG, 3.4 RPG, 1.7 APG, 111th Current Yahoo Fantasy Rank

The Grizzlies selected Wells in the second round of the 2024 draft, and he immediately made an impact. He came off the bench for the first five games of last season, then entered the starting lineup. He never relinquished the role, finishing with averages of 10.4

points, 3.4 rebounds and 1.7 3-pointers. Despite his starting job, he averaged a modest 26 minutes per game.

One of the big moves of the offseason was the Grizzlies trading [Desmond Bane](#) to the Magic. Bane was one of the focal points of their scoring attack, averaging 19.2 points and posting a 23.3% usage rate last season. That marked the fourth straight season in which Bane averaged at least 18.2 points.

The Grizzlies made some depth additions with [Ty Jerome](#) and [Kentavious Caldwell-Pope](#), and drafted [Cedric Coward](#). However, none of them figure to handle the scoring burden that Bane had. Wells should not only continue to start this season, but he will likely play more minutes and see an increase in his 15.9% usage rate. He shot 35.2% from behind the arc last season, so more minutes and more shot attempts could propel him to average more than 2.0 3-pointers per game, while also chipping in more in other counting stats.



Andrew Nembhard, Indiana Pacers

2024-25 Season: 12.5 PPG, 3.2 RPG, 4.7 APG, 99th Current Yahoo Fantasy Rank

A run to the NBA Finals last season ended in disaster for the Pacers when [Tyrese Haliburton](#) tore his Achilles. He will be out for the entire 2025-26 season, which will make it difficult for the Pacers to repeat their success.

There is no one player on the roster who can make up for Haliburton's production. The Pacers should use both Nembhard and [T.J. McConnell](#) to soak up Haliburton's minutes at point guard. McConnell is a hard-nosed player who can rack up stats in a hurry when given added playing time. However, he has never averaged more than 26 minutes per game in a season. The last three seasons, he has averaged 20 minutes or fewer. Given his all-out style of play, it's difficult to envision him holding up over 82 games if the Pacers play him 30+ minutes a night.

McConnell should see an increase in production as well, but Nembhard is the more appealing option for fantasy purposes. He averaged 33 minutes per game last season,

which helped him produce 12.5 points, 3.2 rebounds, 4.7 assists and 1.5 steals. Nembhard should continue to average over 30 minutes per game, so the possibility of added playing time to fill the open gap of Haliburton leaves him with the potential for a career season.



Kevin Porter Jr., Milwaukee Bucks

2024-25 Season: 11.2 PPG, 3.6 RPG, 5.4 APG, 152nd Current Yahoo Fantasy Rank

The Bucks made headlines this summer when they waived [Damian Lillard](#), who is recovering from a torn Achilles that could keep him out for all of this season. They did so to add [Myles Turner](#), who provides a significant upgrade at center for them over [Brook Lopez](#). However, with a lot of money tied up in their front court, the Bucks were left to bargain shop at their guard spots. Their guard depth chart includes [Gary Trent Jr.](#), [Cole Anthony](#), [A.J. Green](#), [Ryan Rollins](#) and [Gary Harris](#).

The most notable move that the Bucks made at guard was signing Porter Jr. to a two-year deal. He didn't do much with the Clippers last season, but he saw his production increase when he was traded to the Bucks. With the Bucks, he averaged 11.7 points, 3.9 rebounds, 3.7 assists, 1.3 steals and 1.0 3-pointers in 19.9 minutes per game.

With Lillard out, Porter Jr. averaged 30 minutes in the Bucks' playoff series against the Pacers. He only shot 39.6% from the field in the series, but he still averaged 11.2 points, 3.6 rebounds, 5.4 assists and 1.4 3-pointers.

This might be cheating a bit to consider Porter Jr. a potential breakout player. He isn't that far removed from a 2022-23 season with the Rockets in which he averaged 19.2 points, 5.3 rebounds, 5.7 assists, 1.4 steals and 2.4 3-pointers over 34 minutes per game. However, he hasn't had much fantasy impact since then. Given the Bucks' options at guards, Porter Jr. should average somewhere between 25 and 30 minutes per game this season. With his ability to contribute in multiple categories, that kind of playing time leaves him with appealing upside.

Sam Hauser, Boston Celtics



2024-25 Season: 3.5 PPG, 1.5 RPG, 0.5 APG, 57th Current Yahoo Fantasy Rank

When [Jayson Tatum](#) tore his Achilles against the Knicks in the playoffs, it changed the direction of the Celtics' franchise. With him potentially missing all of next season, the Celtics decided to get their cap in order. To shed some payroll, they traded away [Kristaps Porziņģis](#) and [Jrue Holiday](#). [Luke Kornet](#) also left in free agency, and while Al Horford has yet to sign with another team, it appears unlikely that he will return to Boston.

The Celtics landed [Anfernee Simons](#) in the Holiday trade, but they didn't make any other big additions this summer. Their power forward and center spots are especially thin. Options include [Neemias Queta](#), [Chris Boucher](#), [Luka Garza](#) and [Xavier Tillman](#). With that in mind, Hauser will have the opportunity to earn more playing time.

Hauser is a three-point specialist. He has shot at least 41.6% from behind the arc in all four seasons of his career. If he can approach 30 minutes a game, he has the potential to average 3.0 3-pointers per game, while also becoming more of a factor in rebounds. For those hunting for threes late in drafts, Hauser should be a top target.

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