

FANTASY

# NBA Fantasy: Forward tiers for 2025-26

RotoWire breaks down forwards to consider drafting in fantasy for the 2025-26 NBA season.

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Kevin Durant will kick off his 2025-26 season on a new team of the Houston Rockets.

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With so many talented forwards in the NBA, there are often differences of opinion as to how they should be ranked. While some forwards are sharpshooting wing players, others are board-crashing hybrid centers who are nightly double-double threats. It's a challenge

to combine those qualities and create a streamlined list, but we've done our best and categorized the position into five tiers. We also identified some honorable mention candidates who could rise in the rankings this season.

## Tier 1



Jaylen Brown and Paolo Banchero find themselves in Tier 1 of the fantasy forwards list.

**Giannis Antetokounmpo, Milwaukee Bucks:** Antetokounmpo is a shoo-in as the first forward off the board. The All-Star averaged 30.9 points, 11.9 rebounds, 6.5 assists and 1.2 blocks over 67 games, and it's hard to find a player who makes multi-category contributions like the 12-year pro. A superior presence on both sides of the ball, Antetokounmpo balked at other offers and elected to stick with the Bucks, who have a window of opportunity in a weakened Eastern Conference.

**Kevin Durant, Houston Rockets:** Although most of Durant's best years are behind him, there's no questioning Durant's difference-making abilities. He should fit right into his role in Houston, and as long as he stays healthy, he'll be a force to be reckoned with and deserves a slot in the first tier.

**Paolo Banchero, Orlando Magic:** Most may question a first-tier placement for Banchero, who enters his fourth year in the pros. With the addition of [Desmond Bane](#), the Magic are

getting closer to a playoff-caliber squad, and Banchero will be their anchor. He had an excellent 2024-25 campaign, averaging 25.9 points, 7.5 rebounds and 4.8 assists.

**Jaylen Brown, Boston Celtics:** With [Jayson Tatum](#) (Achilles) out until April at the earliest, pressure will be on Brown to deliver. Although the squad added [Anfernee Simons](#) and acquired some strength in the interior, Tatum's injury and the departure of [Kristaps Porziņģis](#) leave Boston vulnerable to stronger teams in the conference. Brown will be called upon to be the team's top scoring option. Usually a pure shooter with minimal defensive metrics, Brown should see a boost in nearly every statistical category.

## Tier 2



LeBron James finished 10th in total fantasy points last season.

**LeBron James, Los Angeles Lakers:** James is inching ever closer to retirement with each passing year. Despite his age, I doubt JJ Redick can convince James to modify his workload. James returns this year for one reason—a final shot at an NBA Championship, and with [Luka Dončić](#) as the new headliner, he has a shot to do just that. I'd expect a slight lift in assists as he gains more rapport with Dončić, but he'll still have elite scoring and rebounding numbers to round out his stat lines.

**Pascal Siakam, Indiana Pacers:** Some may view Siakam's ranking as a little high, but it's hard to argue with last season's numbers. Over 78 games, Siakam averaged 20.2 points, 6.9 rebounds and 3.4 assists. That's a high floor, and Siakam often recorded peaks above these numbers, especially in critical situations. The championship-caliber roster should continue to make waves in the East, and Siakam could be the key difference-maker, especially with [Tyrese Haliburton](#) (Achilles) sidelined for the season.

**Scottie Barnes, Toronto Raptors:** Barnes is Toronto's anchor on both sides of the ball, and although the team was out of the playoff hunt, Barnes enjoyed an excellent fourth season, averaging 19.3 points, 7.7 rebounds, 5.8 assists, 1.2 steals and 1.0 blocks. A hand injury slowed down his production after the All-Star break, but he finished with a flourish and will be fully healthy for the season opener.

**Julius Randle, Minnesota Timberwolves:** Although he sometimes struggled with consistency last season, he threw down monster stat lines with abandon when he was dialed in. A nightly double-double threat, Randle's presence was a big part of making the Timberwolves a playoff-caliber threat, as Randle and [Rudy Gobert](#) combined to form one of the best frontcourts in the league. Minnesota returns with an almost identical lineup, and Randle is projected to have another great campaign.

**Kawhi Leonard, Los Angeles Clippers:** Leonard probably deserves a higher ranking, but predicting yearly outcomes for the oft-injured Leonard is a risky endeavor. If we can check off some concerns, we could give him a higher ranking. There's no questioning his ability to transform a team into a playoff favorite. He did it with Toronto—he can certainly do it in Inglewood.

**Cooper Flagg, Dallas Mavericks:** There's no shortage of Cooper Flagg hype, which may become a prophecy that's difficult to fulfill, however there's no question that he'll make an immediate impact here. Based on his college performances, Flagg checks all the boxes. He'll face little competition at the position and will serve as a great complement to [Anthony Davis](#). A very solid Tier 2 candidate.

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## Tier 3



Jimmy Butler III averaged 35.9 fantasy points per game last season.

**Evan Mobley, Cleveland Cavaliers:** Although Mobley could be considered a center, his role with Cleveland is cemented as the interior complement to [Jarrett Allen](#), who is the traditional five. Mobley gets incrementally better with every season, and he posted career highs in points (18.5) and also excelled with averages of 9.3 rebounds and 1.6 blocked shots. Mobley had 37 double-doubles last season, as he has the potential to maintain or exceed that total.

**DeMar DeRozan, Sacramento Kings:** DeRozan slid into a full-time role with the Kings last season, and although the 16-year pro isn't getting any younger, he's still dropping monster numbers. He has a high ceiling when he's dialed in, but his 2024 averages of 22.2 points, 4.4 assists and 3.9 rebounds over 77 games also demonstrate a solid floor. The mid-season addition of [Zach LaVine](#) also helped out DeRozan's bottom line.

**Lauri Markkanen, Utah Jazz:** Although injuries have been a concern for Markkanen, he recently racked up 48 points with the Finnish National Team in a recent exhibition game. He seems primed and ready to return to NBA action and get back to his high-scoring ways with the Jazz, which desperately needs his production. Markkanen was out for two significant stretches last season and recorded only 47 games, but his injury concerns

seem to be far behind him. If he can stay healthy, he has all the tools to be a top-10 forward.

**Jalen Williams, Oklahoma City Thunder:** Williams was clutch in last year's playoff run, and the third-year pro improved by leaps and bounds during the course of the regular season. He recorded career-highs in almost every statistical category, and thanks to contract extensions for the team's core, Williams and his teammates should be in great shape for another playoff run. William is fun to watch and has that star-quality swagger when he plays, adding to his well-deserved ranking.

**Jimmy Butler III, Golden State Warriors:** Butler III's advanced age is a major reason why he isn't ranked higher, but he should still make a significant impact after joining the Warriors midway through the 2024 season. Butler III stated that an offseason of work will elevate synergy with his teammates, but we saw the building blocks formed as the team made a run for the playoffs. Even if Butler III's numbers drop off, he's an excellent defender who will deliver in critical moments, placing less dependency on late-game heroics from [Stephen Curry](#).

**Miles Bridges, Charlotte Hornets:** Bridges quietly continues to put up great numbers every season. He appeared in 64 games and was in the upper echelons of the forward category last season, averaging 20.2 points, 7.5 rebounds and 3.9 assists. Mixing slashing power and perimeter efficiency, Bridges is an excellent fantasy sleeper who could be around in drafts after more notable names go off the board.

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## Tier 4



Zion Williamson played only 30 games last season but averaged 44.6 fantasy points when on the floor.

**Zion Williamson, New Orleans Pelicans:** Zion earns this ranking based on raw talent alone because the former Duke standout has shown little to ensure his reliability over the course of his career. After a promising 2023 campaign, he appeared in only 30 games last season. At only 25, it's way too soon to give up on Williamson, and he's set for monster seasons if he can stay on the court. There's no question that the Pelicans need his help.

**Jalen Johnson, Atlanta Hawks:** A torn labrum derailed Johnson's 2024 campaign, but there's no denying the 23-year-old's potential, especially as a great off-the-glass defender. He's projected to be ready for training camp while still undergoing rehab on the shoulder, and he should make an immediate impact with the first unit. The team added Kristaps Porziņģis, but he's a more likely presence at the four while Johnson can be effective at the wing. He's a skilled defender who can drop mid-range shots, making him a little more versatile than Porziņģis overall.

**Franz Wagner, Orlando Magic:** Wagner is part of the promising core of Magic standouts, and they'll be a dangerous team if all the cylinders click. Wagner posted career-high numbers last season, averaging 24.2 points, 5.7 rebounds, 4.7 assists, and 1.2 steals over 60 games. There was merit to rank Wagner higher, but the team may need a period

of adjustment while it integrates Desmond Bane into the offense, and his acquisition may affect Wagner the most.

**Mikal Bridges, New York Knicks:** Bridges was an excellent contributor for the Knicks last season, averaging 17.6 points, 3.7 assists and 3.2 rebounds over a full 82 games. While he played some time at the off-guard position, the 6-6 Villanova product is usually considered a wing player who worked at small forward often. The Knicks will be marching out a very similar lineup this season, and there's no reason for a major adjustment in Bridges' production.

**Brandon Ingram, Toronto Raptors:** Although Ingram has played in the backcourt at times in his career, he's more likely to occupy a forward spot with the Raptors, who already have [Immanuel Quickley](#) and [RJ Barrett](#) manning the guard positions. It will be interesting to see if Ingram can engineer a career renewal with his new team, as he still has the tools to perform at a high level. All systems are go after recovering from an ankle injury, and good things may be on the horizon for the veteran.

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## Tier 5



OG Anunoby averaged 18.0 points, 4.8 rebounds, 2.2 assists and 1.5 steals last season.

**Aaron Gordon, Denver Nuggets:** Gordon is as dependable as they come, although an injury kept Gordon out of action for three weeks last season. The Nuggets barely played break-even ball during that absence, highlighting the importance of Gordon to his team's effectiveness. Gordon's a hustler with great all-around numbers, and though [Nikola Jokić](#) is the highlight reel for the team, Gordon is a great interior defender who will make his presence known off the glass.

**Cameron Johnson, Denver Nuggets:** We will stick with Denver here and discuss Johnson, who will fill the gap left by [Michael Porter Jr.](#) Johnson is arguably a better perimeter threat than Porter Jr., and probably a bit quicker. The team obviously had some confidence in dealing the veteran Nugget away and see Johnson as an upgrade at a critical position for Denver. Johnson has proved himself during stints with Brooklyn and Phoenix, and he should fit right in with the Nuggets.

**John Collins, Los Angeles Clippers:** This is a great upgrade for the Clippers, who can now solidify Leonard at the wing and give more size and durability inside alongside [Ivica Zubac](#), who had a career season while enduring extended minutes. Collins has played center occasionally with Atlanta and Utah, but the Clippers won't be employing him there thanks to a center depth chart featuring Zubac, [Brook Lopez](#) and 2025 first-round pick [Yanic Konan](#) Niederhäuser.

**OG Anunoby, New York Knicks:** Anunoby could be a second scoring option on another team, but it's an uphill battle when you're on New York's talent-stacked roster. Despite that uphill battle, Anunoby had an excellent season. Averaging 18.0 points, 4.8 rebounds, 2.2 assists and 1.5 steals. Anunoby has intangible defensive skills that don't show up in the metrics, which is a major reason for his inclusion here. He'll occasionally spike with high numbers when the game flows in his direction.

**Kyle Kuzma, Milwaukee Bucks:** This marriage hasn't gone according to plan thus far, but there's ample evidence suggesting that Kuzma can integrate into this offense more effectively. He'll begin the season as a starter at the wing with only moderate competition below him on the depth chart. This is Kuzma's moment as he enters his first full season in Milwaukee.

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## Honorable mentions

As previously stated, ranking the forward position is almost always controversial, as there will be differences of opinion about which style of play deserves the better ranking. In no particular order, I've also listed some additional players who could have easily attained tier status.

**Brandon Miller, Charlotte Hornets**

**Jonathan Kuminga, Golden State Warriors**

**Andrew Wiggins, Miami Heat**

**Trey Murphy III, New Orleans Pelicans**

**Jerami Grant, Portland Trail Blazers**

**Jabari Smith Jr., Houston Rockets**

**Paul George, Philadelphia 76ers**

**Santi Aldama, Memphis Grizzlies**

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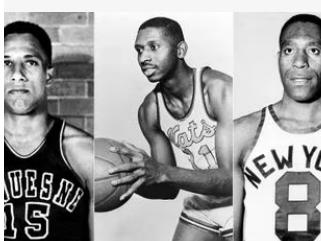
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