

2008 Olympic Basketball Preview

Many questions abound regarding the men's basketball competition at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Can the United States rebound from disappointing performances at the 2004 Sydney Olympics and the 2006 World Championships? Will China have a healthy roster as they compete in front of their home fans? Can Argentina win another gold medal after their amazing performance in 2004? Soon, these questions will all be answered. Let's take a look at the 2008 Olympic basketball tournament that will take place in Beijing this summer.

The Argentina squad is one of the main favorites to medal in this year's Olympic Games. Gold medal winners in 2004, they feature several great players, such as Manu Ginobili, Luis Scola, and Andres Nocioni. They are known for their good team play, outside shooting and passing. While they may not be the favorites after a poor showing in the 2006 World Championships, they will take advantage if the other teams make mistakes.

China's main questions surround the health of Yao Ming and Wang Zhizhi. Both players were taken out of the NBA season before its conclusion due to injuries they sustained. However, both will likely do whatever it takes to make sure they can compete as their home country hosts the 2008 Olympic Games. If they are able to play, China will boast a very intimidating front line, although their guard play is suspect. If Yao and Wang are able to play, don't bet against China to finish well.

The United States team is full of question marks. Their talent is never a problem, but in the 2004 Sydney Olympics, they failed to play as a cohesive unit and paid the price. After three losses and a disappointing bronze medal, it was clear that the rest of the world's talent had begun to catch up with the United States, and that throwing together a "dream team" every four years just wasn't going to get the job done. Since then, the philosophy behind the roster of the team has evolved, with coaches looking to have players that compliment each other, instead of a team of all stars.

Only time will tell whether the United States will win with their new approach, but it's hard to think of a team that faces more pressure than they do. The United States fans literally expect their team to win the gold medal, and anything less is absolute failure. Even after a disappointing several years on the international scene, the United States team is the favorite to win the gold medal in Beijing. As you can see, there's a lot of pressure on the U.S. players.

Other teams that could make a splash include Spain, who has a lot of great

talent, including Pau Gasol, Jose Calderon and Juan Carlos Navarro. Spain is a talented team that has an exciting style of play and doesn't back down to any challenge. If the Spanish players shoot well and play good team defense, the sky is the limit at the Beijing Olympics for them.

An exciting dark horse team is the Lithuanian team, which is famous for a free-wheeling, outside shooting style. They can win games with great outside shooting, or shoot themselves right out of the game, so it's hard to know what to expect from Lithuania. However, it's definitely assured that they will be entertaining to watch. They are led by Cleveland Cavaliers star Zydrunas Ilgauskas.

If Canada is able to qualify during July's 12-team tournament that will determine three more competitors, they could be exciting to watch as well. Canada's Steve Nash is a multiple-time NBA MVP who usually plays a fast-paced style of basketball that fits well with the international game.

The only way to find out what will really happen will be to watch the men's basketball tournament at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Make sure to follow the teams so you can stay up to date with one of the most exciting sports in the world!

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