

Shaking Up the NBA

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I'm shocked to be able to say this in 2019, but I believe that there is oil to be struck that the brilliant minds of the NBA are overlooking. Following the model of the NFL, the NBA should expand to 32 teams, adding two new franchises in the near future. There is a very practical and feasible set of steps the league could undergo in order to bring two new major markets into play for the NBA as soon as 2021. Doubters or traditionalists will shoot this idea down instantly, fearing the necessary division changes and growth periods commonly endured by expansion teams. However, I will answer both of these concerns, addressing both the grace period of building a squad and laying out the new format of the divisions. Simply put, the culture of the NBA has evolved in which a new franchise could sprout and thrive almost immediately now more so than ever. Between the rise in prominence of free agency enabling the mobility of players combined with the increase of metrics available to front offices, it wouldn't be crazy to see an expansion team making the playoffs within its first three years of inception. This idea was put on display most recently in the NHL with the addition of the Las Vegas Golden Knights in 2017. In fact, the team went on a historic run to the Stanley Cup Finals their first year in the league, finishing runner up to the San Jose Sharks in an epic seven game series. Though the transition for an NBA franchise might not be as swift, I don't doubt the ability for a pair of new teams to thrive in the modern atmosphere of the league. Furthermore, I see a tremendous opportunity for Adam Silver to build upon his legacy and to grow the brand of the NBA.

The New Destinations



Seattle- As the 18th largest city in America and the home of both MLB and NFL franchises, I don't doubt the ability for the Northwest's biggest city to welcome and sustain an NBA team going forward. In fact, Seattle already had an NBA team as recently as 2008 until the Supersonics moved to Oklahoma City and became the Thunder. The only reason the team left in the first place was due to the demands of the new owner and native Oklahoman Clay Bennett in 2006. Many public figures also support this move, as a loaded investment group has recently begun renovations on Seattle's KeyArena, the presumptive venue for the team's games should a team move there. On top of this, Seahawks QB Russell Wilson stated that he would support the funding of a new arena if an NBA team moved to Seattle. At the end of the day, the recreation of the Supersonics in Seattle seems like a no brainer given the hunger of that large market for a basketball team.

Las Vegas- With the expansion of the NHL to Las Vegas in 2017 and the NFL set to relocate a franchise there in 2020, the Sin City has established itself as a sports hub in recent years. Conveniently enough, the city actually built a new multi-purpose arena in 2016 that can seat 18,000 fans, just below the current average NBA arena capacity. This means the team would have no problem finding a venue to host their home games. In addition, the city has a relatively strong fan base as is with a population of over 640,000, yet the flood of 43 million annual tourists provides a massive influx of potential business for any franchise who seeks to plant their flag there. For some reason, there is an allure for people to blow their money in this city and any team who resides here would surely reap the benefits of such injudicious decision making.

The New Divisions

Eastern Conference			
<u>North Division</u>	<u>Atlantic Division</u>	<u>Heartland Region</u>	<u>Southeast Division</u>
Cleveland Cavaliers	Boston Celtics	Chicago Bulls	Atlanta Hawks
Detroit Pistons	Brooklyn Nets	Indiana Pacers	Charlotte Hornets
Philadelphia 76ers	New York Knicks	Memphis Grizzlies^	Miami Heat
Toronto Raptors	Washington Wizards	Milwaukee Bucks	Orlando Magic

^Switch in Conference

Western Conference			
<u>Central Division</u>	<u>South Division</u>	<u>Northwest Division</u>	<u>Southwest Division</u>
Denver Nuggets	Dallas Mavericks	Las Vegas Aces*	Golden State Warriors
Minnesota Timberwolves	Houston Rockets	Portland Trail Blazers	Los Angeles Clippers
Oklahoma City Thunder	New Orleans Pelicans	Sacramento Kings	Los Angeles Lakers
Utah Jazz	San Antonio Spurs	Seattle Supersonics*	Phoenix Suns

*Expansion Franchise

Though it is true the growth of the league will yield some unwelcomed changes in the flow of some teams, it will ultimately benefit the greater prosperity of the league as a whole. The ability to expand their already global brand into untapped major markets will reward both the NBA and the fans in the respective expansion cities. Moving forward, the league would have no trouble finding potential owners to bid over the rights of the incredible investment of a professional sports franchise, especially in a league as popular as the NBA. From a player's perspective, both cities would have the ability to draw in big name free agents, as Warriors star Kevin Durant has expressed interest in returning to Seattle if an expansion team landed there. Best of all, the proposed additions both have important pieces in place such as huge fan bases and operating arenas large enough to support their crowds. As I said earlier, these moves seem like a no-brainer and I am dumbfounded as to why there hasn't been a larger buzz around the growth of the NBA in these wonderful cities.