

NBA Teams as Star Wars characters

- Clayton Crowley

This article is exactly what the title says it's going to be. It's going to be all 30 NBA Teams and which Star Wars characters best capture their essence. I have included some neat footnotes and hyperlinks that should add information or comedic elements to this article¹. The names of the characters are links to pictures of the characters in case you've forgotten (or don't know) which character I'm talking about. I should say right away that I know a whole bunch about the NBA, but I know very little about Star Wars. I've seen all the movies, played the Lego Star Wars games and the old Battlefront games and that's it. And when I say that I've seen all the movies, I mean I've seen them all like once.² I could not tell you the titles of the original trilogy in order without looking them up³. During my "research" for this article I had to google what a "Mon Mothma" was. Regardless, I have a flaccid grasp of the plot of the Star Wars films and the characters therein.

Before we get to the goods, I do have to lay down some ground rules.

1. We are staying inside the realm of the cinematic Star Wars films. This includes anthology movies like *Rogue One* and *Solo* but does not include things like the *Star Wars Holiday Special*⁴ or the *Clone Wars* television show. I already feel lost. There's too much Star Wars, honestly.

¹ Results may vary

² The only movie I've definitely seen more than once is *Attack of the Clones* because it's the only one we had on VHS. I'd watch it again on my old VHS, but *I don't think the system works*.

³ A New Hope, The Empire Strikes Back, Return of the Jedi? I know the Empire Strikes Back is second (I just looked it up and I was right. Eat my ass)

⁴ Is this a real thing? Why don't people talk about it more? It sounds awesome and there's no way it could be bad in any way

2. I did not consider whether characters were heroes or villains in this piece (unless specified). If there is a team that everybody loves and that is metaphysically good but also makes you think of a cantaloupe that's been left in the sun too long, that team is Supreme Leader Snoke.
 3. For characters that appear in multiple films, I will specify which incarnation of that character I am invoking as needed.
 4. This is less of a rule and more of a general reminder that I don't know a lot about Star Wars, and also these are my own subjective comparisons so even though I might not be right, I literally cannot be wrong.
-

1. **Los Angeles Clippers** – General Grievous: General Grievous is an intergalactic Jedi hunter that is part robot and part not robot. The Clippers are part robot because they have Kawhi but also not entirely robot because there are some guys on that team that have a lot of energy and personality and when you combine those things, you get something that will fuck up your day like bad sushi. There *are* some health concerns though that could end up being nothing, slightly annoying, or full-blown robot Ebola.
2. **Sacramento Kings** – Wicket W. Warrick: Wicket W. Warrick is an Ewok. Ewoks are basically tickle-me-Elmos's that came to life and hate everything. They have a lot of spunk and heart, but at the end of the day are trying to kill shit with rocks and sticks and are still mostly cute and non-threatening. The Kings have a talented roster that will for sure do a little bit of booty whooping and may catch some teams unawares, but no one is going to circle their matchup

with the Kings and say “bring out the big guns because Wicket W. Warrick is hiding in these here trees”.

3. **Golden State Warriors** – Han Solo (The Force Awakens version): Han Solo, as he appears in this Star Wars sequel, is kind of (definitely) old and a little bit (lotta bit) past his prime. He is still motherfucking Han Solo and was *the shit* in his prime. The Warriors were the team of the decade and still maintain their championship core but have lost someone very important to them (a son almost (Durant)) and are certainly no longer as threatening as they once were. Make no mistake though, Han Solo was a goddamn shooter and the Warriors still have the shooter of all shooters⁶. Don’t doubt them in single combat, but don’t expect them to go off and win any Kessel runs.

4. **Phoenix Suns** – Jar Jar Binks (The Phantom Menace version): Hear me out. Jar Jar Binks sucks, right? And the Phoenix Suns suck, right? Like, Jar Jar is normally the punchline to a joke when you start talking about how shitty the prequels are and The Phoenix Suns are normally the punchline to a joke when you start talking about how shitty the Phoenix Suns are. There’s so much to fun of both for. But... could Jar Jar *actually* be good? Could he have just been biding his time waiting to enslave us all? And could the Phoenix Suns *actually* be good and just biding their time waiting to not be a trash fire? I don’t know, but they both worry me more than they deserve to.

5. **Los Angeles Lakers** – Darth Maul: Objectively, Darth Maul is cool. He’s one of the top-5 coolest things that the prequels gave us⁷. He’s a cold-blooded killer, his aesthetic is dope as hell, and he has a lightsaber. **With two blades**. The Lakers have 15 championships. The gold and

⁵ This was written before God found out that “Golden State Warriors” was code for “Golden Calf Worshipers” and decided to unleash a plague of pestilence upon their lands

⁶ Oof

⁷ In no order: Darth Maul, Podracing, Ewan McGregor as Obi Wan, Light Saber Duels, Midichlorians

purple that the Lakers wear is pretty fuckin dope. And they have two super-duper-ultra-mega stars in LeBron James and Anthony Davis. Might they get cut in half? Sure, there's a possibility they get cut in half and pushed into a hole, but I think that if you play this out enough times, there's a universe out there where Darth Maul kills everyone and takes over the whole goddamn universe. Also, Darth Maul hated free speech too.

6. **Oklahoma City Thunder** – Boba Fett: I remember playing the old Battlefront games when you could be Boba Fett if you kicked enough ass and I remember hearing my more Star Wars-inclined friends talk about how cool he was and that all had me thinking that this guy was basically Vin Diesel in spaces. And then I watched the movie and guess what? He had like 10 minutes of screen time and got eaten by some fuckin sand spaghetti. That's how I feel about the Thunder. Boba Fett should've been WAY more important than he was. And in almost every other version of Star Wars where he shows up⁹, he is important and badass and awesome. The Thunder had like an 8-year window where they should've been the shit¹⁰. They should have won WAY more than 0 championships. Sometimes I imagine that they won 5 straight titles and their original big 3 all got matching tattoos and vacationed together somewhere neat like Japan. But in reality, Boba Fett got eaten by sand spaghetti and the Thunder leave the decade with nothing but crushed dreams.

7. **Minnesota Timberwolves** – Admiral Ackbar: You already know where this is going. Admiral Ackbar's prescient words transcend his 3 minute and 30 seconds of screen time¹¹ and have made him into a vanguard against all which seeks to deceive. Karl Anthony-Towns might

⁸ Which is the only way Vin Diesel gets any cooler than he already is

⁹ I'm pretty sure there's like books and spin-offs where he's alive and badass right?

¹⁰ Even after Harden left, they had Durant and Westbrook and then after Durant left, they got Westbrook and Paul George

¹¹ Research, bitch

take the leap this year and become a bonafide 28-10 guy and Thibs might have the whole roster playing well and busting their asses but guess what. Andrew Wiggins is still on this team. And as long as Andrew Wiggins is a focal point of your team, you're not fooling me. It's a trap.

8. **Portland Trailblazers** – R2D2: It seems like R2 has been around for just about every major event ever depicted in the history of Star Wars canon¹². He's always taken whatever situation he finds himself in and manages to outperform his expectations. He's a fan favorite, there's nothing not to like about him, and I love him. The Trailblazers have watched patiently as the structure of the Western conference has shaped and reshaped itself time and time again while keeping the core of their team mostly intact. The Blazers will absolutely win more games than you think they will, will probably get farther in the playoffs than they should, and will probably get wrecked by a stronger contender. Because at the end of the day, R2D2 thrives on beating the stupid and subverting expectations. But would he stand a chance against, say, Darth Vader? No. He would get the robot-piss kicked out of him.

9. **Utah Jazz** – C3PO: In some ways, I feel bad making the Jazz C3PO because C3PO is a robot who's very stiff and says things like "Oh! My! I seem to have lost my lucky Gungan Tea Kettle!" and such. The Jazz have personality and are exciting and surprisingly human¹³. It's just that... I don't know, are the Jazz *anyone's* favorite team? And is C3PO *anyone's* favorite character? No. C3PO is a main character without whom the story of Star Wars could not be told. The Jazz are one of the main contenders this year and without them, this season would be totally different.

10. **Denver Nuggets** – Kylo Ren: Kylo Ren is lame. There, I said it. I think the Nuggets are less lame, but I still feel the same lack of excitement when I think about the possibility of an

¹² Except for when Yoda was conceived. As far as I know.

¹³ Gobert crying makes me love and respect him a whole bunch

NBA Finals that features the Nuggets as I do when I think of a scene where Kylo Ren has more than 4 lines. Are the Nuggets good? Absolutely. Jokic is a generational talent and Jamal Murray is a stud. Does Kylo Ren suck? No. Not really, but he is lame. He's just not very compelling and I don't know why. Kylo Ren is less lame than the Nuggets, but the Nuggets are the force-ghost¹⁴ of Kylo Ren.

11. **Dallas Mavericks** – Rey: My dream is that a team from the East gets relocated to Seattle, creating an imbalance in Western and Eastern teams so that New Orleans has to be moved into the Eastern Conference so that we can have Zion and the Pelicans vs Luka and the Mavericks in the Finals someday. Rey is the future of the force in the current incarnation of Star Wars and Luka is the future of my love with basketball.

12. **Houston Rockets** – Orson Crennic: Orson Crennic was the dude that Darth Vader choked and then he said “Don't choke on your aspirations¹⁵”. The Rockets... wait... do you hear that? It's the sound of the Rockets choking on their aspirations. It might be harsh to say that the Rockets “choke” every year, but I'm going to be harsh and say that they choke. What else would you call missing 27 straight 3's? Oh? And they got Russell Westbrook? Sick.

13. **San Antonio Spurs** – Ben Kenobi (A New Hope version): If I may, I would like to write a limerick about the Spurs:

There once was a team from Texas
Who drove through the league like a Lexus
Their coach was the GOAT
Something something moat

¹⁴ Or whatever

¹⁵ Since when did Darth Vader make dad jokes? I bet he has a book of puns that he reads on the toilet and chuckles at... How does Darth Vader shit?

I miss Tim Duncan so much

That was a bad limerick, admittedly. Tim Duncan and Kawhi are gone, but the Spurs keep churning out winning seasons and are the standard success in the NBA. The Spurs' best days are behind them, but they've forgotten more about winning than most teams will ever learn.

14. **Memphis Grizzlies** – URoRRuR'R'R: What's that? You don't know who URoRRuR'R'R is? Weird. I guess that means I know more about Star Wars than you do. URoRRuR'R'R is the Tuskan Raider that greets the young Luke Skywalker by saying "URoRRuR'R'R" and then beating his ass with zero regard for the force. I know that the Grit N' Grind era is over, but isn't that still part of Memphis' identity? And what's grittier or grind-ier than sandpeople? Plus, Tuskan Raiders and Ja Morant have a lot in common. They're decent shots, they're bold, and they have a lot of potential.

15. **New Orleans Pelicans** – Luke Skywalker (A New Hope version): C'mon man. The next guy. Luke will bring balance to the Force and Zion will be the next Guy and the rest of the Pelicans are pretty damn good too. This is too easy. By the by, remember in Footnote #12 when I mentioned Yoda's conception being a major event in Star Wars canon? I feel like I need to defend that claim. Yoda's conception would mean that there have to be females of whatever the hell his species is (major) and males that have the ability to get boners (major) and then those two things would have to come together in some SUPER weird sex (MAJOR)¹⁶. Either that or Yoda was born out of an egg or something? Is Yoda secretly a bird? I don't know. I want to go home and rethink my life.

16. **Indiana Pacers** – Poe Dameron: The Pacers are the diet Jazz of the East. The Jazz are emphatically better than the Pacers and C3PO is emphatically better than Poe Dameron, but they

¹⁶ The mental pictures that this scenario brings up are scarring. I'm sorry I did this to myself and I'm sorrier that I did this to you

are similar because I'm not cancelling plans to watch the Pacers. Let me put it this way: if you took a Star Wars personality quiz on BuzzFeed and got Poe Dameron, you'd be pissed. Maybe I'm not giving the Pacers enough credit or maybe I'm not giving Poe enough credit. And the fact that I can't tell which it is proves to me that I'm right.

17. **Chicago Bulls** – Kit Fisto: Kit Fisto was legitimately my favorite Star Wars character growing up. I had an action figure of him and everything. I have so many good memories of Kit Fisto. The Bulls have never been my favorite team, but they're fucking cool, right? The colors, the logo, Michael Jordan, Derrick Rose, the whole thing. When I think of Kit Fisto or the Bulls, I react with about the same amount of excitement. But when I think about where they are now?¹⁷ Sad boy hours.

18. **Detroit Pistons** – Qui-Gon Jinn: We all like Qui-Gon, right? He's Liam Neeson for God's sake. And I think we all root a little bit for the Pistons because the NBA is just better when the Pistons are good. I would argue that the Bad Boys were catalysts in making Bird's Celtics, Magic's Lakers, and Jordan's Bulls all into the teams that they became. Qui-Gon was instrumental in making Obi Wan and Anakin into the people they became, for better or worse. The '04 Pistons are one of the most outstanding underdogs in sports history. However, according to the official Star Wars Database, Qui-Gon "lived for the moment, espousing a philosophy of 'feel, don't think...'" And nowhere is that more evident than the fact that the Pistons have the 7th-highest payroll in the league and are paying 0-time All-Star Reggie Jackson 18 million dollars this year. That sounds a lot like someone who was doing a lot of feeling and not a lot of thinking.

19. **Milwaukee Bucks** – Mace Windu: Here's what we know about Mace Windu

¹⁷ Kit Fisto = super dead
Bulls = hardcore rebuilding

- Played by Samuel L Jackson
- Is a Jedi Master
- Has a purple lightsaber
- Was defeated on the brink of bringing down his most powerful enemy because when it came time to butter the bread, he put his faith in the wrong person and was electrocuted and launched off of a building.

Here's what we know about the Bucks

- Are led by Giannis Antetokounmpo
- Are contenders
- I couldn't think of a comp for purple lightsabers, so I guess Mace Windu is cooler than the Bucks
- Were defeated on the brink of going to the Finals because when it came time to put the dip on the chip, the rest of the roster made boom boom in their pants and were metaphorically electrocuted and launched off of a building.

There's hope for the Bucks. Giannis is still awesome so they might still be awesome. And no one wants to see them get electrocuted and thrown off of a building. But I'm worried that there's a chance that it happens. Again¹⁸.

20. **Cleveland Cavaliers** – Uncle Owen: Uncle Owen was Luke's uncle. Luke lived with Uncle Owen¹⁹. Luke was/is "The Chosen One". Luke is now gone and Uncle Owen is now dead.

¹⁸ Can you imagine if there was a Mace Windu spinoff where he survived getting thrown off the building and he's rootin and tootin and cool and everything and then at the end of the spin off he's confronting an arch villain and gets electrocuted and thrown off a building AGAIN?

¹⁹ On a moisture farm. For real. They FARMED MOISTURE. ON A PLANET THAT'S A FUCKING DESERT. And I get that you probably do need water on a desert planet, but do you mean to tell me that in this universe there are Death Stars and cloning facilities and all manner of sci-fi stuff, but you can't get a ship to deliver bottled water every now and then? FOH.

Cleveland is LeBron's hometown. LeBron won a championship for Cleveland. LeBron was/is "The Chosen One". LeBron is now gone and Cleveland is now dead.

21. **Miami Heat** – Fodesinbeed Annodue: I don't want to type this guy's name again but he was the two-headed fuck who announced pod races on Tatooine. Jimmy Butler is super good at basketball and he could make the Heat legitimately good. He could also totally implode them and smash them into the ground.

22. **Orlando Magic** – Nute Gunray: I don't know, man. I don't care about the Magic and neither should you. Nute Gunray isn't really a good match for the Magic, I just wanted to include him because I have always remembered him saying "We WouLd NeVeR Do AnYtHInG wItHoUt ThE aPpRoVaL oF tHe *ImPeRiAl SeNaToR!*" in an accent that – yeah - is coming from an alien, but also still sounds kinda racist. Whatever. The Prequels suck and so do the Magic.

23. **Charlotte Hornets** – Gonk Droid: The Charlotte Hornets are a Gonk Droid because Gonk Droids are literally walking trashcans. The Hornets are walking garbage.²⁰

24. **Atlanta Hawks** - Captain Phasma: I don't pay too much attention to the ebbs and flows of Star Wars fandoms, but as far as I understand it, Captain Phasma had a lot of potential and was supposed to be the next awesome Star Wars villain. After I saw *The Force Awakens*, though, I didn't know that Phasma was anything more than a stormtrooper in shiny armor. So, I'm assuming that potential was not reached. Tre Young is *so* good, and I only hope he achieves all of his potential and doesn't become a waste of potential like Phasma or me.

²⁰ I also wanted to make the Hornets the Younglings that Anakin kills because they are going to get killed and I could make a Michael Jordan joke.^{1a}

^{1a} "Fuck them kids"

25. **Toronto Raptors** –Finn (The Last Jedi version): The Raptor are Finn because they accomplished one great thing and we were all rooting for them and happy for them but once they lost their main squeeze²¹, they take a major hit in terms of their relevance to the overall plot but they still (somewhat rightfully) ride the high of their laurels. I will say though, I very much like Finn and I very much like Pascal Siakam. Here's hoping that one or the other makes the leap and becomes their own Broadway Star²².

26. **Washington Wizards** – Sebulba: I don't know, they talk shit I guess? I'm really stretching here because John Wall being hurt and having the worst contract in NBA history puts a damper on the Wizards, but I still think Beal is pretty good. I wish this were a better comparison, but while I was researching Sebulba I found out that his species is called a Dug, which is a notable enough thing in and of itself. Imagine a Dug named Doug. And the Dugs have chiefs that are called – fucking get this – a DOGE! THEIR CHIEF IS A DOGE! That means that somewhere out there in the absolutely bizarre fiction that is Star Wars and the infinite cosmos, mathematically, there *has to be* Doug the Dug Doge. It's the rules of infinity. The Wizards are D(o)ugs but certainly not Doges.

27. **Boston Celtics** – Padme (Revenge of the Sith version): Oh my God, this is a really good one – The Celtics and Padme both had this thing going on with this one guy who was supposed to be the best thing to ever happen to them. He was supposed to be the one who changed everything and brought peace and success and nothing but happy times. But then it turned out

²¹ Rey for Finn and Kawhi for the Raptors

²² Wars. Got 'em

that that guy wasn't quite who they thought he was and there was a great big meltdown and now that guy is gone, never to return. Yeah, I'm that good²³.

28. **Philadelphia 76ers** – Figrin D'an and the Modal Nodes: Figrin D'an and the Modal Nodes²⁴ are the ones playing the Mos Eisley Cantina song in A New Hope. That song is iconic and easily the best thing that FDMN ever produced²⁵. That band is the best part of Mos Eisley, the most wretched hive of scum and villainy in all the world. The 76ers are a great team that could possibly win a championship this year. The Sixers are the best part of Philadelphia, the Mos Eisley of America.

29. **New York Knicks** – Red Five (Pedrin Gaul): Here's what you need to know about Pedrin Gaul, fifth member of the Red Squadron: he existed and then he blew up. That's it. The Star-Wars-God put him into existence so he could blow up and leave a spot open on Red Squadron for Luke. The Knicks seem to exist to blow up. Remember when they thought they were going to get Kyrie Irving and Kevin Durant AND Zion Williamson so they traded away their young franchise cornerstone for almost nothing? How does RJ Barrett, Julius Randle and Dennis Smith Jr sound instead? It sounds like an explosion. I guess the only way this doesn't work perfectly is that Red Five only exploded once. The Knicks are perpetually exploding.

30. **Brooklyn Nets** – Anakin Skywalker (Revenge of the Sith version): This is the only comparison that has any continuity with another comparison.²⁶ The Nets have yet to reach their full potential because Kevin Durant has yet to suit up for them in the same way that Anakin Skywalker didn't achieve his full potential until he got his limbs cut off and lit on fire. For

²³ I bet when you watched the Prequels you didn't see Padme and think, "Wow the relationship between her character and that of Anakin Skywalker is going to be almost perfectly analogous to that of the Boston Celtics and Kyrie Irving at the onset of the 2019-20 NBA season". But I did and that's why I do what I do.

²⁴ Or FDMN as their fans, the Figrin' Fanatics, call them

²⁵ Followed by their debut single, Alderaan Funeral Parlor jingle

²⁶ The Celtics/Padme

Anakin, it was addition by subtraction. For the Nets it will be addition by addition. They can still do some butt kicking, some cutting off of heads, but their true form has yet to be revealed²⁷.

²⁷ This isn't a word, but I really like it so I'm leaving it in