



NBA Finals 2026

# The Road to the Championship

San Antonio Spurs vs. New York Knicks



# A League Born From Hardwood

The NBA's story begins in 1947 — 79 years of rivalries, dynasties, and drama that set the stage for 2026.



## Origins: BAA Merges Into the NBA

The Basketball Association of America tipped off in 1947, merging with the NBL in 1949 to form the NBA — now 30 franchises strong across 79 seasons.



## A History of Dynasties

Only a handful of franchises have truly dominated: Celtics (18 rings), Lakers (17), Warriors (7), Bulls (6), and the Spurs with 5 — each era defined by a new dynasty.



## Contrasting Legacies in 2026

Tonight's finalists carry opposite histories: the Spurs hold 5 rings, the Knicks just 2 — with a 53-year title drought that ends or extends on this very stage.

# The BAA Era & Minneapolis Dynasty (1947–1956)

The league's first decade was defined by small-market teams and the birth of a Lakers dynasty — in Minnesota.

Year	Champion	Runner-Up	Series
1947	Philadelphia Warriors	Chicago Stags	4-1
1948	Baltimore Bullets	Philadelphia Warriors	4-2
1949	Minneapolis Lakers	Washington Capitols	4-2
1950	Minneapolis Lakers	Syracuse Nationals	4-2
1951	Rochester Royals	New York Knicks	4-3
1952	Minneapolis Lakers	New York Knicks	4-3
1953	Minneapolis Lakers	New York Knicks	4-1
1954	Minneapolis Lakers	Syracuse Nationals	4-3
1955	Syracuse Nationals	Ft. Wayne Pistons	4-3
1956	Philadelphia Warriors	Ft. Wayne Pistons	4-1

5

Minneapolis Lakers titles

6 yrs

Dynasty span (1949–1954)

## The Original Dynasty

Minneapolis Lakers won 5 titles in 6 years (1949–1954) — the original dynasty, long before the franchise moved west.

# The Celtics Dynasty (1957–1969)

Boston's Bill Russell era produced the most dominant run in North American professional sports history — 11 titles in 13 years.

## 1957 – 1963

Year	Champion	Runner-Up	Series
1957	<b>Boston Celtics</b>	St. Louis Hawks	4-3
1958	St. Louis Hawks	Boston Celtics	4-2
1959	<b>Boston Celtics</b>	Minneapolis Lakers	4-0
1960	<b>Boston Celtics</b>	St. Louis Hawks	4-3
1961	<b>Boston Celtics</b>	St. Louis Hawks	4-1
1962	<b>Boston Celtics</b>	Los Angeles Lakers	4-3
1963	<b>Boston Celtics</b>	Los Angeles Lakers	4-2

## 1964 – 1969

Year	Champion	Runner-Up	Series
1964	<b>Boston Celtics</b>	San Francisco Warriors	4-1
1965	<b>Boston Celtics</b>	Los Angeles Lakers	4-1
1966	<b>Boston Celtics</b>	Los Angeles Lakers	4-3
1967	Philadelphia 76ers	San Francisco Warriors	4-2
1968	<b>Boston Celtics</b>	Los Angeles Lakers	4-2
1969	<b>Boston Celtics</b>	Los Angeles Lakers	4-3

 **8 consecutive titles (1959–1966)** — an unmatched streak in major pro sports. 11 championships in 13 seasons.

# Parity, Bird vs. Magic & Jordan Rules (1970–1998)

Three decades of shifting power — from New York’s 70s glory to the Magic-Bird rivalry to six Bulls championships — shaped the modern NBA.

## The Decade of Parity (1970–1979)

Year	Champion	Runner-Up	Series
1970	New York Knicks	Los Angeles Lakers	4-3
1971	Milwaukee Bucks	Baltimore Bullets	4-0
1972	Los Angeles Lakers	New York Knicks	4-1
1973	New York Knicks	Los Angeles Lakers	4-1
1974	Boston Celtics	Milwaukee Bucks	4-3
1975	Golden State Warriors	Washington Bullets	4-0
1976	Boston Celtics	Phoenix Suns	4-2
1977	Portland Trail Blazers	Philadelphia 76ers	4-2
1978	Washington Bullets	Seattle SuperSonics	4-3
1979	Seattle SuperSonics	Washington Bullets	4-1

## Bird vs. Magic (1980–1990)

Year	Champion	Runner-Up	Series
1980	Los Angeles Lakers	Philadelphia 76ers	4-2
1981	Boston Celtics	Houston Rockets	4-2
1982	Los Angeles Lakers	Philadelphia 76ers	4-2
1983	Philadelphia 76ers	Los Angeles Lakers	4-0
1984	Boston Celtics	Los Angeles Lakers	4-3
1985	Los Angeles Lakers	Boston Celtics	4-2
1986	Boston Celtics	Houston Rockets	4-2
1987	Los Angeles Lakers	Boston Celtics	4-2
1988	Los Angeles Lakers	Detroit Pistons	4-3
1989	Detroit Pistons	Los Angeles Lakers	4-0
1990	Detroit Pistons	Portland Trail Blazers	4-1

## Jordan Rules (1991–1998)

Year	Champion	Runner-Up	Series
1991	Chicago Bulls	Los Angeles Lakers	4-1
1992	Chicago Bulls	Portland Trail Blazers	4-2
1993	Chicago Bulls	Phoenix Suns	4-2
1994	Houston Rockets	New York Knicks	4-3
1995	Houston Rockets	Orlando Magic	4-0
1996	Chicago Bulls	Seattle SuperSonics	4-2
1997	Chicago Bulls	Utah Jazz	4-2
1998	Chicago Bulls	Utah Jazz	4-2

Knicks reached the Finals in 1994 — their last appearance until 2026. A 32-year wait ends or extends this June.

# Modern Dynasties (1999–2025)

From Tim Duncan's quiet dominance to Steph Curry's revolution, the last 26 seasons produced three distinct dynasties — and one Spurs-Knicks Finals (1999).

## Shaq, Duncan & the Modern Era (1999–2014)

Year	Champion	Runner-Up	Series
1999	San Antonio Spurs	New York Knicks	4-1
2000	Los Angeles Lakers	Indiana Pacers	4-2
2001	Los Angeles Lakers	Philadelphia 76ers	4-1
2002	Los Angeles Lakers	New Jersey Nets	4-0
2003	San Antonio Spurs	New Jersey Nets	4-2
2004	Detroit Pistons	Los Angeles Lakers	4-1
2005	San Antonio Spurs	Detroit Pistons	4-3
2006	Miami Heat	Dallas Mavericks	4-2
2007	San Antonio Spurs	Cleveland Cavaliers	4-0
2008	Boston Celtics	Los Angeles Lakers	4-2
2009	Los Angeles Lakers	Orlando Magic	4-1
2010	Los Angeles Lakers	Boston Celtics	4-3
2011	Dallas Mavericks	Miami Heat	4-2
2012	Miami Heat	Oklahoma City Thunder	4-1
2013	Miami Heat	San Antonio Spurs	4-3
2014	San Antonio Spurs	Miami Heat	4-1

## Warriors Era & Beyond (2015–2025)

Year	Champion	Runner-Up	Series
2015	Golden State Warriors	Cleveland Cavaliers	4-2
2016	Cleveland Cavaliers	Golden State Warriors	4-3
2017	Golden State Warriors	Cleveland Cavaliers	4-1
2018	Golden State Warriors	Cleveland Cavaliers	4-0
2019	Toronto Raptors	Golden State Warriors	4-2
2020	Los Angeles Lakers	Miami Heat	4-2
2021	Milwaukee Bucks	Phoenix Suns	4-2
2022	Golden State Warriors	Boston Celtics	4-2
2023	Denver Nuggets	Miami Heat	4-1
2024	Boston Celtics	Dallas Mavericks	4-1
2025	Oklahoma City Thunder	Indiana Pacers	4-3

🏆99: Spurs def. Knicks 4-1 — these two franchises last met in this exact stage 27 years ago

# Championships by Franchise

## — All Time

Two franchises stand above all others across NBA history — and tonight's finalists sit at 5 and 2 rings respectively.

### 2026 Finalists

#### 🏆 San Antonio Spurs

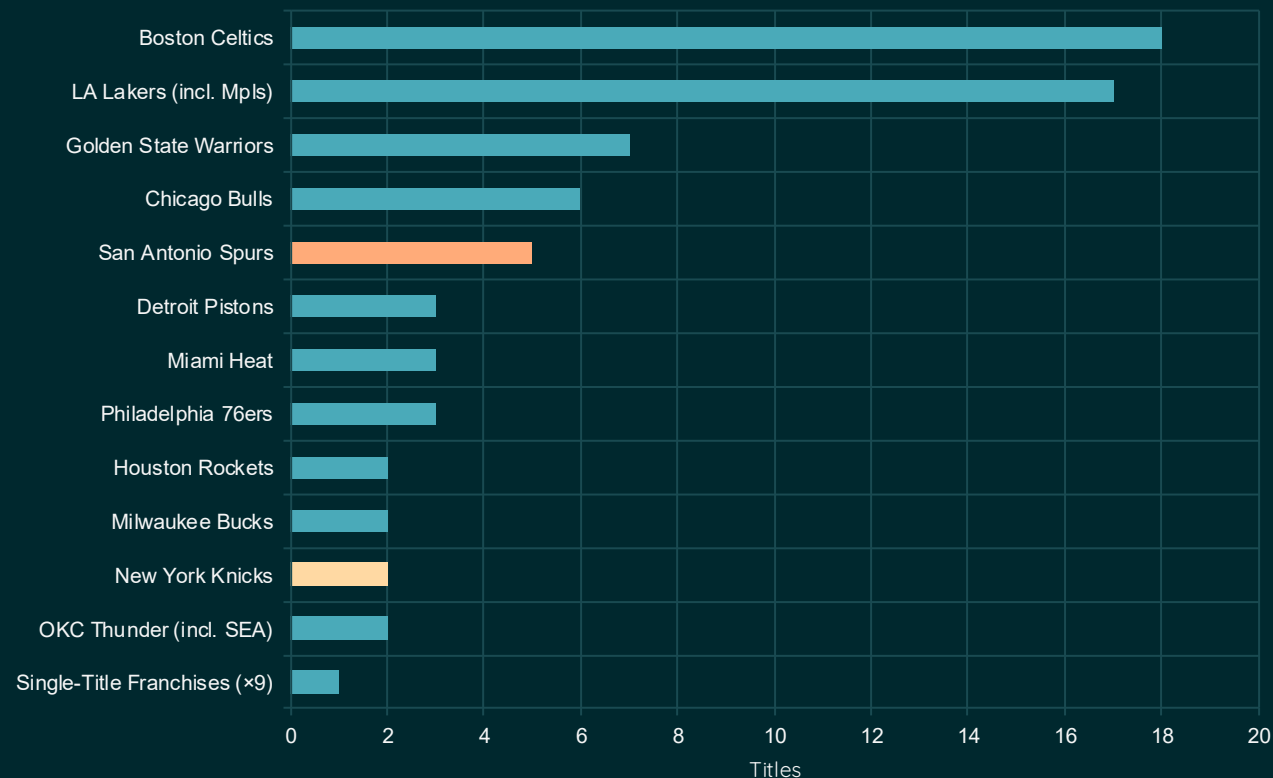
5 titles — 1999, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2014

#### ★ New York Knicks

2 titles — 1970, 1973

The Knicks last won in 1973 — a 53-year drought ends or extends in 2026

### NBA Championships by Franchise (All Time)



# The 2026 Finalists — How We Got Here

Two very different paths led to this moment — a hard-fought western war for the Spurs, a record-breaking playoff run for the Knicks.

## San Antonio Spurs

**62–20** 2nd Seed, Western Conference

### Playoff Record


12–6

### Western Conference Finals

Beat OKC Thunder (defending champions) in 7 games

### WCF Game 7 — Signature Moment

Road win 111–103 at OKC

 **Kornet's chase-down block sealed it — battle-tested through adversity**

## New York Knicks

**53–29** 3rd Seed, Eastern Conference

### Playoff Record

12–2

### Path to the Finals

Swept Philadelphia 76ers (R2) and Cleveland Cavaliers (ECF)

### ECF Game 4

Won by 37 points — 130–93 at Cleveland

### NBA Cup Champions (this season)

Beat the Spurs 124–113 in the Cup Final

 **NBA-record +221 point differential through 12 playoff games**

# San Antonio Spurs — Meet the Roster

The Spurs enter the Finals as the deepest team in basketball, anchored by the most transformative player since LeBron James.

DPOY - Unanimous

## Victor Wembanyama

**25.0** PPG  
**11.5** RPG  
**3.1** BPG

Most transformative player since LeBron James

## De'Aaron Fox

**18.6** PPG  
**6.2** APG

Elite playmaker & scoring guard

## Stephon Castle

**16.7** PPG  
**7.4** APG

Dynamic two-way guard

## Keldon Johnson

**13.2** PPG

Sixth Man of the Year — off bench

## Dylan Harper

**11.8** PPG

Rookie — #2 pick, 2025 Draft

**119.8 PPG**  
Offense — 3rd in NBA

**111.5 Opp PPG**  
Defense — 8th in NBA

**+8.3**  
Net Rating — 2nd in NBA

Head Coach  
**Mitch Johnson** — first full season

**7 players averaging 11+ PPG** — deepest rotation in the league

# New York Knicks — Meet the Roster

The Knicks bring veteran experience, playoff momentum, and an offense that has been historically dominant through the first two rounds.

## 1 Jalen Brunson

26.0 PPG | 6.8 APG  
Franchise cornerstone

## 2 Karl-Anthony Towns

20.1 PPG | 11.9 RPG

## 3 OG Anunoby

16.7 PPG | 1.6 SPG

## 4 Mikal Bridges

14.4 PPG

## 5 Josh Hart

12.0 PPG | 7.4 RPG

## Team Stats

Scoring	<b>116.5 PPG</b> (10th)
Off. Rating	<b>119.8</b> (3rd)
Pace	<b>96.8</b> (27th-slowest)
Playoff Record	<b>12-2</b>

## 3-Point Threat

Season: **37.3%** vs. Spurs 35.9%

Playoff mark: **40%+**

Shamet shooting **60%** from three

Head Coach  
**Mike Brown**  
Hired July 2025 — Warriors dynasty DNA

# Season Series & Key Matchups

Three meetings tell contrasting stories — the Knicks took the season series 2-1, but the Spurs answered with a thriller on their home floor.

Date	Location	Result	Key Note
Dec 16 (NBA Cup Final)	Neutral	<b>NYK 124-113</b>	Knicks controlled wire-to-wire
Dec 31	San Antonio	<b>SAS 134-132</b>	Champagnie: 36 pts, 11 threes
Mar 1	New York	<b>NYK 114-89</b>	Dominant Knicks home performance

Season Series: **NYK 2-1**

## 🛡️ Spurs Advantages

- Wembanyama — best player on the floor
- Home court (2-seed) — Games 1, 2, 5, 7 at home
- 7-deep scoring rotation
- Battle-tested vs. OKC defending champs

## ⚡ Knicks Advantages

- 9 days rest (vs. 4 for Spurs)
- Better 3-point shooting — 37.3% vs. 35.9%
- Veteran experience (Brunson, Towns, OG, Bridges)
- Historic playoff momentum — 12-2, +221 point diff.

⚠️ Health Watch: Mitchell Robinson (Knicks) listed with finger concern heading into the Finals.

# SPI — Success Projection Index

A 14-factor model scores each team across every dimension of Finals performance — and the Knicks edge it out.

Factor	Wt.	Spurs	Knicks	Edge
Playoff Momentum	15	10	14	NYK — 12-2 record, 11-game win streak
Star Power	12	10	9	SAS — Wembanyama DPOY, 25/11.5/3.1
Regular Season	10	9	7	SAS — 62-20 vs. 53-29
Offensive Efficiency	8	7	7.5	NYK — better per possession
Defensive Efficiency	8	7.5	6	SAS — Wemby rim protection
Depth	8	7.5	5.5	SAS — 7 players 11+ PPG
Experience	7	3	6	NYK — Brunson/Towns/OG/Bridges
Home Court	7	5	3.5	SAS — Games 1, 2, 5, 7 at home
3PT Shooting	5	3	4.5	NYK — 40%+ in playoffs, Shamet 60%
Rebounding	5	4	4	Even
Health	5	4.5	3.5	SAS — Robinson finger concern
Coaching	5	3.5	3.5	Even
Head-to-Head	3	1	2.5	NYK — 2-1 season series
Rest / Fatigue	2	0.5	1.5	NYK — 9 days vs. 4 days

# SPI Summary — Final Scores

Three factors separate these teams — experience, momentum, and rest give New York a slim but meaningful edge over the most talented individual player in the league.

## New York Knicks

SPI Score — Edge in 6 of 14 factors

78

/ 100

## San Antonio Spurs

SPI Score — Edge in 6 of 14 factors

75.5

/ 100

### Knicks Lead

- ✓ Playoff Momentum — 12-2 record, 11-game win streak
- ✓ Offensive Efficiency — better per possession
- ✓ Experience — Brunson, Towns, OG, Bridges
- ✓ 3PT Shooting — 40%+ in playoffs, Shamet at 60%
- ✓ Head-to-Head — 2-1 season series
- ✓ Rest / Fatigue — 9 days rest vs. 4 for Spurs

### Spurs Lead

- ✓ Star Power — Wembanyama DPOY, 25/11.5/3.1
- ✓ Regular Season — 62-20 vs. 53-29
- ✓ Defensive Efficiency — Wemby rim protection
- ✓ Depth — 7 players averaging 11+ PPG
- ✓ Home Court — Games 1, 2, 5, 7 at San Antonio
- ✓ Health — Robinson finger concern for Knicks

### Rated Even

- = Rebounding
- = Coaching

⚠ **The margin is tight** — this series will go deep. Two of the most evenly matched Finals teams in recent history.

# Game-by-Game Prediction

The Knicks take it in six — but Wembanyama will make it unforgettable.

## Game 1

San Antonio



**Spurs Win**

Home court + adrenaline +  
Wemby statement game

## Game 2

San Antonio



**Knicks Win**

Spurs fatigue sets in; Knicks  
steal one on the road

## Game 3

New York



**Knicks Win**

MSG erupts; 42% from three;  
Towns dominates the boards

## Game 4

New York



**Knicks Win**

Experience gap shows;  
Shamet and Hart hit timely  
threes

## Game 5

San Antonio



**Spurs Win**

Wemby plays the game of  
his life: 30+ pts, 14 reb, 5  
blocks

## Game 6

New York



**Knicks Win**

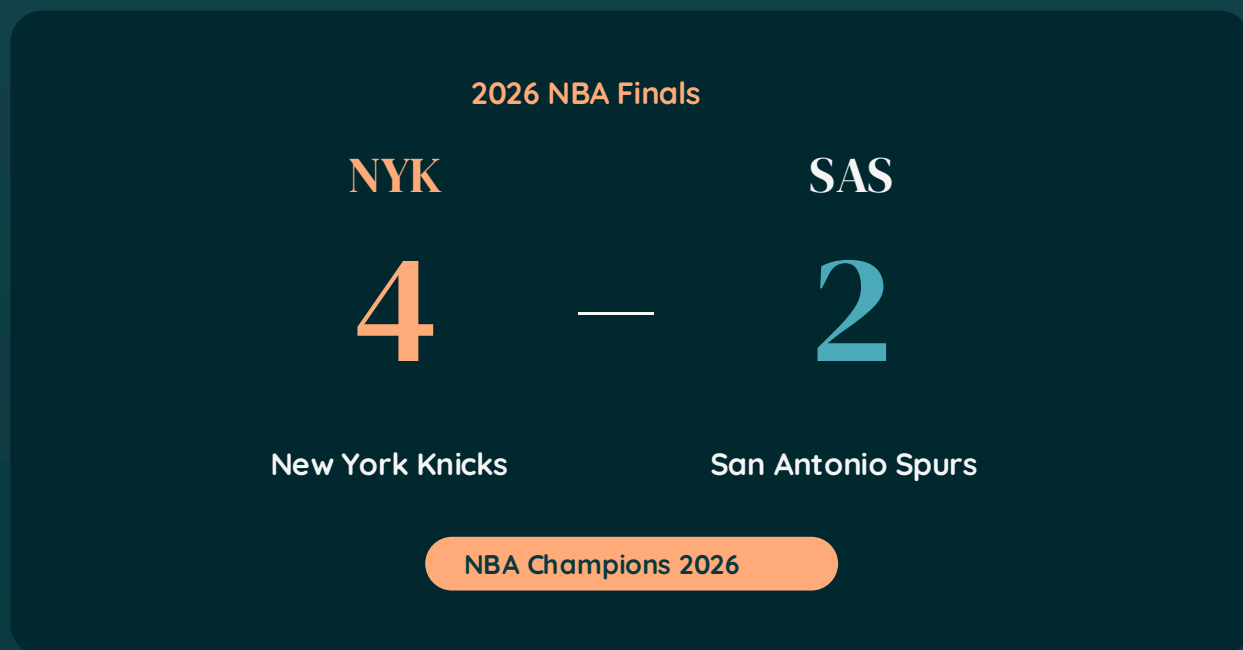
Brunson closes it with 30+  
points — first Knicks title since  
1973



Projected Finals MVP: **Jalen Brunson** — ~28 PPG, 7 APG across the series

# Series Verdict

New York Knicks win the 2026 NBA Finals 4-2 — ending the longest title drought in franchise history.



## The Final Word

- 🏆 **Finals MVP: Jalen Brunson** — the franchise cornerstone delivers when it matters most
- 🕒 The Knicks' last championship: **1973** — a 53-year drought comes to an end
- ★ The Spurs fall at the final hurdle — but **Wembanyama has years ahead**; the dynasty conversation begins
- 📍 Victory sealed at **Madison Square Garden** — New York's most storied arena, on the world's biggest stage

*"New York, New York — the Knicks are champions again."*



NBA Finals 2026

# New York Knicks

NBA Champions 2026



First title since 1973 — 53 years between championships.