

NBA 2018-19

Rookie

Rankings





1) Luka Dončić

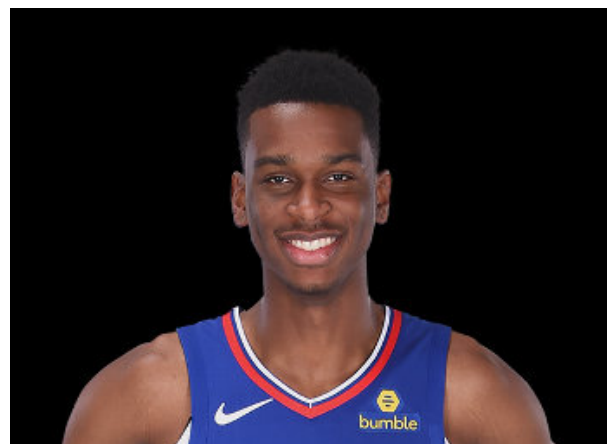
Pos: PG

Age: 19

2019: 4.03 WAR

3-Year: 20.63 WAR

Coming over from Real Madrid, there was a ton of doubt whether he would become the star that he was in Europe. The high risk, high reward made him the 3rd pick in the 2018 draft behind Deandre Ayton and Marvin Bagley. However, he proved to be the real deal for the Mavericks, posting the highest WAR (4.03) for a rookie this year. As the primary ball-handler for the Mavericks, he proved to be extremely efficient (.545 TS%) as a guard with the ability to do the combination of creating for teammates (31.6% AST) and generating rebounds (21.9% DREB). This combo of assists and rebounds makes guys like Ben Simmons and Russell Westbrook extremely valuable. In comparison to other 19 year olds since 2000, he has the third-highest WAR projection (20.63) behind two future Hall-of-Famers, LeBron James and Carmelo Anthony. Dončić should easily win the Rookie of the Year award, but he also projects to have an extremely bright future.



2) Shai Gilgeous-Alexander

Pos: PG

Age: 20

2019: 2.72 WAR

3-Year: 17.37 WAR

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander was the fourth point-guard chosen in the 2018 NBA Draft after the likes of Luka Dončić, Trae Young, and Collin Sexton. Yet, he put up the second highest WAR (2.27) in the entire draft class. He showed to be an efficient scorer (.554 TS%). Other than that, he had one of the lower assist rates for a point-guard (17.8% AST) and showed minimal impact on the court with his on-off numbers (-3.25 On/Off). However, his WAR projection provides a bright outlook, which is mainly a result of being so young at 20 years old. With a similar BPM to Derrick Rose and Gilbert Arenas at the same age, there should be some hope that he could be a well-above average player (17.37).



3) Mitchell Robinson

Pos: C

Age: 20

2019: 2.71 WAR

3-Year: 16.98 WAR

Having been a heralded high school recruit, everyone knew that he had the potential to be a good player, but he essentially fell off the scouting radar after taking the year off to prepare himself for the NBA Draft. In his rookie year, he splashed onto the scene for the Knicks and showed to be a potential cornerstone for the future of the team after posting 2.71 WAR. He proved to be a blocking machine with the second highest block rate (10% BLK) in the draft class behind Robert Williams (12.5% BLK). In addition, since 2000, for players with at least 500 minutes played, he posted the second highest block rate behind former great Alonzo Mourning (10.2% BLK). In addition, to being an excellent block artist, he was an effective offensive rebounder (13.3%) and extremely efficient at the rim (.692 TS%). He will never command high usage of an offense, but his future outlook is bright with a similar 3-year projection to Myles Turner at the same age (16.98).



4) Mikal Bridges

Pos: SF

Age: 22

2019: 2.67 WAR

3-Year: 23.05 WAR

Out of all rookies, Mikal Bridges was able to carve out a significant role with the Suns, attaining the third highest total minutes played. He was able to be an effective player with above average shooting efficiency (.556 TS%), shooting half of his shot beyond the 3-point line, and being an effective defender. As a defender, he showed to be a high impact player while on the court with above average on-off numbers (2.33 On/Off) and posting the second-highest steal rate (2.5% STL) in the draft class. Surprisingly, he shows to have the highest 3-year upside in the draft class, which is likely a byproduct of being 22 years old, which places him pretty close to his highest peak value (23.05). Overall, he clearly shows the upside that could complement a star on an excellent team with his excellent role player qualities.



5) Josh Okogie

Pos: SG

Age: 20

2019: 2.49 WAR

3-Year: 10.11 WAR

Okogie was not a flashy player in his rookie year, posting below average shooting efficiency (.492 TS%) on a high volume of 3-pointers and low creation ability (6.9% AST). However, he showed to be a decent defender with above average on-off numbers (0.33 On/Off), in comparison to rookies, and the third highest steal rate (2.4% STL) for a rookie with at least 500 minutes played. He has upside as a starter as hopefully his shooting efficiency improves.



7) Kevin Huerter

Pos: SG

Age: 20

2019: 2.29 WAR

3-Year: 12.36 WAR

Huerter showed some upside as rookie with average shooting efficiency (.533 TS%) on a high volume of 3-pointers. With below average peripherals as a creator and defender, it seems weird to see how he has higher upside than other rookies like Deandre Ayton, Jaren Jackson, etc. However, his promise comes from being so young, in which his 3-year projection is similar to James Harden, Zach Lavine, and Bradley Beal. The jury is still out on his future outcome, but the Hawks must stay patient as the team continues its rebuilding process.



6) Landry Shamet

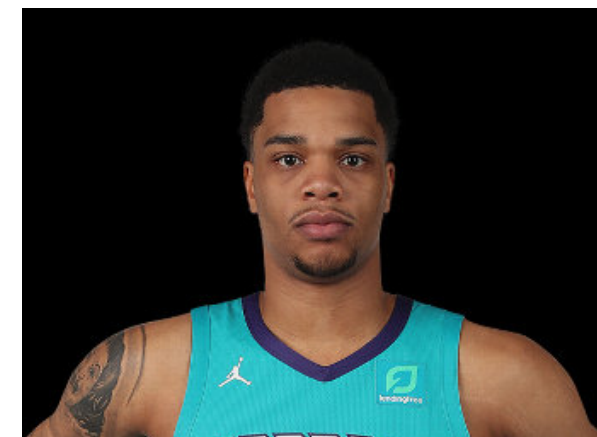
Pos: SG

Age: 21

2019: 2.49 WAR

3-Year: 5.84 WAR

As a late 1st round pick and a minor piece in the Tobias Harris trade, Shamet proved to be an effective role player with his high shooting efficiency (.604 TS%) on a high volume of 3-pointers. With his other skills being below average, his upside is understandably low (5.84), but this just means that he can be an effective player as solely as a shooting option on a good team.



8) Miles Bridges

Pos: SF

Age: 20

2019: 1.99 WAR

3-Year: 14.41 WAR

Bridges proved to show the skills of a swiss-army knife with his well above average athleticism. He demonstrated his athleticism as a strong defensive rebounder (16.6% DREB) and above average shooting efficiency (.548 TS%), especially on 2-pointers (.553 2P%). With his athleticism, there is a reason that he has an optimistic 3-year projection (14.41), in which one hopes that his 3-point shooting (.325 3P%) and his On/Off numbers (-1.97 On/Off) continue to improve.



9) Jaren Jackson

Pos: PF

Age: 19

2019: 1.83 WAR

3-Year: 9.92 WAR

As a top 5 pick in the draft, Jaren Jackson had his season cut short in February as a result of a quad injury. He showed some promise as a defender with the 3rd highest block rate (5.1% BLK) in the draft class and above average shooting efficiency (.591 TS%), incorporating the 3-point shot. However, he also proved to have weak on-off numbers (-5.34 On/Off) with incredibly weak rebounding rates as a PF (5.3% OREB/15% DREB). Though he has relatively low 3-year projections (9.92), he played his rookie season as a 19 year old! As Memphis starts its rebuild with Ja Morant or RJ Barrett, Jaren Jackson will continue to grow as he gains experience and strength.



10) Rodions Kurucs

Pos: SF

Age: 20

2019: 1.69 WAR

3-Year: 5.71 WAR

As a second round pick, the Brooklyn Nets were likely happy to see Kurucs make any impact as a bench role player. He demonstrated above average shooting efficiency (.545 TS%), especially on 2-pointers (.543 2P%). He also showed some ability to generate defensive rebounds (15.4% DREB) as a small-forward. His upside is relatively low with his skill-set, but he could still prove to be an effective role player if he can improve 3-point shooting (.315 3P%) and his ability as a defender.

The Worst Rookie during the 2018-19 Season



Kevin Knox

Pos: PF

Age: 19

2019: -3.73 WAR

3-Year: 2.70 WAR

Although Kevin Knox was not even a top 10 rookie in this draft class, I couldn't resist, but write about his rookie season. He was able to play a ton of minutes on a bad Knicks team, and he was able to contribute to the worst record in the NBA with the worst rookie season since 2000. He was not able to flash his freakish athleticism and size on the either the offensive or defensive end. As an offensive player, he posted well below average shooting efficiency (.475 TS%) and was not able to create for his teammates (6% AST). Although being big and athletic, he posted below average rebounding rates (2.9% OREB/13.6% DREB). To put his rookie season in perspective, he posted a worse rookie season than Adam Morrison (-2.27 WAR). Scary.