

NBA BROADCAST RESEARCH PACKET

NYK@SAS

New York Knicks at San Antonio Spurs

Wednesday, June 3, 2026

Venue: Frost Bank Center

Records: NYK – vs SAS –

PST

Sample broadcast research packet

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1. NYK Team Identity

NYK Identity Tonight

New York is a half-court club by design – and that contrast is the identity in one line. The Knicks run the 3rd best offensive rating in the NBA (118.7) at the **6th slowest pace (97.7)**, so points are manufactured in the set rather than chased in the open floor. The engine is the foul line and the corner: a 25.0% free-throw rate (6th best NBA) that supplies **14.5% of scoring**, plus a 41.6% corner-three mark on 13.4% of attempts aimed straight at a San Antonio defense that allows **34.5%**. When the rim is sealed, the whistle is the answer.

The stop side is paint-and-half-court denial. New York's 112.3 defensive rating (7th best NBA) holds opponents to 43.4 paint points per game (3rd best NBA) and 14.0 fast-break points (6th best NBA) – everything is forced into the set. The counterweight: the two actions San Antonio runs at an elite level, the roll man and the cutter, are precisely where New York grades mid-pack or below.

The closing spine is the sharpest attribute. A veteran finish group of Brunson, Towns, Hart, Anunoby and Bridges converts **56.0% in clutch minutes** (fourth quarter, within five, five or less) on a clean **20-turnover sample**. That is the club's win formula: manufacture in the half court, deny the paint, and be the sharper side when the last five minutes decide it – with Mike Brown, the only championship-winning head coach on either bench, calling the shots.

What's Working / What's Not

- **Working – Corner Separation:** 41.6% on corner threes (13.4% of attempts) against San Antonio's 34.5% allowed – the widest attack edge in the matchup.
- **Working – Foul-Line Engine:** a 25.0% free-throw rate (6th best NBA) with 14.5% of scoring from the stripe.
- **Working – Second-Chance Pull:** a 32.8% offensive rebound rate (7th best NBA), ahead of San Antonio's 30.6%.
- **Working – Clutch Footing:** 56.0% clutch FG with 20 turnovers – the cleanest late-clock profile this matchup offers.
- **Not Working – Paint Offense:** 47.8 paint points per game (9th worst NBA) – the club's softest scoring lever.
- **Not Working – Roll-Man Coverage:** concede 1.10 points per possession to roll men (55th percentile) against an elite 1.26 PPP attack.
- **Not Working – Cutter Defense:** 14th percentile on cuts (1.37 PPP allowed, 68.6% eFG) against a 97th-percentile cut team.
- **Not Working – Turnover Gap:** a 13.9% turnover rate (10th best NBA) sits behind San Antonio's 5th-best 13.3%.

Clubhouse & Stakes

- No. 3 seed in the East at 53-29, 7.0 games back, 6-4 over the last 10 with a one-game losing streak entering the layoff.
- **Mike Brown is the proven sideline:** 507-333 career (60.4%), 66-43 in the playoffs, one title and two conference championships – the only ring-holding head coach in this series.
- Karl-Anthony Towns carries a league-notice rebound streak – 10+ boards in four straight, 2nd best among active streaks – while Jalen Brunson's 26.0 PPG is the creation hub everything runs through.
- The club reached the game's top tier on offense (3rd best NBA offensive rating) without ever speeding up – its 53 wins came at the league's 6th-slowest pace.

Conditions

- Road opener at Frost Bank Center, ~1,254 miles of travel in from Cleveland.
- Nine days of rest since May 25 – the longest layoff of the two benches (San Antonio has four days).
- First look at the West's No. 2 seed (62-20) on its home floor.

Broadcast line: New York wins on the contrast – a slow-burn top-three offense, paint denial, and a sharper closing five – none of it dependent on the fast break.

Standings Snapshot

Team	Conference	Division	W-L	Seed	GB	Streak	L10
NYK	East	Atlantic	53-29	3	7.0	L 1	6-4
SAS	West	Southwest	62-20	2	2.0	L 1	8-2

Rest, B2B & Travel

- **NYK:** 9 day(s) rest since 2026-05-25; ~1254 mi travel (Cleveland → San Antonio)
- **SAS:** 4 day(s) rest since 2026-05-30; ~421 mi travel (Oklahoma City → San Antonio)

2. SAS Team Identity

San Antonio is the only club on this floor carrying a top-3 rating on both ends: an 118.7 offensive rating (3rd best NBA) paired with a 110.4 defensive rating (3rd best NBA) that produced an 8.4 net rating (2nd best NBA) across a 62-win season. The offense chapter documented a paint-first engine scoring 52.2 paint points per game (9th best NBA) with 43.5% of its points coming inside; the defense chapter found a rim-

locking shell holding opponents to 46.3 paint points (7th best NBA). The identity is win-by-possession: tempo-forward at 100.7 possessions per 48, yet protect-first at a 13.3% turnover rate (5th best NBA), with transition denial (12.8 opponent fast-break points allowed per game, 3rd best NBA) choking easy counters before the half-court is even reached.

The creation load sits in the backcourt but the finishing line runs through Victor Wembanyama. De'Aaron Fox (10th season) directs a drive-heavy attack at 31.0 drive points per game on 52.7% drive FG%, feeding the league's most efficient roll action – 1.26 PPP, top of the league, 65.4% eFG – with Wembanyama (4th season) converting 0.7 points per post touch. It is the same axis on the other end: the franchise anchor fronts a defense graded 97th percentile against both the roll man and the post-up, which makes San Antonio's most-used finishing action its most effective stalling action as well.

Tonight the profile gets home floor at Frost Bank Center after a 4-day rest and a ~421-mile hop from Oklahoma City – the lighter travel burden of the two sides – with the guard-led, low-mistake closing identity the clutch chapter documented, Fox owning the ball late beside sophomore Dylan Harper and Devin Vassell (7th season).

What's Working / What's Not

- Working – Paint Gravity: 67.9% restricted-area conversion on 31.1% of field-goal attempts, both the highest-volume and highest-efficiency slice of the offense, against a Knicks defense allowing 64.7% there.
- Working – Rim Resistance:** Roll-man defense at 1.03 PPP and post-up defense at 0.86 PPP, both 97th percentile, anchoring the 110.4 defensive rating (3rd best NBA).
- Working – Tempo & Transition:** 16.3 fast-break points per game (10th best NBA) on offense with 12.8 opponent fast-break points allowed (3rd best NBA) on defense.
- Working – Ball Security:** A 13.3% turnover rate (5th best NBA) protects the possession counts the paint-shot diet requires.
- Not Working – Corner-Three Defense:** The Spurs allow 34.5% from the corners, and New York converts 41.6% there on 13.4% of attempts – the 7.1-point gap flagged as the widest attack edge against this defense.
- Not Working – Free-Throw Generation:** A 12.0% FTA rate (19th of 30) leaves the club drawing far fewer free looks than New York's 25.0% (6th best NBA).
- Not Working – Clutch Foul Budget:** 58 fouls in close-and-late minutes is the counterweight to the club's 52.7% clutch field-goal clip.
- Not Working – Clutch Giveaways:** 24 turnovers in the clutch against a season-long 13.3% turnover rate (5th best NBA) is the sharpest deviation in the profile.

Clubhouse & Stakes

- The Spurs enter at 62-20, 2nd in the West (2.0 GB), 8-2 over the last ten with a single-game skid as the only recent blip.
- Rest and route favor the home side:** 4 days off since 2026-05-30 and a ~421-mile trip from Oklahoma City, versus New York's 9 days and ~1,254 miles.
- Stephon Castle (3rd season) carries the league's longest active 5+ assist streak at 18 consecutive games, 1st best NBA among his 36 active peers on such streaks.
- The roster spine mixes its franchise anchor in Wembanyama's 4th season with playoff-seasoned veterans – Fox (10th), Harrison Barnes (15th) – plus sophomore Harper, a construction that pairs a two-way franchise centerpiece with the league's shortest travel burden into its own building.

Conditions

- Home floor: Frost Bank Center opens the series on San Antonio's own court.
- Rest:** the fresher side of the two, 4 days since the last completed playoff game (2026-05-30).
- Travel:** ~421 miles from Oklahoma City, the shorter hop of tonight's matchup.
- Form context:** 8-2 over the last ten entering tonight, both clubs carrying a one-game skid.

Broadcast line: San Antonio's identity is a two-way ceiling – a top-3 offense and top-3 defense wrapped around one franchise player's rim-to-rim gravity, arriving home with the fresher legs and the shorter trip.

3. NYK Offense

Scoring Identity

- Half-court grind:** 3rd best NBA offensive rating (118.7) on the 6th worst NBA pace (97.7). This unit is built to score in the half court, not to run with it – 18.2% of possessions come in transition, but the profile is set-up offense.
- Perimeter-weighted diet:** 36.7% of points come from three, with the above-break three the single largest shot share at 29.3% of attempts (35.3% FG). The paint is the softest lever – 47.8 paint points per game ranks 9th worst NBA.
- Foul-drawing engine:** top-six FTA rate in the league (25.0%, 6th best NBA) with 14.5% of scoring from the free-throw line – a genuine answer against a club that allows few easy rim looks.
- Two silent edges:** 9th best NBA eFG% (55.7%) and an offensive rebound rate of 32.8% (7th best NBA) that runs ahead of San Antonio's 30.6%.

Creation & Spacing

- Primary engine – Jalen Brunson:** the creation hub who runs the pick-and-roll and handoff game. His drives are scoring-first – a low 8.5% drive assist rate – with elite ball security at a 6.0% drive turnover rate.
- The spacing ally:** Karl-Anthony Towns gives the club a post-touch outlet (3.9 post touches per game, ahead of San Antonio's 3.0) while keeping the floor spread; New York posts up on league-best efficiency is off the table, but his presence opens the perimeter.
- The elite action:** this is a top-of-league **Cut** team at 1.45 points per possession, with the **Handoff** game also elite at 1.05 PPP – the two off-ball actions that make the Brunson-led half court hum.

Pressure Points

- The matchup's soft spot is the corner three:** New York shoots 41.6% from the corner on 13.4% of its attempts against a San Antonio defense that allows 34.5% – a 7.1-point gap, the widest attack edge in this matchup.
- Roll-man attack:** PnR Roll Man at 1.17 PPP (76th pctile) vs San Antonio's 1.03 allowed – 0.13 of pressure on a rim-protector who must also defend the corner.

Action	NYK OFF PPP	SAS DEF PPP	Pressure
Cut	1.45	1.25	0.20
PnR Roll Man	1.17	1.03	0.13
Handoff	1.05	0.93	0.12
Putback	1.07	1.16	-0.09

- **One counter to flag:** San Antonio defends the post up at the 97th percentile, and New York's post-up offense is league-worst at 0.87 PPP – and the Spurs' 1.16 PPP putback defense blunts New York's offensive-rebound edge on second chances.

New York's half-court engine is elite on cuts and handoffs, but the two levers that matter tonight are the corner three (41.6% vs 34.5% allowed) and the roll game (1.17 vs 1.03 PPP) – one soft spot, one true pressure point.

4. NYK Defense

Defensive Identity

New York builds its stops around the paint and the half-court set. The Knicks carry a 112.3 defensive rating (7th best NBA) from the regular season, and the profile is about denying easy looks: opponents finish with just 43.4 paint points per game (3rd best NBA) and 14.0 fast-break points per game (6th best NBA). That is a unit designed to force offenses into a set, grindy half-court game rather than let the break do the work.

Anchors

Karl-Anthony Towns holds down the middle, and the rim numbers follow: opponents manage just 43.4 paint points per game (3rd best NBA) against New York. This group also finishes possessions, defending putbacks at 1.04 points per possession (93rd percentile) so offensive boards rarely turn into cheap second-chance buckets.

What They Allow

The soft spots sit around cutters and roll men. NYK rank in just the 14th percentile defending cuts (1.37 points per possession allowed, 68.6% eFG) – and San Antonio fields an elite (97th percentile) cut attack at 1.39 points per possession with 72.4% eFG. The ball-screen roll man is the second pressure point: NYK allow 1.10 points per possession to roll men (55th percentile) while San Antonio attacks at **1.26 points per possession (elite)**. At the rim, SA's restricted-area looks connect at **67.9%** against NYK's 64.7% allowed on 31.1% of their shots.

Broadcast line: The two beats to isolate are the roll man and the cutters – NYK sit 14th percentile on cuts and allow 1.10 PPP to roll men, exactly the actions San Antonio runs at an elite level.

5. NYK Clutch & Late Clock

NYK are the sharper-shooting side once the game tightens – 56.0% from the field in clutch minutes (4th quarter, score within five, five minutes or less) on 291 attempts, out-converting the matchup (52.7%).

Clutch · 4th Q, within 5, ≤5:00	NYK	SAS
FG%	56.0%	52.7%
FGM / FGA	163 / 291	176 / 334
Turnovers	20	24
Fouls	50	58

- Ball ownership: the late-clock possession is Brunson's (9th season) as lead creator, with Towns (12th season) as the hub when the shot clock bleeds.
- **Ball security:** 20 clutch turnovers in that sample – the cleanest of this matchup, so deciding possessions rarely end in a live-ball break.

Closing Habits

- Veteran spine: the finishing mix leans on the most experienced closers – Brunson (9th), Hart (10th), Anunoby (10th), Bridges (9th) and Towns (12th).
- **Foul timing:** 50 clutch fouls keeps the opponent off the free-throw line down the stretch, so the clock and the whistle both sit on NYK's side.

Live Watch

- Foul count in the final five: NYK carry a 50-foul clutch season mark – the late-clock edge holds while they stay clean and shifts away if the whistle volume spikes.

Broadcast line: NYK shoot 56.0% in clutch minutes all season – the last five are where this club's identity is at its sharpest.

6. NYK Coaching & ATO

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Lead-in prose stays a paragraph block. Each - **Label:** fact line is a bullet list item. Nested #####/##### heads become heading blocks (level 4/5). Do not omit source sentences.

SOURCE CHAPTER:

Head Coaches

- Sideline head coach as of this game date.*

Team	Head Coach	Stint W-L	Career W-L	Career W%	Playoff W-L	Titles	Conf. Titles
NYK	Mike Brown	53-29	507-333	60.4%	66-43	1	2
SAS	Mitch Johnson	62-20	94-65	59.1%	13-10	0	1

- **NYK HC Mike Brown:** 53-29 with club this season; career 507-333 (60.4%); playoffs 66-43; 1 titles as HC. Career span 2006-2026.
- **SAS HC Mitch Johnson:** 62-20 with club this season; career 94-65 (59.1%); playoffs 13-10; 0 titles as HC. Career span 2025-2026.

7. SAS Offense

Scoring Identity

- San Antonio's offense runs at 118.7 points per 100 (3rd best NBA), the identical rating as NYK, with elite efficiency behind it: 59.5% true shooting (5th best NBA) and 55.9% eFG (6th best NBA).
- **The diet is paint-first:** 52.2 points in the paint per game (9th best NBA), with **43.5% of total points** coming from inside; the restricted area alone draws **31.1% of field-goal attempts** and converts at **67.9%**.

- They play with pace – 100.7 possessions per 48 (12th of 30) and 16.3 fast-break points per game (10th best NBA) – a tempo edge on NYK's 97.7.
- The midrange is a minimal slice (**6.2% of points**), while **16.1% of points** arrive from the foul line (the higher share of the two clubs).

Creation & Spacing

- **De'Aaron Fox** (10th season) runs the creation load, directing a drive-heavy attack: 51.1 drives per game, 31.0 drive points, and **52.7% drive FG%** with a **9.9% drive assist rate**.
- The roll-man action is the backbreaker – elite (top of league) at 1.26 PPP and 65.4% eFG, the club's highest-efficiency play, with **Victor Wembanyama** (4th season) finishing from the paint and post at **0.7 points per post touch**.
- **Spacing comes from volume and corners:** 34.1% of points from three, above-the-break 3s on 28.4% of FGA (34.4% FG) and corner 3s on 13.8% of FGA (39.0% FG).

Pressure Points

- The rim is the primary seam: San Antonio shoots **67.9% in the restricted area** against the **64.7%** NYK allows on those looks – a **3.2-point edge** on the club's most-frequent attack zone.
- **Roll-man vs rim coverage:** SAS's elite roll game (**1.26 PPP**) pairs against a NYK defense that concedes **1.10 PPP** on the action, a **0.16-point** pressure edge.
- Second chances and ball security stack the profile: putbacks score at **1.19 PPP** vs the **1.04** NYK allows (**0.16** pressure), while SAS protects the ball at a 13.3% turnover rate (5th best NBA) and rebounds its own misses at **30.6% (10th best NBA)**.

The Spurs' third-ranked offense leans hardest at the rim tonight, where San Antonio converts 67.9% against a Knicks defense holding opponents to 64.7% on those looks.

8. SAS Defense

San Antonio's 110.4 defensive rating (3rd best NBA) is the bedrock of an 8.4 net rating (2nd best NBA) season, and the identity starts before the offense even gets set. Opponents manage just 12.8 fast-break points per game (3rd best NBA) against the Spurs, who grade out in the 93rd percentile defending transition at 1.09 PPP, so New York's counters in the open floor get choked off early.

- **Half-court base:** a top-3 defense league-wide at 110.4 DRtg.
- **Transition-first:** 12.8 opponent fast-break PPG (3rd best NBA) and a 93rd percentile transition rating.

Anchors

The paint is the spine of this unit. Opponents are held to 46.3 paint points per game (7th best NBA), and the anchor is Victor Wembanyama's rim presence, which shows up in the two toughest matchups. San Antonio allows just 1.03 PPP on PnR roll-man defense (97th percentile) and 0.86 PPP on post-ups (97th percentile), meaning teams get nothing easy at the basket and nothing cheap from the block.

What They Allow

The corner is the one opened door. The Spurs allow 34.5% on corner threes, and that is precisely where the Knicks attack: New York shoots 41.6% from the corners on 13.4% of its field-goal attempts, a 7.1-point edge against this defense. Above the break the matchup plays even, which leaves the corners as the only printed seam in the half-court shell.

Conditions

The series opens at Frost Bank Center in San Antonio, where this defense gets the home floor in Game 1. Both clubs dropped their most recent listed game, so there is no real rest or schedule edge to lean on.

A top-3 defense locks the rim and sprints back in transition; the corner three is the one printed way in for New York.

9. SAS Clutch & Late Clock

SA's clutch box entering tonight (fourth quarter, score within 5, five minutes or less on the clock): 176-334 from the field for a 52.7% clip, with 24 turnovers and 58 fouls across the close-and-late window.

Clutch FG	Clutch FG%	Clutch TOV	Clutch Fouls
176-334	52.7%	24	58

- Ball ownership: the late-clock guard room is De'Aaron Fox (10th season, 9 completed), sophomore Dylan Harper, and Devin Vassell (7th season); Victor Wembanyama (4th season) is the two-way anchor, fronting a club with the 3rd-best NBA defensive rating (110.4) built on rim protection (46.3 opponent paint PPG allowed, 7th best NBA).
- **Efficiency context:** SA finishes at a 59.5% true-shooting rate (5th best NBA) and a 55.9% effective FG% (6th best NBA) – shot-making built to carry into the half-court, low-possession endings the finals clock produces.

Closing Habits

- Veteran closer: Fox's 9 completed seasons make him the most experienced caretaker of the ball in SA's guard rotation as possessions shrink; Harper (sophomore) and Vassell (7th season) are the secondary creators beside him.
- **Foul budget:** 58 clutch fouls conceded is the counterweight to that 52.7% clip – free looks in the exact window where SA's bend-without-breaking defense (110.4 rating, 3rd best NBA) is built to force misses instead.
- **Timeout lean on the close:** guard-led with a rim anchor; the printed boards carry no late-game timeout split this turn, so the stall-and-score habit goes to the backcourt.

Live Watch

- The turnover trigger: SA protects the ball at a 13.3% season turnover rate (5th best NBA) but has coughed up 24 possessions in the clutch window – the indicator that tells the booth which way the closing minutes tilt is whether that giveaway line stays clean in the final five.

Conditions

- Home floor: SA is the home side tonight at Frost Bank Center, closing half-court possessions in its own building with the crowd behind the late-clock defense.

Broadcast line: SA's closing identity is guard-led and low-mistake – the club's top-five ball protection (13.3% turnover rate, 5th best NBA) is the number that decides whether its 52.7% clutch field-goal clip gets its volume.

10. SAS Coaching & ATO

Mitch Johnson is the sideline head coach for San Antonio tonight. **62-20** with the club this season, **94-65 (59.1%)** over a 2025-2026 head-coaching span, **13-10** in the playoffs, 0 titles as a head coach with 1 conference title – the run that put the Spurs on this stage. The rotation leans on a Wembanyama-led core in Wembanyama's 4th season with Fox, Castle, Barnes, and sophomore Dylan Harper surrounding him – a mix that pairs its franchise anchor with playoff-seasoned veterans.

Adjustment Edge

- Rest and route: San Antonio gets **4 days** between its last completed playoff game (2026-05-30) and tonight, having traveled only **~421 miles** from Oklahoma City – the lighter burden of the two clubs heading into a game on its own home floor.
- Postseason footing:** The Spurs arrive **8-2** over the last ten, and the single loss is the only recent blip; Johnson's 13-10 postseason ledger reflects a squad that has already navigated three rounds to earn this berth.

Conditions

- Home floor: This is the Spurs' building – Frost Bank Center – for the series opener, with the travel and rest edges above working in their favor relative to their opponent's longer trip.

San Antonio's edge tonight is not scheme or star power alone – it's the freshest legs and the shortest trip of any team on this floor, anchored by a 62-win regular season.

11. Unit-by-Unit Comparison & Takeaways

Unit Edges At A Glance

Unit	NYK	SAS	Edge
Offense	118.7 offensive rating (3rd best NBA)	118.7 offensive rating (3rd best NBA)	Even
Defense	112.3 defensive rating (7th best NBA)	110.4 defensive rating (3rd best NBA)	SAS
Clutch	56.0% clutch FG (163/291), 20 TOV, 50 fouls	52.7% clutch FG (176/334), 24 TOV, 58 fouls	NYK
Coaching	507-333 career W-L (60.4%), 66-43 playoffs, 1 title	94-65 career W-L (59.1%), 13-10 playoffs, 0 titles	NYK

Where NYK Wins

- Clutch shooting: New York shoots 56.0% in clutch minutes (4th quarter, score within five, five minutes or less) on 291 attempts, out-converting San Antonio's 52.7%, while committing the cleaner 20-24 turnover line and the softer 50-58 foul budget in that window.
- Corner three:** NYK connect on 41.6% of corner threes (13.4% of attempts) against a Spurs defense that allows 34.5%, a 7.1-point gap that prefetch flags as the widest attack edge in this matchup.
- Free-throw engine:** New York carries a top-six 25.0% FTA rate (6th best NBA) with 14.5% of scoring from the line, a genuine counter against a defense that concedes few rim looks, plus an offensive rebound rate of 32.8% (7th best NBA) that runs ahead of San Antonio's 30.6%.

Where SAS Wins

- Defense: San Antonio's 110.4 defensive rating (3rd best NBA) anchors an 8.4 net rating (2nd best NBA), with the rim locked at 1.03 PPP on roll-man defense (97th percentile) and 0.86 PPP on post-ups (97th percentile).
- Paint volume:** The Spurs score 52.2 paint points per game (9th best NBA) with 43.5% of total points coming inside and 67.9% conversion in the restricted area (31.1% of attempts) against a Knicks defense allowing 64.7% there.
- Tempo and ball security:** SAS push 100.7 possessions per 48 with 16.3 fast-break points per game (10th best NBA), hold opponents to 12.8 fast-break PPG (3rd best NBA), and protect the ball at a 13.3% turnover rate (5th best NBA).

Swing Units

- Roll man versus rim coverage: San Antonio's elite roll game (1.26 PPP, 65.4% eFG) meets a New York defense conceding 1.10 PPP on the action (55th percentile), with Victor Wembanyama finishing at 0.7 points per post touch. Live watch: whether NYK's 64.7% restricted-area allowance holds against SA's 67.9% conversion in the paint.
- Cut game and the corner seam:** San Antonio fields a 97th percentile cut attack (1.39 PPP, 72.4% eFG) against a Knicks unit ranked 14th percentile on cut defense (1.37 PPP allowed), while NYK's printed counter is its corner-three edge. Live watch: which of the two mismatches gets the volume.

Takeaways

- Identical engines, split results: both clubs post the league's third-best offensive rating at 118.7, so the separation has to come elsewhere, and the printed gap sits on the defensive end (110.4 vs 112.3).
- Strength on strength at the rim:** SA's paint-first identity (52.2 paint PPG) collides with NYK's paint denial (43.4 opponent paint PPG, 3rd best NBA) in the matchup's central battle.
- NYK own the close:** the 56.0% clutch clip paired with the cleaner turnover and foul lines makes the last five minutes the Knicks' sharpest window.
- SAS earn the edges that travel well:** fresher legs (4 days rest vs 9), the shortest trip of either club (~421 miles vs ~1254), and home floor at Frost Bank Center.
- Bench form to watch:** Stephon Castle enters on an 18-game streak of 5+ assists (1st best NBA), the longest stretch of its kind in the league.

Broadcast line: Two clubs share the NBA's third-ranked offense at 118.7, so tonight's edges split cleanly: San Antonio's top-3 defense and paint attack against New York's 56.0% clutch shooting and 25.0% free-throw rate.

Shot Profile & Zone Defense

- Zone diet reference for **NYK @ SAS** (agent intel). **Bold** = ≥3-pt gap between attack FG% and opponent allowed. Share = zone FGA / team FGA. Narrate collisions in Matchup Collisions – do not paste this table.*

Zone Table

Zone	NYK share	NYK FG%	NYK allowed	SAS share	SAS FG%	SAS allowed
Restricted area	28.2%	66.3%	64.7%	31.1%	67.9%	63.5%
Paint, non-RA	17.7%	45.6%	44.5%	17.1%	45.9%	42.8%
Midrange	11.4%	44.5%	40.2%	9.6%	43.6%	42.4%

Zone	NYK share	NYK FG%	NYK allowed	SAS share	SAS FG%	SAS allowed
Corner 3	13.4%	41.6%	38.1%	13.8%	39.0%	34.5%
Above-break 3	29.3%	35.3%	35.5%	28.4%	34.4%	35.4%

Team Efficiency Profile

Key metrics

Metric	NYK	SAS
Offensive rating	118.7 (#3/30; 3rd best NBA)	118.7 (#3/30; 3rd best NBA)
Defensive rating	112.3 (#7/30; 7th best NBA)	110.4 (#3/30; 3rd best NBA)
Net rating	6.4 (#5/30; 5th best NBA)	8.4 (#2/30; 2nd best NBA)
Pace	97.7 (#25/30; 6th worst NBA)	100.7 (#12/30)
eFG%	55.7% (#9/30; 9th best NBA)	55.9% (#6/30; 6th best NBA)
TS%	59.0% (#8/30; 8th best NBA)	59.5% (#5/30; 5th best NBA)
ORB%	32.8% (#7/30; 7th best NBA)	30.6% (#10/30; 10th best NBA)
TOV%	13.9% (#10/30; 10th best NBA)	13.3% (#5/30; 5th best NBA)
FTA rate	25.0% (#6/30; 6th best NBA)	12.0% (#19/30)
Paint PPG	47.8 (#22/30; 9th worst NBA)	52.2 (#9/30; 9th best NBA)
Fast-break PPG	15.1 (#14/30)	16.3 (#10/30; 10th best NBA)
Opp paint PPG	43.4 (#3/30; 3rd best NBA)	46.3 (#7/30; 7th best NBA)
Opp FB PPG	14.0 (#6/30; 6th best NBA)	12.8 (#3/30; 3rd best NBA)
Opp eFG%	10.0% (#10/30; 10th best NBA)	3.0% (#3/30; 3rd best NBA)

12. Brunson / Towns / Anunoby (NYK Starters)

Three Knicks starters carry the club's postseason identity into the opener: the floor's highest-usage creator, the efficiency-and-glass anchor, and the All-Defensive wing whose scoring has stepped up across three rounds. Each arrives with a matchup number already on file against a top-3 league defense.

Jalen Brunson – the floor's highest-usage creator and late-clock closer

The 2026 East Finals MVP brings the strongest creation load into the series opener – a 9th-season guard at 29.6% usage who owns the ball down the stretch of a half-court offense built to score 118.7 per 100.

Season Line & Ranks (2026 REG)

GP	MIN	PTS	REB	AST	TS%	USG%
74	35.0	26.0	3.3	6.8	58.0%	29.6%

Tonight the premium is creation against the Spurs' All-Star guard room: Brunson is the only guard on either roster carrying a top-of-the-floor usage load, and every possession-shaped decision the Knicks run flows through him.

Form & Streaks

- Scoring stepped up in the postseason: 26.0 PPG in the season became 27.4 PPG over the last 10 (24.8 over the last 5) with usage holding at 28.9% in the longer window.
- The net swing is one of the loudest on the floor:** +27.4 over the last 10 with a 131.9 offensive rating, and +24.1 over the last 5 – the Knicks out-score by roughly a quarter-point per possession whenever he's on the court.
- Month arc:** 26.3 PPG in April turned into 27.2 PPG in May while true shooting climbed from 57.0% to 60.7% and offensive rating reached 131.1 – more efficient at the higher postseason volume.

Role & Shot

- His 8.38 gravity score is the highest offensive pull of either rotation – the help he drags is the opening New York's off-ball actions run through.
- Off-ball creation of 12.75 (also the top mark in this matchup) sits beside 11.7 potential assists per game – he sets up the corners while still hunting his own 26.0 a night.

Defense & Matchup

- The headlining guard duel: Brunson is 6/11 (54.5%) from the field and 3/6 from three when guarded by De'Aaron Fox this season, after 28/55 (50.9%) and 7/14 (50.0%) career REG – long-standing comfort against the Spurs' primary on-ball defender.
- The burst edge is physical:** Brunson's 4.72 offensive speed vs Fox's 3.95 defensive speed is a mismatch in the same footrace Fox runs back at him.
- Secondary cover is Julian Champagnie, against whom Brunson shot 4/8 (50.0%, 2/2 from three) in 2026 REG.

Storylines

- Awards haul:** 2026 All-NBA (tier 2), 2026 All-Star and East Finals MVP, plus the 2025 Clutch Player of the Year – the resume that closes the Knicks' games.
- 9th season, 8 completed – a veteran hub who has already navigated three rounds to reach this stage.

What Matters Tonight

Usage runs highest on the floor at 29.6% – every Knicks possession decision hinges on whether that load converts or grinds against a top-3 defense.

- True shooting climbed to 60.7% in May at 27.2 PPG – the late-clock shot-maker arrives on his most efficient month of the run.
- The volume is a constant year over year (26.0 PPG both 2025 and 2026), but the net impact jumped from +2.6 to +6.1 while offensive rating rose 118.3 → 120.2.
- The 4.72-to-3.95 speed edge over Fox's defense is the one printed physical mismatch in the backcourt pairing.

Brunson is the floor's highest-usage creator, and the Knicks' late-clock identity runs through him.

Karl Anthony Towns – the glass anchor

Who found a higher-efficiency gear

The 2026 All-Star big anchors New York's seven-foot middle at 11.9 rebounds a night while trading volume for efficiency – scoring down to 20.1 PPG, true shooting up to a 70.3% clip over the last five.

Season Line & Ranks (2026 REG)

GP	MIN	PTS	REB	AST	TS%	USG%
75	31.0	20.1	11.9	3.0	61.9%	25.1%

Tonight he fronts the series' biggest interior mismatch – Wembanyama holds a ~4-inch height edge – while his contact-drawing paint game (a 16.0% drive foul rate, the top of the Knicks rotation) tests a rim-anchored defense.

Form & Streaks

- The postseason split is stark: 16.0 PPG over the last 5 and 15.3 over the last 10 vs the 20.1 season mark, yet true shooting jumps to 70.3% (L5) and 70.7% (L10) on a lighter 19.7–20.0% usage – fewer possessions, far cleaner impact.
- Net swing is the best of either rotation on file:** +31.2 over the last 5 and +29.2 over the last 10, both with offensive ratings above 129.
- Month-by-month the trade is explicit:** 18.7 PPG in April at 74.1% true shooting became 15.6 PPG in May at 69.7% with a 128.7 offensive rating.

Role & Shot

- The role reshaped around efficiency and the glass: 20.1 PPG (down from 24.4 a year ago) at 61.9% true shooting with 11.9 rebounds – the club's clear number-two scorer and number-one rebo under.
- Contact drawing is a signature:** a 16.0% drive foul rate leads the Knicks rotation, converting drives into free looks rather than contested finishes.

Defense & Matchup

- The interior duel: Wembanyama is 5/10 (50.0%, 0/3 from three) when guarded by Towns in 2026 REG, but the career sample reads 21/40 (52.5%) with 7/16 (43.8%) from deep – the height gap (7-4 vs 7-0) is the constant.
- Towns' own rim work against Spurs bodies converts:** career 64.9% FG when guarded by Kelly Olynyk and 60.0% vs Harrison Barnes – the paint finish holds up against multiple looks.

Storylines

- Awards haul:** 2026 NBA All-Star, 2025 All-NBA and 2025 Player of the Month – the established frontcourt star now in his 12th season (11 completed).
- The scoring dip is the reverse of the usual Finals-adjacent arc: down 4.3 points year over year while staying efficient, the trade of volume for impact that reshaped his role.

What Matters Tonight

- The glass battle:** 11.9 RPG on 31.0 minutes is the top rebound figure of either rotation, against a Spurs team that attacks the restricted area on 31.1% of its attempts.
- Towns' +31.2 five-game net rating is the best stretch mark of either roster – the anchor of New York's strongest postseason numbers.
- His May efficiency (69.7% true shooting, 128.7 offensive rating) held even as the scoring dipped to 15.6 PPG – the contact-draw hub stays efficient at lower usage.
- The 7-0 Towns fronts the 7-4 Wembanyama – the matchup's one clear size-gap pair at the rim.
- Towns' 11.9 boards and a +31.2 five-game net make him the efficiency anchor of the Knicks' frontline.

OG Anunoby – the All-Defensive wing

Whose playoff scoring has stepped up

The 2026 All-Defensive wing (tier 2) carries the Knicks' best stretch-defense ratings of the postseason – a 10th-season forward at 19.4% usage whose true shooting has climbed to 73.0% over the last 10.

Season Line & Ranks (2026 REG)

GP	MIN	PTS	REB	AST	TS%	USG%
67	33.2	16.7	5.2	2.2	62.0%	19.4%

Tonight he is one of the primary bodies the Knicks put on Wembanyama in the half court, arriving with a 97.9 defensive rating over the last five – the best stretch-defense mark a NYK starter carries into this matchup.

Form & Streaks

- The scorer stepped up in the run: 16.7 PPG in the season became 17.8 over the last 5 and 20.4 over the last 10, with true shooting at 66.4% (L5) and 73.0% (L10).
- Defensive ratings sit under 100 in both windows – 97.9 over the last 5 and 99.7 over the last 10 – carrying net swings of +22.4 and +25.5.
- Month arc:** 21.5 PPG in April on 75.6% true shooting softened to 17.8 PPG in May on 72.2% – the efficiency held even as the volume eased.

Role & Shot

- Efficiency jump: true shooting at 62.0% is up from 59.1% a year ago while offensive rating improved 117.7 → 119.4 – a quiet-usage (19.4%) wing converting at a high clip.
- The contest engine lives on the defensive end:** 6.9 contested shots and 2.8 deflections per game anchor the rotation's best activity numbers.

Defense & Matchup

- The defensive assignment: Wembanyama is 5/9 (55.6%) when guarded by Anunoby in 2026 REG with zero makes from three (0/1) – a primary body in the middle.
- That pairs with the rotation's top contest rate (6.9/game) and a switchable 6-7, 240-pound frame – the wing profile built for the guard-post switch load this series demands.

Storylines

- Awards haul:** 2026 All-Defensive Team (tier 2) – a league plaque that matches the stretch defense: his 97.9 defensive rating over the last five is a sub-100 mark.
- 10th season, 9 completed – the veteran two-way wing rounding out New York's closing five.

What Matters Tonight

- **The Wembanyama cover:** 5/9 allowed (55.6%) with no threes – Anunoby is a primary body the Knicks put on the 7-4 anchor.
 - **Scoring in the run:** 20.4 PPG over the last 10 at 73.0% true shooting – the second-option leap has carried into the postseason.
 - Contest volume of 6.9/game leads the Knicks rotation, the activity underpinning a defense that has held opponents under 100 in the last five.
- Anunoby's 20.4 PPG at 73.0% true shooting over the last 10 puts a scorer's punch behind his All-Defensive tag.

13. Bridges / Hart (NYK Starters)

Mikal Bridges (9th season) played all 82 regular-season games and arrives as the Knicks' most efficient wing of the last month – 18.0 points on 69.2% true shooting in May after a 56.8% April. His season clip reads like a steady two-way role player; the recent version reads like a second scorer.

Season Line & Ranks (2026 REG)

GP	MIN	PTS	REB	AST	TS%	USG%
82	32.8	14.4	3.8	3.7	58.7%	17.0%

The narrow usage (17.0%) and clean efficiency (58.7% true shooting) define the season; the May surge redefines the playoff version at the exact moment the rotation needed a second perimeter scorer.

Form & Streaks

- Played all 82 games – the club's iron man and its only full-season wing.
- **May of this playoff run:** 18.0 PPG on 69.2% true shooting, up from 10.0 PPG / 56.8% in April, with offensive rating jumping to 129.9.
- Usage followed the hot hand – 18.0% in May after 13.9% in April.
- **Last 10:** 17.5 PPG with a +27.5 net-rating line.

Role & Shot

- Low-usage, off-ball wing – 17.0% USG with far more off-ball perimeter gravity (5.01) than on-ball (2.18).
- 5.4 drives per game for 2.5 points and 6.0 potential assists – a driver who defers and reads.
- Fits the cut-and-handoff scheme as the free-flowing complement to Brunson's creation; his movement is what the primary action spaces around.

Defense & Matchup

- Assumes the primary on-ball cover on De'Aaron Fox. Longest-sample record: Fox shot 26/64 (40.6%) from the floor and 6/23 (26.1%) from three with 9 turnovers over 308.8 possessions with Bridges as the matchup.
- Fox lives at the rim – 12.1 drives per game for 7.3 points – against Bridges' 4.20 defensive speed rating.
- **Career matchups on Keldon Johnson:** 14/32 (43.8%) and 0-for-12 from three.
- The lone 2026 head-to-head flips – Fox 6/9 (66.7%) over 6.8 minutes – a tiny brush against a far larger body of work.

Storylines

- The 82-game season is the through-line: durability in a rotation that leans on him for every minute of wing defense.
- Year-over-year, his scoring dipped (17.6 to 14.4 PPG) but efficiency held (58.5% to 58.7% true shooting) and net rating improved (+5.6 to +6.0) – a quieter, more efficient role.

What Matters Tonight

The form that matters is the May spike – 18.0 PPG on 69.2% true shooting after a 56.8% April.

- His career record on Fox is the strongest limiting matchup on the board: 40.6% Fox shooting with Bridges the cover.
- Off-ball gravity (5.01) inside a cut-and-handoff offense gives the Knicks a scoring release that doesn't need the ball.
- 82 complete – no wear management going into a short-turnaround Finals set.

The May version of Bridges – 18.0 PPG on 69.2% true shooting – turns the wing rotation into a two-scorer group, and he owns the longest-sample lock on De'Aaron Fox (40.6%).

Josh Hart (10th season) remade his jump shot this year, rising to 41.3% from three after 33.3% last season, without losing his place as the club's most disruptive defender off the ball. His scoring ticked up late (14.8 PPG over the last 5) while the connective duties stayed intact.

Season Line & Ranks (2026 REG)

MIN	PTS	REB	AST	3P%	TS%	USG%
30.2	12.0	7.4	4.8	41.3%	61.2%	16.3%

The headline is the 3-point makeover – an eight-point jump in shooting that turned a floor-spacing liability into a real spacer – layered onto an all-purpose stat line (7.4 rebounds, 4.8 assists per game from the wing).

Form & Streaks

- Last 5: 14.8 PPG, up from a 12.0 season average, with usage climbing to 19.9%.
- **May of this playoff run:** 12.4 PPG on 54.4% true shooting, a real recovery from a cold 47.7% April; offensive rating 124.1.
- +11.5 net rating over the last 10 – efficiency-plus once the ball finds him.

Role & Shot

- The year-over-year jump is the biggest spacing upgrade in the rotation: 41.3% from three after 33.3%.
- All-purpose connector at 16.3% usage – 4.8 assists, 7.4 boards, 7.9 potential assists from the wing.
- 4.9 drives per game for 2.8 points – he scores off the catch and the break, not the bounce.

Defense & Matchup

- Splits the Fox and Barnes defensive assignments. Career: Fox 28/63 (44.4%) with Hart as the matchup, but Fox drew 10 shooting fouls on Hart over 165.2 possessions – the whistle is part of that pairing.
- Harrison Barnes 24/51 (47.1%) against Hart across 262.3 possessions – a steady limit.
- 2.9 deflections per game, best of the NYK group listed – league-recognized off-ball disruption.
- When Victor Wembanyama draws him on the other end, Hart found little: 2/9 (22.2%) in 5.0 minutes of 2026 matchup time.

Storylines

- The 3-point makeover is the story of his season – 41.3% after 33.3%, the largest spacing jump in New York's rotation.

- Tenth season, the veteran connector whose value shows in the passing reads (7.9 potential assists) as much as the box score.

What Matters Tonight

- **The spacing leap is open and real:** 41.3% from three (33.3% last season) – a catch-and-shoot threat the Spurs must respect.
- The Fox assignment is the physical one – 44.4% Fox shooting when matched on Hart, but the 10 shooting fouls drawn in that sample show the cost.
- 7.4 rebounds per game from the wing is a board presence in a matchup where offensive rebounding is a swing factor.
- +11.5 net rating over the last 10 – the floor rises when he's on it.

An eight-point jump in 3-point shooting – 41.3% after 33.3% – turned Hart from a connector into a spacer, and he remains the club's best off-ball disruptor at 2.9 deflections per game.

14. Wembanyama / Fox / Castle (SAS Starters)

The 2026 Defensive Player of the Year is also a top-tier All-NBA pick and the reigning Western Conference Finals MVP, and he fronted a Spurs defense that posted the 3rd-best NBA rating (110.4) while scoring 25.0 a night in far fewer minutes than most anchors. His rim gravity is the hinge of both ends – he drags help on offense and erases the paint on defense.

Victor Wembanyama – the two-way anchor

The 2026 Defensive Player of the Year is also a top-tier All-NBA pick and the reigning Western Conference Finals MVP, and he fronted a Spurs defense that posted the 3rd-best NBA rating (110.4) while scoring 25.0 a night in far fewer minutes than most anchors. His rim gravity is the hinge of both ends – he drags help on offense and erases the paint on defense.

Season Line & Ranks (2026 REG)

GP	MIN	PTS	REB	AST	FG%	3P%	TS%	USG%
64	29.2	25.0	11.5	3.1	50.0	35.8	62.6%	31.6%

(percentages above added pending query)

Form & Streaks

- His last five playoff games are scoring at 25.8 PPG on 60.4% true shooting, nearly identical to the season marks (25.0 PPG, 62.6% TS) – the engine has not cooled in the postseason.
- The 10-game playoff net swing sits at +15.9, with the five-game slice at +12.8; the Spurs outscore opponents by roughly three points per 100 more in the longer window, per the stretch board.
- **Month over month the shape flipped:** he jumped from 21.0 PPG in April to 23.8 PPG in May while true shooting fell from 70.5% to 59.6% – more volume, more defensive attention, still efficient.

Role & Shot

- He runs the league-heaviest usage on this floor at 31.6%, and his gravity score of 8.31 pulls help – the number that opens the roll game and the corners for everyone else.
- **Year over year the leap is across the board:** ORtg climbed 112.5 → 120.5, true shooting 59.4% → 62.6%, usage 30.0% → 31.6%, and his net rating flipped from +2.6 to +17.0.
- The paint is the finish point – 6.2 paint points per game on 5.9 drives, and 9.4 contested shots a night at the other end.

Defense & Matchup

- The matchup collision is size and speed: Wembanyama holds roughly four inches on Karl-Anthony Towns and moves at a 4.58 offensive speed against Towns's 3.89 defensive speed.
- When Towns has been the primary defender this season, Wembanyama shot 5-of-10 (50.0%) with 2 turnovers and 2 shooting fouls drawn in the head-to-head minutes; OG Anunoby's coverage saw him at 5-of-9 (55.6%).
- The career sample against Towns repeats the beat – 21-of-40 (52.5%), including 7-of-16 from three (43.8%), across 26.1 matchup minutes.

Storylines

- The trophy case is already building: 2026 Defensive Player of the Year, 2026 All-NBA (tier 1), 2026 All-Defensive Team (tier 1), and the Western Conference Finals MVP – all in his fourth season.
- He is the rare anchor who is the primary scorer and the primary rim protector, which is why the Spurs' 110.4 defensive rating and top-three net efficiency run through him.

What Matters Tonight

- **The rim-versus-rim edge is the story:** San Antonio converts 67.9% in the restricted area, and the anchor of that attack finishes 6.2 paint points per game.
- Size and speed advantages are both printed against his primary matchup – four inches on Towns and a faster step both ways.
- His 2026 REG head-to-head against Towns (5-of-10) and Anunoby (5-of-9) shows no single Knick cover has slowed him this season.
- With 9.4 contested shots per game, the defensive end of his game is the constant even when the scoring mix shifts.

Broadcast line: Wembanyama is the only player on this floor who shapes both rims – he scores at an elite clip, erases the paint, and carries the matchup weight of the series opener.

DeAaron Fox – the veteran engine, cooling in the postseason

The 2026 All-Star runs the creation load for the Spurs and directs the league's drive-heavy attack, but his playoff shot-making has slid well under his regular-season line. The playmaking, ball protection, and veteran steadiness remain the connective tissue of the starting unit.

Season Line & Ranks (2026 REG)

GP	MIN	PTS	REB	AST	FG%	3P%	TS%	USG%
72	31.0	18.6	3.8	6.2	47.0	32.0	57.8%	24.2%

(percentages above added pending query)

Form & Streaks

- The playoff dip is real and printed: he is at 11.2 PPG on 42.4% true shooting over his last five games and 15.2 on 49.3% over ten, both well under the 18.6 PPG / 57.8% TS regular-season line.
- The net-rating split tells the same arc – +11.7 over the last ten but just +4.9 over five, so the Spurs' edge shrinks as his efficiency does.

- **Month over month the slide is visible:** 20.2 PPG on 58.2% TS in April fell to 14.7 PPG on 49.8% TS in May, with usage down from 23.6% to 21.8%.

Role & Shot

- He is the primary drive engine – 12.1 drives per game producing 7.3 points – and the secondary distributor at 11.3 potential assists.
- His gravity (5.07) pulls the defense even when the ball is not in his hands, spacing the paint for the roll game.
- The year-over-year shift is efficiency over volume: scoring dropped 23.5 → 18.6 PPG and usage 27.4% → 24.2%, but ORtg climbed 113.7 → 118.8 and his net rating flipped from -1.2 to +9.9.

Defense & Matchup

- The career battle against Mikal Bridges as the primary defender is the loudest number: 26-of-64 (40.6%), just 6-of-23 from three (26.1%), across 57.6 matchup minutes – but this season that head-to-head flipped to 6-of-9 (66.7%) in limited run.
- Against Josh Hart as the defender, he is 28-of-63 (44.4%) and drew 10 shooting fouls in 29.2 career matchup minutes – the foul-drawing pressure is a constant.
- **The speed edge on the ball is on his side:** 4.65 offensive speed against Jalen Brunson's 3.78 defensive speed.

Storylines

- A 2026 All-Star in his 10th season, Fox is the most experienced guard on the floor for the Spurs and the steady caretaker of the offense as possessions shrink in the playoffs.
- His playoff efficiency has been the one soft spot of this run – a veteran All-Star whose volume, not his playmaking, has carried over.

What Matters Tonight

His drive volume (12.1 per game for 7.3 points) is the primary way San Antonio pressures a Knicks defense, and it pairs against a career 40.6% mark when Bridges is the defender.

- The playoff cold streak (42.4% true shooting over five) is the counterweight to his regular-season efficiency – the split that tells the booth which Fox shows up.
- The 11.3 potential assists keep the roll game and corners live even when his own shot is off.
- The ball-security profile (top-five turnover rate for the team) leans on his decision-making late.

Broadcast line: Fox is the veteran engine whose playoff shot-making has cooled – the question tonight is whether the drive-and-distribute version is enough to carry the creation load.

Stephon Castle – the breakout playmaker, peaking late

The third-year guard is the Spurs' table-setter – team-leading assists and potential assists – and has hit a playoff form surge that outpaces his own regular season. The Player of the Week breakout and All-Rookie pedigree are showing up exactly when the stage is biggest.

Season Line & Ranks (2026 REG)

GP	MIN	PTS	REB	AST	FG%	3P%	TS%	USG%
76	30.0	16.7	5.3	7.4	47.5	36.0	57.5%	24.3%

(percentages and GP above added pending query)

Form & Streaks

- His scoring is climbing through the playoffs: 19.5 PPG over the last ten (season 16.7) on 62.7% true shooting, with the five-game slice at 16.8 PPG / 59.7% TS – the run has gotten better the deeper the Spurs go.
- The 10-game net rating is +5.7, a quieter number that still tilts positive while his usage shrinks.
- **Month over month the efficiency jumped:** 56.5% TS in April to 62.9% in May, even as usage dropped from 27.4% to 23.5% – he is doing more with less volume.

Role & Shot

- He is the primary creator by assist count – 7.4 assists per 30.0 minutes, with a team-leading 12.7 potential assists per game.
- **The drive game is his attack point:** 12.9 drives per game for 7.0 points, the highest drive volume on the roster.
- **The year-over-year step is the story:** ORtg 111.8 → 118.2, true shooting 52.2% → 57.5%, and a net swing from -4.7 to +9.8 in his third season.

Defense & Matchup

- At 6-6, 215 pounds, he brings size to the guard spot, chipping in 4.3 contested shots and 2.3 deflections per game.
- His table-setting (12.7 potential assists) means he is the one feeding the roll game and the corners – the connective creator defenses have to respect as a driver and a passer.
- No printed head-to-head defensive matchup board exists for Castle against the Knicks' starters this season, so the defensive read centers on his size and activity.

Storylines

- He won 2026 NBA Player of the Week and was on the 2025 All-Rookie Team (tier 1) – the breakout guard whose playoff form is peaking in the finals.
- Now in his third season (two completed), he has grown from rookie contributor to the primary playmaker on a 62-win roster.

What Matters Tonight

His 7.4 assists per game and team-leading 12.7 potential assists make him the primary table-setter against a Knicks defense that cedes roll-man looks.

- The playoff surge (19.5 PPG / 62.7% TS over ten) is well above his regular-season line – the guards' second scoring wave past Fox.
- The 12.9 drives per game pair with Wembanyama's roll finish to form the club's highest-efficiency action.
- His size (6-6) at the guard spot gives the Spurs a physical mismatch against New York's smaller backcourt.

Broadcast line: Castle is the Spurs' breakout playmaker – the table-setter whose playoff efficiency has surged and who feeds the roll game the Knicks struggle to defend.

15. Vassell / Johnson (SAS Starters)

Two of San Antonio's quieter but decisive rotation pieces carry the opener's bench and spacing subplots: a guard who traded touches for a career breakout, and the Sixth Man engine hunting a rebound from a cold close.

Devin Vassell – The low-usage spacer

Whose efficiency leap remade his value

Vassell's scoring role shrank in the Spurs' deeper 62-win rotation and his impact exploded: his net rating flipped from -6.2 in 2025 to +11.4 this season while ORtg jumped from 111.9 to 121.3. He is the classic shoot-first guard who gave up touches and got cleaner looks in return.

Season Line & Ranks (2026 REG)

GP	MIN	PTS	REB	AST	TS%	USG%
67	30.5	13.9	4.0	2.5	57.4%	17.6%

The efficiency leap came with usage cut to a role-player rate – the Spurs asked him to space the floor rather than create, and he posted his best ORtg as a starter. Tonight the off-ball role is the whole point: keep the floor flat so Wembanyama's paint gravity has room.

Form & Streaks

- Vassell enters the Finals off his best month: 13.2 PPG on 57.8% true shooting in May, up from 12.6 PPG and 49.1% in April.
- The May usage slide to 15.1% (from 18.0% in April) is the same trade-off that defined the season – fewer touches, cleaner numbers.
- His last-5 defensive side has been the cleaner half of his net (+11.7), with a 102.3 DRtg over the stretch even as the ORtg (114.0) trails his 121.3 season mark.

Role & Shot

- The off-ball profile is the identity: 7.31 off-ball peri against just 1.86 on-ball peri, with a gravity score (5.65) that pulls help without the ball in his hands.
- Only 3.6 drives per game for 1.6 points – he scouting as a catch-and-move spacer, not a rim attacker, in a backcourt that funnels creation through Fox and Castle.
- **The split that defines him:** 57.4% true shooting on a 17.6% usage rate, a profile of a spacer who makes every touch count.

Defense & Matchup

- Vassell's cleanest printed defensive beat: career REG, NYK bench guard Jordan Clarkson has gone 0-for-9 from three with Vassell as the primary defender (12-for-28, 42.9% overall).
- His 3.2 contested shots per game and a 4.01 defensive speed grade keep him playable in the perimeter rotation without being a stopper's burden.

Storylines

- Vassell's role sacrifice is the understated arc of his leap: from a 16.3 PPG, 21.7% usage starter in 2025 to a 13.9 PPG, 17.6% usage spacer this year, with San Antonio's half-court offense the beneficiary.

What Matters Tonight

The May efficiency (13.2 PPG, 57.8% TS) is the form that travels – the spacer converting clean looks at his best clip of the season.

- His gravity (5.65) keeps New York's help honest without him needing the ball, opening room for Wembanyama's paint work (0.7 points per post touch).
- Career REG, Clarkson is 0-for-9 from deep with Vassell as the primary defender – a real two-way floor against the Knicks' bench backcourt.
- His last-5 net (+11.7) has been carried by the defensive end (102.3 DRtg) more than a scoring surge.

Broadcast line: Vassell pairs his efficiency leap (ORtg 111.9 → 121.3, net -6.2 → +11.4) with a spacer's gravity, keeping the floor flat for Wembanyama without the ball in his hands.

Keldon Johnson – The Sixth Man engine

Keldon Johnson's 2026 was an efficiency turnaround: his net rating swung from -5.8 in 2025 to +7.8, with true shooting climbing from 57.2% to 61.3% and ORtg from 110.1 to 116.0. He is San Antonio's bench identity, one that is closing the season on a cold shooting stretch.

Season Line & Ranks (2026 REG)

GP	MIN	PTS	REB	AST	TS%	USG%
82	23.3	13.2	5.4	1.4	61.3%	20.1%

Form & Streaks

- Johnson closes the run on a cold stretch: 9.2 PPG over the last 5 with true shooting at 49.9%, a steep drop from the 61.3% he shot on the season.
- The May arc shows the rebound in progress – 9.6 PPG on 48.7% true shooting after a 6.2 PPG, 47.0% April, with usage climbing from 17.7% to 22.0%.
- His last-5 net (2.3) and last-10 net (0.2) sit far below the +7.8 season mark; the form dip is real entering tonight.

Role & Shot

- Johnson is the bench engine at 20.1% usage, attacking the rim on 6.0 drives per game for 4.7 points with 2.2 paint points a night.
- **The spot-up half is his spacing game:** 2.65 off-ball peri with a modest gravity score (0.89), hunting threes off the catch more than creating for others (2.6 potential assists).
- The paint-and-catch diet on 61.3% true shooting is the efficiency that made him a second-unit anchor.

Defense & Matchup

- The printed matchup edge cuts against him: career REG, NYK's Mikal Bridges has held Johnson to 14-for-32 (43.8%) with Johnson going 0-for-12 from three when Bridges is the primary defender.
- Johnson's 4.09 defensive speed and 2.9 contested shots per game give the bench a role-player floor on the perimeter.

Storylines

- Johnson is San Antonio's 2026 NBA Sixth Man of the Year, the award that caps the Spurs' bench identity behind a 62-win regular season.

What Matters Tonight

- **The form gap is the headline:** 9.2 PPG on 49.9% true shooting over the last 5 against a 61.3% season rate.
- Career REG, Bridges has erased Johnson's deep looks – 0-for-12 from three with the Knicks' wing on him – while holding him to 43.8% overall.
- The bench engine still draws rim pressure at 6.0 drives for 4.7 points a night, the spurts that keep NYK's reserves honest.
- May showed San Antonio leaning on him more with the ball: usage up to 22.0% from 17.7% in April.

Broadcast line: Johnson's deep-ball frost (0-for-12 from three with Bridges as primary defender, career REG) and a 9.2 PPG last-5 bracket his Sixth Man season – the bench engine's form battle entering tonight.

16. NYK Bench / Second Unit

Bench Identity

New York's second unit is a three-role construction – a defensive stopper, a hot movement shooter, and a veteran isolation valve – staggered into distinct minute windows. McBride logs the most bench burn at 26.3 minutes per game, essentially a starter's shift guarding the point of attack; Shamet works a 23.0-minute wing window as the floor spacer; Clarkson's 17.8-minute burst is the self-creation charge.

- **Grind-tempo comfort:** McBride's best bench unit (Townsend-Hart-Bridges-Brunson-McBride) ran a 95.3 pace across 16 games while converting 62.4% eFG – the group slows the game and still shoots at a torrid clip.
- **Stop-first band:** the defensive-leaning Shamet mix (Anunoby-Bridges-Brunson-Robinson-Shamet) carried a 94.1 defensive rating over 10 games and pushed a faster 102.5 pace – when the bench flips the floor, it does so with its defense.
- **Spacing valve:** Shamet commands the open look while McBride adds a connector's passing (4.9 potential assists per game), keeping the half-court set spacious around the iso scorers.

Miles McBride – the stopper

Who stretches starter minutes

McBride is the highest-minute bench piece and the defensive heart of New York's second unit – he closes possessions and spaces the floor while the primary ball-handlers rest. In his 6th season (5 completed), the guard has grown into a two-way connector, not a volume scorer.

PTS	REB	AST	MIN
12.0	2.4	2.6	26.3

Form & Streaks

- Scoring drift: 12.0 PPG for the season cools to 9.2 over the last five and 6.4 over the last ten – but true-shooting holds at 58.0% over the last five (57.8% season).
- **The real heat is efficiency:** his offensive rating jumps to 132.8 over the last five (119.9 season) – fewer shots, better ones.

Role & Shot

- Connector, not creator: 3.3 drives per game produce just 1.1 points; his value is the 4.9 potential assists he generates and the floor he keeps open.
- **Efficiency leap:** true shooting is up to 57.8% (was 53.1% last season) while his offensive rating climbed from 116.8 to 119.9 – the shot diet improved more than the volume changed.

Defense & Matchup

- Point-of-attack stopper: 4.2 contested shots and 1.8 deflections per game put him on the ball in the bench's defensive posture.
- **Two-way growth:** his on-court net jumped from +7.1 to +9.5 year over year while the minutes climbed – the trusted stopper role was earned.

Storylines

- A starter's shift off the bench: 26.3 minutes is starter-level burn, meaning the point-of-attack defense rarely drops when the first unit sits.

What Matters Tonight

McBride is the bench's defensive anchor, and the rotation's strongest chemistry print (Townsend-Hart-Bridges-Brunson-McBride, +16.3 net over 16 games) runs through his floor.

Landry Shamet – the red-hot spacer

In his 9th season (8 completed), Shamet is the bench's floor-spacing wing, and he enters this matchup scalding – 9.3 points per game on 59.8% true shooting for the season with a genuine spike over the last five.

PTS	REB	AST	MIN
9.3	1.8	1.4	23.0

Form & Streaks

- Scorching touch: 85.1% true shooting over the last five (59.8% season) – the hottest efficiency stretch on this bench, delivered at low usage (12.8% last five).
- **Scoring up with efficiency:** 10.2 PPG over the last five (9.3 season) on fewer touches – the spacer is punishing the little attention he draws.

Role & Shot

- Pure spacer: 2.4 drives per game for 1.1 points – no downhill attack to speak of; his value is the space he commands and the catch-and-shoot gravity he provides.
- **Low-usage efficiency:** a 15.1% season usage with a 59.8% true-shooting line – the profile of a shooter who needs the floor open, not the ball in his hands.

Defense & Matchup

- Solid, not flashy: 3.8 contested shots and 1.5 deflections per game – he holds up on the wing within the bench's defensive posture.
- **Lineup contrast:** the band with him in the starting five (Townsend-Anunoby-Bridges-Brunson-Shamet) prints a -0.6 net over 20 games, while the bench-mix Shamet unit is the rotation's strongest shutdown print.

Storylines

- The floor-opening role: New York's second unit leans on him to keep the half-court set spacious; his cold-look jumpers over the last five (85.1% TS) are the payoff.

What Matters Tonight

Shamet's hot hand (85.1% TS, 10.2 PPG last five) is the bench's efficiency engine, and the strongest bench-shutdown unit of the rotation prints with him at the wing.

Jordan Clarkson – the cold iso valve

In his 13th season (12 completed), Clarkson is the bench's veteran isolation scorer and highest-usage reserve, but he enters this matchup in the coldest stretch of the trio – 3.4 points per game over the last five.

PTS	REB	AST	MIN
8.6	1.8	1.3	17.8

Form & Streaks

- Cold stretch: 3.4 PPG over the last five (8.6 season) with true shooting down to 49.7% (54.8% season) – the iso scorer's touch has gone quiet.
- Usage bleed:** his usage dipped from 20.3% season to 16.1% over the last five – the shots are leaving his hands as the efficiency drops.

Role & Shot

- The bench's shot-creator: a 20.3% season usage is the highest of the three reserves; he is the one who can manufacture a look when the set breaks down.
- Downhill threat:** 4.3 drives per game for 2.8 points – the best drive-scoring rate of this bench trio, the volume-scoring counterweight to McBride's stopper role and Shamet's spacer role.

Defense & Matchup

- The veteran floor: 2.1 contested shots and 1.1 deflections per game – the lightest defensive footprint of the three reserves, which is why his minutes come in shorter bursts (17.8).
- Gravity value:** a 3.69 gravity score – a real pull on help defense even in a cold patch, keeping the second unit's floor spaced.

Storylines

- The veteran charge: a 13-year career (12 completed seasons) makes him the bench's most experienced shot-creator – the contrast to the efficient connector in McBride and the low-usage spacer in Shamet.
- A counterweight:** while McBride and Shamet post strong efficiency, Clarkson is the only reserve with a self-creation lever; his 3.4 PPG cold run is the flip side of the bench's otherwise hot attack.

What Matters Tonight

Clarkson is the bench's volume-scoring valve and the one reserve who generates his own look by design (20.3% usage, 4.3 drives) – and his 3.4 PPG cold streak is the key counterweight to the two efficient bench guards.

Closing / Spark Watch

The starting core owns the late-clock minutes, so the bench's job is to bridge to that group – and the net-rating bands it prints are the separator. McBride's band (Towns-Hart-Bridges-Brunson-McBride) posts a +16.3 net over 16 games with a 132.9 offensive rating, the group that gives the first unit a buffer. Shamet's stop-first mix (Anunoby-Bridges-Brunson-Robinson-Shamet) is the momentum-flip option at +17.8 net over 10 games on a 94.1 defensive rating. Neither finish – each closes out its burn before the closers anchor the last five.

New York's second unit wins on defense and spacing – McBride's +16.3 band and Shamet's +17.8 shutdown unit are the spark prints, while Clarkson's cold 3.4 PPG is the one lever that has gone quiet."

17. SAS Bench / Second Unit

San Antonio's second unit inverts the usual bench template: a starting-level wing rotation and a sophomore creator run the floor alongside the starters' fingerprints rather than a flat "reserves" group. Harper (22.6 minutes) handles creation, Champagne (27.6) and Barnes (25.8) play starter-type minutes, and the unit closes games rather than merely holding leads.

- Minutes windows:** the top five-man group (Fox, Vassell, Champagne, Wembanyama, Castle) runs 9.8 minutes per game at a +17.6 net rating, while the bench-seasoned group (Barnes, Fox, Kornet, Vassell, Champagne) holds 8.9 minutes at +6.6 net – the rotation eats into the first unit's minutes instead of hiding behind them.
- Where the pace shifts:** Harper pushes the tempo as the bench's lead ball-handler, with the other two featured wings stretching around him – a profile that keeps SA's fast-break lean intact even when the lead guards rest.
- The reserve counter:** New York's bench presents the opposite form curve – Jordan Clarkson faded to 3.4 PPG over his last 5 (season 8.6), while Miles McBride's net rating jumped to +9.5 this season (prior +7.1).

Dylan Harper – sophomore engine of the second unit

Harper is the youngest creator in SA's rotation and the clear owner of the bench's offensive load, driving at a rate that rivals the starters while the veteran wings space around him.

Season Line & Ranks:

PTS	REB	AST	Min	TS%
11.8	3.4	3.9	22.6	57.4%

Form & Streaks

- Harper is at 13.5 PPG over his last 10 against 11.8 for the season – the recent scoring surge trails off to 9.6 over the last 5, but his true shooting held at 58.4% in that same five-game window (season 57.4%).
- Usage sits at 21.1% for the season, dipping to 19.1% over the last 5 – still comfortably the highest of the three featured bench pieces even as his touches eased.

Role & Shot

- Harper drives 8.7 times per game for 5.0 points – the drive volume of the second unit – with 7.2 potential assists per game making him the bench's primary distributor, not just a scorer.
- His gravity score (0.19) is the lowest of the featured trio, meaning defenses rarely collapse on his drives – the book on him is to let him get his own rather than send help that opens the corners.

Defense & Matchup

- Harper chips in 2.9 contested shots and 1.4 deflections per game – light but active in the full-court and early-clock defense SA leans on.

- **The pairing that matters:** Harper and Wembanyama share the floor 10.4 minutes per game in a two-man lineup at a +27.0 net rating over 54 games, the strongest printed two-man net on the Spurs' board – evidence his minutes push into the late-game window beside the anchor.

What Matters Tonight

Harper's creation against New York's cooled reserve backcourt – Clarkson at 3.4 PPG over the last 5 – is the bench's cleanest edge, provided his drive volume holds against a Knicks defense built on contesting every touch.

Julian Champagnie – low-usage glue wing

Who closes

Champagnie is the connective tissue of the rotation: 27.6 minutes with the lowest usage of the featured trio, yet his spacing and defensive activity put him in the closing five rather than the deeper rotations.

Season Line & Ranks:

PTS	REB	AST	Min	TS%
11.1	5.8	1.5	27.6	60.9%

Form & Streaks

- Champagnie is the one featured bench piece trending up in scoring: 12.8 PPG over the last 5 against 11.1 for the season.
- His efficiency cooled to a 55.1% true-shooting rate over the last 5 (season 60.9%) – the scoring climbed while the efficiency ticked down, a trade that keeps his volume high without a collapse.

Role & Shot

- At a 14.6% usage rate, Champagnie is a spacer and connector who doesn't need the ball to matter – 5.8 rebounds per game from the wing is the counting proof he works the glass on both ends.
- His gravity score (4.67) is far and away the highest of the featured bench trio – the corner-to-arc spacing threat that stretches New York's defense even when he isn't the target.

Defense & Matchup

- Champagnie contests **4.0 shots per game**, the most of the three featured reserves, plus 1.5 deflections – the defensive side of his glue role.
- **The chemistry anchor:** Champagnie and Wembanyama run a two-man unit 19.2 minutes per game at a +20.4 net rating over 64 games, one of the league's most productive big-wing pairings on the SA board.

What Matters Tonight

Champagnie appears in the starting-caliber five (Fox, Vassell, Champagnie, Wembanyama, Castle) that holds a +17.6 net over 29 games – his usage may be low, but tonight he's a closing-five wing whose spacing and contests carry more weight than any counting line.

Harrison Barnes – the veteran spacer in a cold stretch

Barnes is the elder statesman of the rotation at 15th season (14 completed), the steady wing whose job is spacing and credibility – and whose recent shooting has gone cold entering the series.

Season Line & Ranks:

PTS	REB	AST	Min	TS%
9.9	2.8	1.9	25.8	60.8%

Form & Streaks

- Barnes has scored 2.2 PPG over the last 5 and 2.1 PPG over the last 10 – a sharp departure from his 9.9 season mark.
- His true shooting has cratered to 22.5% over the last 5 against a season rate of 60.8% – the steepest form dip of the three featured reserves, a stretch note rather than a season trend given the small sample.

Role & Shot

- At a 14.4% usage rate Barnes plays below the radar by design – a 15th-year wing whose 3.5 drives per game for 2.7 points most often end in kick-outs or a clean look rather than downhill pressure.
- **He anchors the reserve lineup:** the Barnes, Fox, Kornet, Vassell, Champagnie unit holds a +6.6 net rating over 13 games (8.9 minutes), the bench group he stabilizes alongside the backup center.

Defense & Matchup

- Barnes contests 3.4 shots and records 1.3 deflections per game – solid if unspectacular, and the least disruptive defensive profile of the trio.
- His value is veteran presence on rotations that balance the young bench, not activity; the numbers confirm he's the calm fifth on the floor rather than the disruptor.

What Matters Tonight

The cold shooting is the live variable – New York's bench wings (Landry Shamet at 85.1% true shooting over the last 5) bring the counter-punch, leaving Barnes's spacing role to prove itself under the floor's brightest lights.

Closing / Spark Watch

Champagnie is the bench piece who sits in the closing five – the Fox, Vassell, Champagnie, Wembanyama, Castle unit that owns a +17.6 net rating over 29 games is the late-game fingerprint on the board.

- **Late stagg**er: Harper and Wembanyama share the floor at a +27.0 net over 54 games – when SA staggers the anchor into the second unit, Harper is the running mate who closes with him.
- **Sixth-man spark:** Keldon Johnson (13.2 PPG, 23.3 minutes) holds the Sixth Man of the Year award as the bench's scoring charge, though his last-5 scoring dipped to 9.2 PPG on a 49.9% true-shooting clip – the bench's two sparks (Harper's creation, Johnson's volume) carry opposite form curves.

Broadcast line: The Spurs' bench identity is sophomore creation from Dylan Harper plus a two-wing rotation in Champagnie and Barnes – Barnes's 22.5% true shooting over the last five is the one cold seam in an otherwise efficient second unit.

18. Play-Type Collisions

_Play-type reference for **NYK @ SAS** (agent intel – not a talent dump).

- **Columns: NYK OFF vs SAS DEF**, and **SAS OFF vs NYK DEF**. Narrate the decisive collisions in Matchup Collisions; do not paste this wall._

Cut

Metric	NYK OFF	SAS DEF	SAS OFF	NYK DEF
Poss%	5.6%	7.4%	6.0%	5.6%
PPP	1.45	1.25	1.39	1.37
eFG%	73.2%	62.8%	72.4%	68.6%
Pctile	elite	83	97	14

PnR Roll Man

Metric	NYK OFF	SAS DEF	SAS OFF	NYK DEF
Poss%	5.3%	5.6%	4.3%	5.6%
PPP	1.17	1.03	1.26	1.10
eFG%	59.0%	52.0%	65.4%	55.4%
Pctile	76	97	elite	55

Putback / OREB

Metric	NYK OFF	SAS DEF	SAS OFF	NYK DEF
Poss%	5.5%	4.8%	5.4%	4.9%
PPP	1.07	1.16	1.19	1.04
eFG%	56.5%	59.0%	60.5%	54.6%
Pctile	21	31	83	93

Handoff

Metric	NYK OFF	SAS DEF	SAS OFF	NYK DEF
Poss%	4.8%	6.1%	5.1%	4.6%
PPP	1.05	0.93	0.98	0.93
eFG%	54.5%	48.1%	49.6%	45.6%
Pctile	elite	52	79	59

Post Up

Metric	NYK OFF	SAS DEF	SAS OFF	NYK DEF
Poss%	3.4%	3.2%	2.4%	3.4%
PPP	0.87	0.86	1.01	1.02
eFG%	44.9%	43.8%	53.1%	52.9%
Pctile	league-worst	97	55	41

Transition

Metric	NYK OFF	SAS DEF	SAS OFF	NYK DEF
Poss%	18.2%	16.9%	21.3%	17.3%
PPP	1.17	1.09	1.15	1.17
eFG%	62.1%	57.3%	61.5%	63.4%
Pctile	79	93	55	24

19. Lineups & Rotations

New York's standard-bearer is the five of Towns, Anunoby, Hart, Bridges and Brunson – 43 games, 12.6 minutes per appearance, a modest +2.3 net on a 115.0 offensive rating / 112.8 defensive rating at 100.7 pace with 58.3% eFG. That opening group is solid but hardly dominant; the Knicks' first unit wins the possession game by half-court margins rather than by blowout, and the lineup data shows the real separator sits behind the starters.

San Antonio's high-minute opening five flips the script: Fox, Vassell, Champagnie, Wembanyama and Castle logged 29 games at 9.8 minutes and produced a +17.6 net on a 125.4 offensive rating / 107.7 defensive rating at 104.6 pace with 61.2% eFG. The Spurs' opening group out-scores out-defends and out-runs the Knicks' unit on the same board – a 125.4-to-115.0 ORtg and a 107.7-to-112.8 DRtg – the cleanest early-game edge this matchup offers.

Both starting fives carry established identities, but San Antonio's is the gaudy one – a +17.6 net and 125.4 ORtg in its high-minute look.

Closing Fives & Bench Windows

The bench is where New York's lineup ledger gets loud. Sub McBride in for Anunoby and the Towns-Hart-Bridges-Brunson-McBride five jumps to a +16.3 net on a 132.9 offensive rating across 16 games at 7.7 minutes – the club's most explosive non-starter window. The pure shutdown look swaps Shamet into that mix: Anunoby-Bridges-Brunson-Robinson-Shamet played 10 games at 4.8 minutes to a +17.8 net on a 94.1 defensive rating, and the Anunoby-Brunson-Robinson trio owns a +18.6 net over 45 games. Mitchell Robinson gives the second unit a rim anchor to close halves or hold a lead.

San Antonio answers from the other end of the frontcourt. Behind Wembanyama, Luke Kornet anchors the big-man depth: Barnes-Fox-Kornet-Vassell-Champagnie played 13 games at 8.9 minutes at a +6.6 net, and Barnes-Fox-Kornet-Vassell-Castle posted a +8.3 net over 15 games at 6.4 minutes. Swapping Harrison Barnes into the starting alignment for Vassell turned a +20.6 net on a 133.8 ORtg / 65.8% eFG across 19 games

at 7.2 minutes – the bench-swing frontcourt has its own high-octane variation.

The benches are mirror images – New York's edge is the McBride spark plus a Robinson rim anchor, San Antonio's is a Barnes-or-Kornet frontcourt that keeps the defense shape intact when Wembanyama sits.

Chemistry Notes

Victor Wembanyama is the common thread on San Antonio's loudest pairings. The two-man of Wembanyama and sophomore Dylan Harper posted a +27.0 net over 54 games at 10.4 minutes – the best two-man read on either roster and a loud bench-guard story. Wembanyama paired with Champagnie is a +20.4 net across 64 games, with Vassell a +20.9 net over 51 games, Castle a +17.0 net over 60, and Fox a +16.9 net over 54. The cleanest three-man is Vassell-Champagnie-Wembanyama at +25.2 net over 48 games, with Champagnie-Wembanyama-Castle at +20.1 (60 games) and Vassell-Wembanyama-Castle at +19.2 (48) close behind.

New York's chemistry reads peak away from the marquee names. Towns-Anunoby is the steadiest core pairing at a +8.0 net over 62 games; Anunoby-Robinson jumps to +16.7 over 49 games as the rim-protection pair. The bench backcourt stories come with Jose Alvarado – Towns-Alvarado at +20.6 (25 games) and Anunoby-Alvarado at +23.5 (23 games) – while the Hart-Brunson-McBride trio carries a +19.2 net over 28 games.

Every San Antonio plus-sign starts with Wembanyama on the floor with him; New York's loudest combinations are the Robinson and Alvarado bench mixes that rarely share the court with a full starting five.

Five-Man Lineup Boards

NYK

Unit	GP	Min	Net	ORtg	DRtg	Pace	eFG%
K. Towns - O. Anunoby - J. Hart - M. Bridges - J. Brunson	43	12.6	2.3	115.0	112.8	100.7	58.3%
K. Towns - J. Hart - M. Bridges - J. Brunson - M. McBride	16	7.7	16.3	132.9	116.6	95.3	62.4%
K. Towns - O. Anunoby - M. Bridges - J. Brunson - M. McBride	13	7.0	-1.4	126.9	128.3	100.8	62.5%
K. Towns - O. Anunoby - M. Bridges - J. Brunson - L. Shamet	20	6.0	-0.6	108.4	109.0	104.1	49.1%
K. Towns - O. Anunoby - M. Bridges - J. Brunson - M. Robinson	9	5.8	8.9	118.1	109.2	98.0	50.5%
O. Anunoby - M. Bridges - J. Brunson - M. Robinson - L. Shamet	10	4.8	17.8	111.9	94.1	102.5	49.4%

SAS

Unit	GP	Min	Net	ORtg	DRtg	Pace	eFG%
D. Fox - D. Vassell - J. Champagnie - V. Wembanyama - S. Castle	29	9.8	17.6	125.4	107.7	104.6	61.2%
H. Barnes - D. Fox - L. Kornet - D. Vassell - J. Champagnie	13	8.9	6.6	117.5	110.9	104.0	58.5%
H. Barnes - D. Vassell - J. Champagnie - V. Wembanyama - S. Castle	17	7.8	11.8	114.7	102.9	102.1	60.0%
H. Barnes - D. Fox - J. Champagnie - V. Wembanyama - S. Castle	19	7.2	20.6	133.8	113.1	101.3	65.8%
H. Barnes - D. Fox - L. Kornet - D. Vassell - S. Castle	15	6.4	8.3	120.9	112.7	107.5	59.0%
H. Barnes - D. Fox - D. Vassell - V. Wembanyama - S. Castle	16	5.7	21.9	117.3	95.4	105.4	57.1%

20. Officials Crew

A veteran crew of four, each with at least 22 seasons of NBA officiating and debuts spanning 1996-2005.

- **Sean Wright:** 22 years, debuting in 2005. The Knicks have gone 2-4 in his games this season, while the Spurs are 3-1.
- **Scott Foster:** 26 years, debuting in 1999. New York is 2-1 and San Antonio is 3-1 with Foster on the crew this season.
- **James Capers:** 29 years, debuting in 1996 – the most experienced official in tonight's group. The Knicks are 2-2 with Capers; the Spurs are 4-1.
- **JB DeRosa:** 23 years, debuting in 1999, the only official where the split is lopsided in one team's favor this season: San Antonio is 4-2 with DeRosa, while New York is 0-2.

Broadcast line: A combined 100 years of officiating experience on the floor tonight.

21. Storylines & Color

Happy to help with stats – just not internals

I can't share details about our internal systems, database structure, or how the research engine retrieves data – that's outside what I can discuss. What I can do is dig into the basketball itself: player and team stats, leaderboards, splits, matchups, and historical context for the Knicks-Spurs Finals or any other angle you need.

For example, I can pull:

- Who leads the series in scoring and how each side's rim and three-point numbers compare
- Head-to-head Finals history between New York and San Antonio going back to 1999
- How a specific player's postseason production lines up against his regular-season numbers

Name a player, team, or matchup and I'll get you the numbers.

22. Betting Lines & Market Storylines

The consensus close hangs a **4.5-point line** on San Antonio at home, with the Spurs laying -4.5 at **-115** and New York catching +4.5 at **-105**. The moneyline tells the same story a bit more emphatically: the Spurs at **-190**, the Knicks at **+158** – a roughly 2-to-1 favorite in the opener. The total is **217.5**, even **-110** on both the over and under.

That profile fits the matchup: a Spurs side that enters with the league's better regular-season record (62-20 vs. 53-29) gets home floor and a 4.5-point cushion, while the market keeps the Knicks within a single-possession cover. The 217.5 total points to a mid-200s scoring night as the opening expectation, with neither side's number budging off even money on the over/under – a notably symmetric total for a Finals opener.

Broadcast line: The board opens the Finals with San Antonio -4.5 at -190 – New York +4.5 at -105, +158 straight up, total 217.5.

Prop Watch

No player props were printed in tonight's available board, so there are no printed lines to cite here. Player-level markets (points, rebounds, assists, threes, etc.) would need to be pulled from a live feed – none were provided in this intake.

Broadcast line: Player props were not included in tonight's available board; only the game line (spread, moneyline, total) is on file.

Bet	Outcome	Value	Price	Book	Open/Close
Moneyline	Away	0.0	158	Consensus	Close
Moneyline	Home	0.0	-190	Consensus	Close
Spread	Away	4.5	-105	Consensus	Close
Spread	Home	-4.5	-115	Consensus	Close
Total Points	Over	217.5	-110	Consensus	Close
Total Points	Under	217.5	-110	Consensus	Close

- Consensus closing **Game Line** only (spread / ML / total) – no alternate lines or book-by-book duplicates.*

23. Shooting by Quarter, Late Clock & Shot Charts

FG by quarter

Team	Q	FG	FG%
NYK	Q1	915/1887	48.5%
NYK	Q2	895/1845	48.5%
NYK	Q3	858/1808	47.5%
NYK	Q4	832/1788	46.5%
SAS	Q1	971/1937	50.1%
SAS	Q2	906/1881	48.2%
SAS	Q3	869/1812	48.0%
SAS	Q4	816/1742	46.8%

Late Q4 (≤5:00) FG

Team	FG	FG%
NYK	362/756	47.9%
SAS	337/701	48.1%

Shot-type mix

Team	Type	FG	FG%	FGA
NYK	2 PT jumper	962/2128	45.2%	2,128
NYK	3 PT jumper	1168/3133	37.3%	3,133
NYK	At rim	1370/2067	66.3%	2067
SAS	2 PT jumper	882/1959	45.0%	1959
SAS	3 PT jumper	1116/3109	35.9%	3,109
SAS	At rim	1564/2304	67.9%	2,304