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NBA Dynasties: What team reigns superior?

We've all heard of the GOAT debate between Michael Jordan and Lebron James. While each player is truly extraordinary at the game of basketball, how is it possible to determine who is better? The same reasons that make the GOAT debate such a difficult question, are the same reasons that make NBA dynasties a tricky question. Differences in the era, competition, skillsets, and evolution of basketball as a whole all play a role in which team can claim the title of "dynasty of all dynasties". That's why I made a formula calculating these factors to determine who truly is the best dynasty.

But How?

To begin, I picked eight of the top dynasties of all time. Celtics (two times), Lakers (two times), Bulls, Spurs, Heat, and the Warriors. I decided that the range of years I would use for each dynasty would have to start with a championship appearance and end with a championship appearance. Then, I chose six categories of basketball that measure a teams success and overall skill. These six categories were average win percentage, championships, competition, longevity, all stars/year, and lastly the average age of the starting lineups. It's important to know that there are many more possible indicators that determine a teams success but these are some of the most prevalent. I will go into detail for each indicator later, but for now lets see what it looks like.

Table1

Team	Average win %	Average win Min/Max	Championships	Championships Min/Max	Competition (average number of total teams/30)	Competition Min/Max	Longevity (yrs)	#	Longevity Min/Max	All stars/year	All stars Min/max	Average Age of starters	Age Min/Max	Reversed Age	Finel Score
Celtics (1956-1969)	0.71	0.462	11	1.000	0.31	0.000	13		1.000	3	1.000	28.277	0.456	-0.456	0.590
Spurs (2002-2014)	0.78	1.000	4	0.222	0.99	0.986	12		0.889	1.4	0.000	28.900	0.733	-0.733	0.542
Lakers (1979-1989)	0.72	0.538	5	0.333	0.76	0.652	10		0.667	2.6	0.750	27.420	0.076	-0.076	0.472
Bulls (1990-1998)	0.75	0.769	6	0.444	0.91	0.870	8		0.444	1.75	0.219	29.500	1.000	-1.000	0.434
Celtics (1980-1987)	0.75	0.769	3	0.111	0.76	0.652	7		0.333	2.9	0.938	28.429	0.524	-0.524	0.366
Lakers (1999-2010)	0.65	0.000	5	0.333	0.98	0.971	11		0.778	1.6	0.125	28.127	0.390	-0.390	0.351
Warriors (2014-2022)	0.66	0.077	4	0.222	1	1.000	8		0.444	2.5	0.688	27.250	0.000	0.000	0.342
Heat (2010-2014)	0.68	0.231	2	0.000	1	1.000	4		0.000	3	1.000	29.000	0.778	-0.778	0.171

	Weights	Win %	5
		Championships	6
		Competition	3
		Longevity	4
		All stars	1
		Age	2

Celtics Are Superior!



As you can see in the spreadsheet, the Boston Celtics dynasty from 1956-1969 has achieved the top spot. This is largely due to the fact that they were dominant for so long and because of the many championships (11!) that they won. They would have won by even more, but I added in a competition indicator that took into account the number of teams in the NBA. The competition indicator is tricky because it's impossible to measure just how widespread basketball is and the level to which the competition has. For example, basketball is played worldwide nowadays, and the emergence of European stars today was never an option back in the 60s. But in 1956, there were only 8 NBA teams, by 1969 there were 14 teams. These numbers don't come close to the amount of teams that are in league today, which is 30, but the championships won and leadership of Bill Russell and Bob Cousy are still valuable and point to the sheer dominance of this dynasty.

Spurs Fight for Second



The Silver and Black earn the silver medal with an impressive dynasty lasting from 2002 to 2014. Led by the big three, Tim Duncan, Tony Parker, and Manu Ginobili, the Spurs managed to collect four championships within this competitive era while also having the best win percentage of all dynasties. One thing this Spurs team lacked was a young age. For the age indicator, I calculated it by taking the average age of the 5 players with the most minutes played, which is typically the starting five but occasionally not. I reversed the age indicator because a younger team means that they are still winning even though they have less experience, which points to better coaching and a more impressive feat. Because the Spurs were good for so long, their players began to get older which ended up hurting their score. Another thing the Spurs weren't competitive in was All Stars per year, having a score of 1.4 which was last.

Lakers Rally for Third



The Los Angeles Lakers dynasty from 1979-1989 achieved third place. This team was very well rounded across the board, getting the third most championships, and fourth best in longevity. They were led by Magic Johnson and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, two iconic players in NBA history. Unfortunately, this team wasn't above and beyond in any category to surpass the Celtics or Spurs but they still are one of the greatest dynasties.

The Windy City Blows for Fourth Place



Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls claimed six championships in only eight years (1990-1998). Achieving not one but two "three-peats" is one of the greatest feats in NBA history. But it wasn't enough to make this Bulls team superior. While the Bulls scored great in championships and average win %, they didn't do so good in longevity and age. They also didn't have an outstanding number of all stars/ year either, with only 1.75. Overall, the story for this Bulls team was that they excelled in winning championships, which is the heaviest weighted indicator, but couldn't excel in any of the other indicators.

2010 Dynasties Come In Last





Both of the most recent dynasties, Miami Heat and Golden State Warriors, take up the end of the pack. These teams lacked almost everything when compared to the dynasties they are facing. Even though the Lebron James Heat era only lasted four years (2010-2014), they did make a finals appearance in all four but could only win two of them. The Warriors lasted from 2014-2022 and were led by Stephen Curry and Klay Thompson. The bright spots on these teams were the competition that they faced helped their score. Because they played most recently, all 30 teams were in the NBA during their reign, which makes their finals appearances more impressive. Both teams also managed to have many all stars, the Heat had three all stars each year, while the Warriors averaged 2.5 all stars per year. On the flip side, both teams struggled with average win %, but is it important to note that the Warriors do hold the record for a 73-9 season in 2015-16 which was later brought down by a couple down years between 2018-2021 while the team endured injuries. The Heat simply didn't win enough games or championships to be competitive in this stacked ranking of the top dynasties.

Sources:

Basketball Statistics & History of Every Team & NBA and WNBA Players | Basketball-Reference.com

Celtics picture

Spurs picture

Lakers picture

Bulls picture

Heat picture

Warriors picture