

WASHINGTON, DC – MARCH 30: Gordon Hayward #20 of the Charlotte Hornets dribbles in front of Deni ... [+] Avdija #9 of the Washington Wizards during the second half at Capital One Arena on March 30, 2021 in Washington, DC. NOTE TO USER: User expressly acknowledges and agrees that, by downloading and or using this photograph, User is consenting to the terms and conditions of the Getty Images License Agreement. (Photo by Patrick Smith/Getty Images)

Getty Images

[The Washington Wizards shipped off Russell Westbrook to the Los Angeles Lakers earlier in the NBA offseason](#), and are currently looking at a major logjam at the big forward spot due to the return of that trade.

With Kyle Kuzma and Montrezl Harrell coming over, the Wizards now have Deni Avdija, Rui Hachimura, Davis Bertans, Kuzma, Harrell and Isaiah Todd [all angling for minutes at primarily the power forward position](#), which means quite a few will end up getting squeezed.

Finding a balance

With such an overabundance of talent at one position, the Wizards are either forced to play a chunk of their players out of position, or make trades to find a better roster balance.

The first solution makes little sense, as they would place players into either the more perimeter oriented small forward slot, or move them up a position to center, which is a position none of them can really handle.

While one could argue that Avdija and Kuzma could handle minutes at small forward, it's clear that playing them out of position will limit their physical agility, to which they have an advantage at the bigger forward slot. Negating that advantage won't help Washington on the court, nor will it do much for the trade value of those players.

That leaves trades.

[The Wizards signed point guard Spencer Dinwiddie via sign-and-trade this summer](#) to pair with All-Star Bradley Beal in the backcourt. Beal has long been involved in trade rumors, which has prompted the Wizards to assemble a better team around him.

As such, creating better roster symmetry will only help their ultimate goal of retaining Beal's services long-term. With the team currently projected to finish 11th in the East, [according to FanDuel Sportsbook](#), an upgrade appears outright necessary.

Identifying talent

The Wizards, who are shallow at wing, could identify teams that need size and see if there's a deal to be made.

One team that would make an intriguing trade partner is the Charlotte Hornets.

The Hornets found a franchise player in the 2020 NBA Draft when they selected LaMelo Ball third overall. The 6'6 floor leader won Rookie Of the Year and projects as the team's primary star moving forward.

Before Ball exploded as a future star, however, the [Hornets swung big on signing former All-Star Hayward to a four-year contract worth \\$120 million](#).

While Hayward had a nice season in Charlotte (19.6 points, 5.9 rebounds, 4.1 assists), there's an age-difference of 11 years between him and Ball, which means the door to a trade could crack open ever so slightly, as the Hornets try to build a long-term supporting cast around Ball.

It's also worth noting that Charlotte already has Miles Bridges, Jalen McDaniels and Kelly Oubre Jr to offset the loss of Hayward, as all can step in and fill his minutes, while opening more minutes up front.

Lining up a deal

A deal for Hayward won't be without its challenges.

First and foremost, the Hornets will have to be open to moving away from a player who increases their chances of making the playoffs in 2022.

Given that Charlotte has only made the postseason three times since 2002, it's no sure thing the organization is willing to sacrifice a potential run. Furthermore, the Hornets appear to love Hayward, even going after him in 2014 [via an offer sheet](#) that Utah later matched. So this would undoubtedly be a tough sell.

Secondarily, the Hornets will need to find some of the aforementioned pieces from Washington attractive. Hayward, while expensive, remains a highly-effective borderline All-Star which isn't easy to come by. If the returning pieces aren't attractive, there's little sense in pivoting away from Hayward.

Finally, the Wizards will have to determine how much they're willing to fork over in any trade. That said, if a Hayward acquisition helps them secure Beal's signature on a long-term deal, they might have to be open to relinquishing a fair bit, similarly to [what the Milwaukee Bucks did in the Jrue Holiday trade](#) in order to convince Giannis Antetokounmpo to re-sign with them.

[\(Which worked.\)](#)

Any Hayward deal likely starts with the inclusion of Hachimura, regardless of the fan outcry and backlash that inevitably would land at the feet of Wizards general manager Tommy Sheppard.

Hachimura is a fan favorite, and for good reason. Despite being a sturdy 6'8 and 230 lbs, Hachimura is nimble and can take players off the dribble. He hit a remarkable 74.8% of his shots around the rim and improved his three-point shot, albeit on low volume.

With [Hayward's contract of \\$29.925 million](#), the Wizards will need to match salaries, as Hachimura's cap hit [is only a bit over \\$4.9 million](#).

Bertans, who will earn \$16 million this season, could be the odd man out in Washington as it currently stands, but his shot-making profile from outside the three-point line would fit beautifully with Ball's game in Charlotte, especially as a specialized floor spacer who can come off the bench in a more established role.

Finally, the inclusion of Thomas Bryant and his \$8.6 million will get the job done financially. The Hornets have needed a reliable offensive center who can stretch the floor, and Bryant offers that.

Bryant is coming off an ACL tear, and likely [won't be available at the beginning of the season, it must be noted](#).

As for non-player compensation, the Wizards will need to sweeten the pot and send over a lightly protected future first-round selection that has a high probability of conveying.

Since roster spots also need to be taken into account, adding in Cody Martin from Charlotte's side helps on the overall structure.

Value perspective

Washington relinquishes future flexibility for immediate high-level production. Both Bryant and Hachimura are only going to get better moving forward, whereas Hayward is who he is for the next few years, which should be at a near All-Star level.

This is the type of trade a team makes to convince their star – in this case Beal – that they're serious about winning.

Needless to say, this would be a significant shake-up for both teams, and the Hornets could frankly ask for more given that they're aware the Wizards need to make a strong effort to maintain Beal's loyalty.

Given Washington's delicate Beal situation, however, it's fair to question if they can afford not to go all-in on another star caliber player.

Source: [How A Gordon Hayward Trade Could Balance Washington Wizards Roster](#)