

ATLANTA, GEORGIA – APRIL 20: Wendell Carter Jr. #34 of the Orlando Magic dunks against John Collins ... [+] #20 and Bogdan Bogdanovic #13 of the Atlanta Hawks in the first half at State Farm Arena on April 20, 2021 in Atlanta, Georgia. 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 Kevin C. Cox/Getty Images)

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For over six years, the Orlando Magic built around a core of Nikola Vucevic, Evan Fournier and Aaron Gordon, hoping to strike gold. For that they deserve credit for patience.

Despite making two playoffs appearances in 2019 and 2020, the trio never quite raised the collective level of the Magic to the point where they could contend for a title, and during the 2021 NBA Trade Deadline, the time for change had arrived.

Filling up the asset trove

Orlando decided to ship out their three primary players over a span of hours, acquiring Wendell Carter Jr and two protected first round draft picks from Chicago, two second round picks from Boston, and guards Gary Harris and R.J. Hampton, as well as a protected 2025 first round pick, from Denver.

(One of Chicago's picks conveyed during last month's NBA Draft and landed the Magic forward Franz Wagner with the eight overall pick.)

The scene was made clear. Orlando committed to a full-on rebuild, further aided by their own lottery pick, which was spent on point guard Jalen Suggs, as well as an established young core of Cole Anthony, Mo Bamba, Chuma Okeke, Markelle Fultz and Jonathan Isaac, the latter two nursing torn ACL's.

While those injuries are severe, both are likely to return during the 2021/2022 season.

The Magic are now loaded with possibilities, due to the youth of their roster and the additional incoming draft picks, which could accelerate their rebuild by hitting on those selections.

Future Commitments

Orlando is not projected to be a winning franchise this season, despite the excitement of the new-look roster. But that's to be expected, and a necessary sacrifice of entering into a rebuild.

Regardless of Orlando's likely struggles on the court, the franchise is very much committed to the future, and the roster. According to league sources, the Magic are expected to offer Carter Jr a contract extension worth over \$70 million before the beginning of the regular season.

Carter Jr played 22 games for Orlando after getting acquired from Chicago, averaging 11.7 points, 8.8 rebounds and showcasing a more aggressive offensive mindset with his new team.

The 22-year-old was the seventh overall selection in the 2018 NBA Draft and has long been considered a center with significant upside due to his passing vision, defensive upside and perimeter shooting projections.

Such a contract would be similar in value to that of Isaac, who signed a four-year extension in December of 2020 worth \$70 million after suffering the ACL tear.

On that same December day, Orlando also locked in Fultz to a three-year extension with \$50 million.

The Magic are clearly banking on the upside of all three players, while adding rookie scale players and veterans around them with the hope of ultimately creating a long-term window of competitiveness.

Decisions still to come

With the franchise still in development mode, it's understandable if veterans such as Harris, Terrence Ross and Michael Carter-Williams ultimately end up asking for trades, in hopes of landing with a contender.

Ross, 30, is an athletic wing with high-volume three-point shooting capabilities. He should have a market, considering his contract doesn't end until 2023 and thus won't be a flight risk during the 2022 summer.

It would behoove Orlando to request a first round pick for Ross given the league-wide fascination with wings that can create their own offense, of which Ross created 41.3% of his own shots during last season.

It's of course important for Orlando to have veterans around such a young roster, but those can be found around the league and in free agency for what should be minimum deals.

Those, however, are details for later. Right now, Orlando is looking ahead to a season of discovery.

Can Suggs and Wagner live up expectations? How will Anthony and Hampton perform after an NBA season under their belts? When will Isaac and Fultz return from their injuries, and how quickly can they return to game form?

These are the overarching questions that need answers first.

Source: [The Orlando Magic Are Committing Themselves To The Future](#)