

NBA Christmas Day '23: Knicks v Bucks and the quest for the throne

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Date: Dec 26, 2023

The game is where you thrive. Princes become kings and boys become men. You have to know when your moment is.

The Knicks led by an awakened Jalen Brunson took on the East powerhouse that is the Milwaukee Bucks. The Knicks punched them in the mouth in the first half.

New York led by as much as 13. The true story lay, however, on the other team. Giannis Antetokounmpo was undergoing a transformation.

The usual "drive and demolish" transformed into a pull-up jumper over the defense. The shot was missed. The usual hard bodied screen was replaced with a savvy fall to reach the foul line.

The Knicks were in the bonus and conceded free throws to Giannis. The Bucks conceded the three that Damian Lillard had made immediately off that screen. Giannis swished both free throws.

Quick blocks and rams to the rack by Giannis once again diminished the lead. A nice three by the Bucks No. 24, Pat Connaughton, to cut it to 3.

Donte Divincenzo made an elegant spin out of traffic but was caught by help defense. Josh Hart and Brunson performed acrobatic shots to revive the lead to 9.

Giannis pulled up from three off a slow dribble step back. The lead was back to 6.

Lillard took the reins as Giannis was subbed out.

The supporting cast duked it out to start the fourth. Brook Lopez with a smothering block over RJ Barrett. Lopez leads the league in blocks.

Immanuel Quickly with a furiously quick floater. Queinten Grimes with a magnificent jelly layup through contact.

The Knicks were no longer the laughing stock the league could gamble their progressions on. It was Christmas Day, but this was no miracle. This was a realization.

This realization does not condemn Giannis by any means. He is a true king of the East in the absence of LeBron's dynasty. However, he must make a greater leap to claim the Iron throne of the NBA. Games such as these are necessary.

Lillard must do so as well. He was a singular warrior in the years of his Portland Lore. Leading a team is different. Being point guard for a legion of stars is different. He must broaden his vision more.

Alas, the Knicks. A jewel of the NBA that has been rusted for years. Can Brunson and Randle be the ones to refurbish this diamond? Will an exterior force, a Donovan Mitchell or a Lamelo Ball of sorts, be the necessary piece to accompany them?

The *league* wants to know. The *fans* want to know. The playoffs will tell.