

The Underrated Style Expertise of the NBA

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The NBA is probably one of the last places you would think to look for style inspiration, but with the league being the highest-paying sport in the entire world, it's not surprising that players arrive dripping in high-end fashion on game days.

The tunnel, or the short distance from the team bus to the locker room, acts as the players' runway. In early 2018, *Slam Magazine* writer Ian Pierno started the Instagram account [@LeagueFits](#), documenting the tunnel outfits of the league's most notable players. The account rapidly gained popularity after Pierno posted LeBron James en route to game two of the 2018 NBA Finals [in a short suit](#) from world-renowned designer Thom Browne. Since then, the account has amassed over one million followers, continuing to share the off-court style inspiration – including fits from the off-season and even the courtside style of celebrity rows.



Aside from winning plays and highlights, [the tunnel fit](#) has become one of the most important aspects of a basketball game in the social media era. The [@LeagueFits](#) feed latest uploads include that of Oklahoma City Thunder point guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, usually donning custom pieces from Chrome Hearts. In addition, a fan favorite of the account is former Syracuse basketball star Jerami Grant, now a small forward for the Trailblazers and dominating the style game. He described his personal

(Courtesy of LeagueFits via [Instagram](#)) style as: “If I like it, I’m going to put it on,” and is frequently spotted wearing pieces from Commes Des Garçons and Rick Owens. Grant was recently featured in a striped Maison Margiela button-down and the Adidas x Wales Bonner metallic Sambas, coveted by fashion fanatics. Others recently pictured in the tunnel were Devin Booker in Dries Van Noten jeans and LeBron in a checkered denim jacket while toting a kelly green monogram duffle, both from Pharrell Williams's latest menswear collection for Louis Vuitton - unreleased, of course. In addition, Kevin Durant was spotted in a Jacquemus hoodie, and Lakers point guard D’Angelo Russell showed off a Van Cleef and Arpels 20 motif Vintage Alhambra necklace.



(Courtesy of LeagueFits via [Instagram](#))

Since the inception of LeagueFits, fashion has grown to an even more influential role in the professional basketball industry. The high-end streetwear brand Kith began a partnership with the New York Knicks - releasing the ready-to-wear line with the team’s iconography and designing alternate jerseys for the players to wear. The brand’s founder, Ronnie Feig, is now the team’s creative director. This resulted in Madison Square Garden hosting Kith night for a



(Courtesy of the [NBA](#))

Knicks home game, complete with a custom court designed by the brand. The tunnel looks from the night were captured by LeagueFits; a carousel post by the account showed players like Quentin Grimes and Josh Hart in looks from the collaboration.

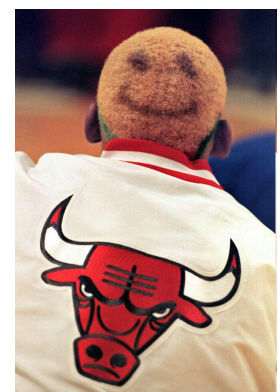
With the Kardashian's long-running history with the league, it's also not surprising that Kim is expanding her operations into sports. Skims recently announced a [multi-year contract with the NBA](#), WNBA, and USA Basketball as the official underwear partner, with SKIMS Mens launching shortly after. The cultural significance of Kim and SKIMS alike played a significant factor in the endorsement.



The tunnel fit also brings into light the fact that these over-six-foot-tall athletes are managing to collect off-the-runway garments and thousand-dollar tee shirts that can fit them. A carousel post on LeagueFits showcased ten slides of Phoenix Suns center Bol Bol, who is seven feet two inches, and his collection of oversized black hoodies. One commenter brought up how they were even more impressed by the length of his pants. A few weeks earlier, Victor

(Courtesy of LeagueFits via [Instagram](#)) Wembanyama, a seven-foot rookie center for the Spurs, was getting flamed in the comments section of a post documenting himself walking through the tunnel in pants that were not the right length. Is the greatest difference between being a veteran versus a rookie knowing where everyone gets their pants tailored?

Fashion and self-expression have always been a constant in the league, but never to the extent it is today. Dennis Rodman's patterned buzz cuts during the Bulls Dynasty of the 90s were a game-changer. But, for a long time, that was

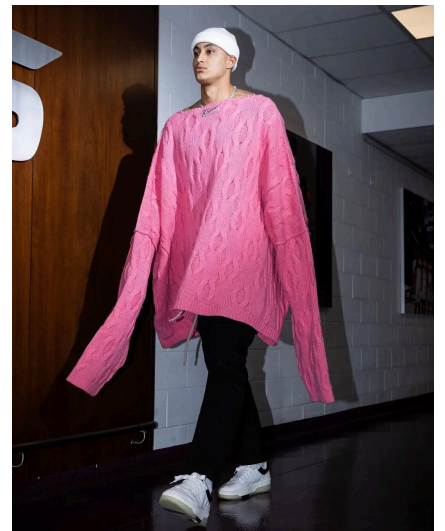


about as far as fashion in the NBA could go. Once Rodman retired, the star's style was lacking as people trotted through the tunnel in oversized and obnoxiously boxy gray suits, reminiscent of



David Byrne of the Talking Heads. For a while, the only time fashion and the NBA were discussed in the same sentence when *Vogue* recounted what

Rihanna was wearing courtside at a Lakers game.



Throughout the 2010s, experimentation with the tunnel outfit rose

through players like Russell Westbrook, who essentially initiated a chain reaction of the tunnel turning into a fashion show.

Because (Courtesy of [Complex](#))

Dennis Rodman spray painted a smiley face into his head, Russell Westbrook wore Prada, Kyle Kuzma wore that one oversized pink sweater, and off-the-runway Rick Owens. And thanks to Ian Pierno and @LeagueFits, fashion girls and sports guys can rejoice in the enviable drip of their

favorite players, whether saved to their Pinterest board or on their fantasy
of [GO](#) team.

(Courtesy