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# Flames Rise to the Top: 5TMSL Cup Champions in Dominant Performance

## **Flames 16, Ballerz 10 (Basketball)**

The Ballerz entered the championship confident, riding high with a 2–0 basketball record and believing this was the sport that would deliver them the 5TMSL Cup. But from the opening whistle, it was clear the Flames came prepared with another level of preparation and execution.

Early on, the Ballerz struggled to contain the Flames' basketball trio. Dani Grabie controlled the pace with his ball-handling, making several tough shots off the dribble. Akiva Schreier attacked the lane with confidence. Shai Levine's physicality and scoring touch around the rim gave the Ballerz trouble all half. The Flames held a four point lead at the break.

The Ballerz came out of halftime with energy, tying the game on a strong Ari Davidowitz finish off a beautiful feed from Yumi Erlichman. But from that point forward, the Flames took total control. Their defensive intensity went up another level, locking down the usually unstoppable Ballerz scoring core. Every attempt to push the pace or match the Flames' physicality was shut down.

Offensively, the Flames' big three continued to create separation. Schreier, Grabie, and Levine were steady, poised, and impactful on every possession. Coach Eli Portal's game plan was executed perfectly, with disciplined defense, smart shot selection, and full trust in his team.

By the final minutes, the Ballerz, the team to beat all season long, had no answers left.

The Flames closed out the game strong to secure the 5TMSL Cup, earning their championship rings and carving their names on the Cup and into 5TMSL history. It was a statement performance from the Flames on the biggest stage.

Shoutout to Coach Portal for guiding an incredible season from start to finish. And shoutout to Coach Eli Jaroslawicz and the Ballerz for an outstanding run all year long, who came so close to getting the job done.

What a season!



## **WEEK 5: Bruisers Winning Streak to 3, Thrashers ride Goalie Dominance, Sting Stay Perfect in Thriller as 5TMSL Dynasty Hockey Heads to All-Star Weekend**

### **Bruisers 7, Johnny Hockey 6**

Johnny Hockey came into the night looking to make a statement. Fresh off last week's win, they were hoping to carry that momentum into a showdown with the Bruisers, the same Bruisers they stunned in last season's semifinals with a last-minute comeback and OT winner. With two teams that know each other well and a history of wild finishes, this matchup had storylines everywhere.

Johnny Hockey started exactly the way they wanted. Mendel Weiss opened the scoring, and after Micky Spiro answered for the Bruisers, Johnny Hockey struck twice more; Weiss again and Dovi Mandelbaum, to grab a 3-1 lead. Early on, it felt like Johnny Hockey was controlling the pace and dictating the game.

But the Bruisers have one of the most explosive top-end duos in the league, and once they settled in, the momentum flipped quickly. Micky Spiro got rolling, scoring three more to complete a four-goal night, and captain Dovi Gordon added two of his own. The Bruisers had stormed ahead 7-4 and looked like they had put the game away.

Johnny Hockey, as they always do, refused to go quietly. Weiss completed his hat trick, and Dovi Taubenfeld buried one to make it 7-6, setting up a tense final stretch. But despite several late pushes, and a couple of dangerous shots on net, that equalizer never came.

The Bruisers held on, improving their record to 4-1 and reminding the league that they're one of the toughest teams to put away. Johnny Hockey showed fight again and proved that they're definitely still a team to watch in the second half, but this time the comeback fell just short.

### **Thrashers 6, Fighting Flamingoes**

This game belonged to Eli Jaroslawicz. From the opening shift to the final whistle, the Thrashers' goalie delivered one of the best performances of his career, calm, locked in, and completely in control. He cut down angles, anticipated every shot, and turned away chance after chance, setting the tone for the entire night.

Offensively, the Thrashers leaned on their elite playmakers. Yaakov Noam Levine continued his incredible season, adding another assist to bring him to six, second in the league, and scoring three goals of his own in a dominant all-around effort. Yaakov Gal knocked in two huge goals as well, giving the Thrashers the cushion they needed as they controlled most of the game.

The Flamingoes made a late push, but the Thrashers had already built up too big of a lead. Between Jaroslawicz's brilliance and the steady scoring throughout the lineup, the result never truly felt in jeopardy.

The Flamingoes' quest to defend their title has not found its footing. They've shown flashes, but the consistency and overall scoring ability across the board that was seen last year from this franchise has not taken shape over the first five weeks.

For the Thrashers, it was a complete team win, powered by a signature performance from their goalie.

## **Sting 6, Blizzards 5**

On paper, this had must-watch written all over it. On one side, the expansion Sting; 4–0 and playing hockey on a level nobody expected from this expansion squad. On the other, the Blizzards, just 2–2 in the standings, but anyone who watches this team knows they're way better than that record suggests. With two of the league's elite scorers, Dovid Neuman on offense and Chaim Zagelbaum launching missiles from the defensive zone, the Blizzards bring firepower few teams can match.

Early on, the Blizzards showed exactly why they're so dangerous. Neuman drilled a center-court laser, Zagelbaum followed with a signature snipe, and Eli Safier squeezed one past Nachum Klein to put the Blizzards up 3–1. They kept hammering shots on net, forcing Klein to make save after save. Captain Uri Bryks crashed hard for a rebound goal, and Neuman punched in another near the crease, giving the Blizzards a 5–3 cushion and full momentum.

But the Sting just never go away. They kept applying pressure on Blizzards goalie Yosef Fein until he finally cracked. Uri Spiro buried one to make it a one-goal game with five minutes left. Moments later, Spiro delivered the assist of the night, a kick-pass to captain Ari Levine, who ripped home the equalizer with three minutes left.

From there, it was chaos. Back-and-forth chances, both goalies standing on their heads. And then, with a minute to go, Sruli Vegh pounced on his own rebound and shoved the puck past Fein to give the Sting a stunning 6–5 lead.

But the Blizzards weren't done. In the final seconds, they unloaded a flurry at Klein, Chaim Homnick crashing the crease, Zagelbaum firing from everywhere, but Klein was a wall. He turned away every look, sealing one of the most electric games of the season.

The Sting held on to stay undefeated at 5–0 heading into the All-Star break. A wild, high-level battle from start to finish.

TEAM	PTS	W	L	OTL	GS	GA	GD	STRK
<b>Sting</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>+8</b>	<b>W5</b>
<b>Bruisers</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>+10</b>	<b>W3</b>
<b>Thrashers</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>+1</b>	<b>W1</b>
<b>Blizzards</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>+6</b>	<b>L2</b>
<b>Fighting Flamingoes</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>-20</b>	<b>L3</b>
<b>Johnny Hockey</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>-5</b>	<b>L1</b>

Rank	Player	Goals
1	Dovid Neuman (Blizzards)	19
2	Micky Spiro (Bruisers)	14
3	Mendel Weiss (Johnny Hockey)	12
4	Dovi Gordon (Bruisers)	10
T5	Yonah Levine (Thrashers)	9
	Uri Spiro (Sting)	9

Rank	Goalie	GA/ Game
1	Nachum Klein (Sting)	3.75
2	Michael Indig (Bruisers)	4.67
3	Yosef Fein (Blizzards)	6.50
4	Eli Jaroslawicz (Thrashers)	6.60
5	Ben Mandelbaum (Johnny Hockey)	6.75
6	Eli Dachs (Fighting Flamingoes)	9.00

## This Week in NY Sports

### New York Giants

The Giants dropped their fifth straight game on Sunday, falling 27–20 to the Green Bay Packers in what has quickly become the defining pattern of their 2025 season: competitive early, and then the same familiar failures late. At 2–9, and now with an interim head coach in Mike Kafka, the Giants feel stuck, where progress shows up for long stretches, but never down the stretch of games.

The game started well. The Giants marched 85 yards on their opening drive, mixing runs and short passes, controlling clock and tempo, and finishing with a Singletary rushing touchdown. The offense looked calm, connected, and confident. The run game, led by Devin Singletary, churned out 142 yards and three rushing touchdowns as a team. It was one of the clear bright spots of an otherwise frustrating afternoon.

But the passing game and late-down execution continue to hold the team back. Jameis Winston, filling in for Jaxson Dart who remains in concussion protocol, had stretches where he looked comfortable. But a red-zone interception, the misfires in must-convert moments, and the strip-sack on the final play all erased whatever rhythm the offense built. That's not entirely on him, but the margin for error is so tiny that one mistake becomes the storyline.

Defensively, it was another week of the same script. For long stretches, the Giants held up. They forced field goals, they got pressure in flashes, and they kept the game winnable deep into the fourth. But then the moment of truth arrived, up 20-19, third-and-10, needing one stop, and they surrendered a 33-yard completion to Savion Williams that flipped the entire game. That one snap summed up everything wrong with this defense right now. The talent is there, but it continues to falter down the stretch of games. And in the NFL, especially for a team fighting uphill every week, these breakdowns are costing the team week after week.

This was also Kafka's first game as interim head coach after the Daboll firing. There were signs of renewed energy and healthier play-calling flow, but a coaching change in November rarely fixes structural problems.

The big-picture takeaway from Week 11 is simple: the Giants showed enough to win, but they still haven't addressed the core issues that keep them losing. The defense's inability to deliver in key moments, the recurring turnovers, the quarterback uncertainty, and the late-game breakdowns continue to bury them.

Looking ahead to Detroit, things don't get easier. The Lions' offense will test every weakness the Giants showed against Green Bay, and unless the defense finds a new level, it could be another long afternoon. A healthy Jaxson Dart would help stabilize things, but until the Giants fix their situational execution, third downs, red zone, turnovers, end-of-game management, the cycle will continue.

For now, this team remains in the same spot it has been for weeks: competitive, flawed, and not yet ready to finish games. The pieces are there, but the answers still aren't.

## New York Jets

The Jets enter this week with a very different tone. With Tyrod Taylor now officially taking over at quarterback, the team finally hopes it has someone who can run the offense. And that confidence comes from what we already saw earlier in the year: when Taylor stepped in against Tampa Bay, and played well. He was decisive, protected the ball, kept the offense on schedule, and moved the chains in a way the Jets simply never ended up getting from Justin Fields.

Right now, he's just the better option. Fields brings athletic upside, but the offense under him never stabilized. Taylor doesn't have Fields' raw talent, but he has control. He gets the ball out. He keeps the Jets out of disastrous third-and-long situations. He makes the simple throws that extend drives. That alone changes everything for a team trying to regain its footing.

This week's matchup against the Baltimore Ravens is a completely different challenge, but it still plays into what Taylor does best. Baltimore brings far more pressure and far more defensive disguise than Tampa, but they also give quarterbacks opportunities in the short and intermediate areas if the ball comes out quickly. That's exactly where Taylor thrives. Expect a deliberate, simplified plan: quick reads, rhythm throws, and an emphasis on the run game. The Jets know they aren't built to trade big plays with a team like the Ravens, so they'll try to win through managing the clock and limiting turnovers.

The run game becomes a key factor of this game. With Taylor at QB, defenses can't just sell out on early downs the way they were doing against Fields. If the Jets can stay in manageable downs, Taylor can replicate the efficient, composed style he showed against Tampa, the kind of football this team desperately needs.

While winning this game is unlikely, this is still a game the Jets can hang around in if they play the right way. With Taylor under center, the formula isn't complicated: control the clock, limit turnovers, and play clean, disciplined football. Baltimore just struggled with the Browns last week because Cleveland stayed patient, ran the ball, and forced the Ravens into long drives instead of giving them short fields. The Jets will have to mimic that exact approach. They aren't winning a track meet, but if they shorten the game, avoid the self-inflicted mistakes that have buried them all season, and let Taylor manage the tempo, they will have a chance to keep this game competitive into the fourth quarter.

## New York Knicks

The Knicks had a chaotic but telling week, one that showed exactly who they are right now. They are an elite offensive team that can score with anybody, but one whose defensive inconsistency keeps every game closer than it should be.

They opened the week on Friday at the Garden with a 140–132 win over Miami, a game that turned into pure shotmaking and depth flexing. With Brunson out and OG out for the game after two minutes, Towns (39/11) and Shamet (career-high 36) torched the Heat, and the bench blew the game open. Clarkson, Hart and Shamet combined for 75 bench points, and the Knicks essentially won by overwhelming Miami with spacing and firepower. But even in a win, they surrendered 132 points, a reminder that the offense is carrying more than it should.

Monday's rematch in Miami flipped the script. The Heat cleaned up what killed them in New York, forced the Knicks into more halfcourt possessions, and used balanced scoring to stay in control for most of the night. The Knicks shot just 9-for-36 from three and couldn't string stops together until the final minutes. Then everything turned insane, Deuce McBride scored 13 in the fourth, Towns hit a huge three, and the Knicks nearly forced overtime before a potential game-tying goaltend was overturned in the final seconds. It was a furious rally, but the final result, 115–113 Heat, reflected the bigger truth: they spent three quarters chasing the game because the defense could not string together stops.

Wednesday in Dallas (their first road win of the season) was somehow even more revealing. They beat a shorthanded, weak Dallas Mavericks team 113–111, but the defensive performance was borderline bad. Dallas hit 16 threes and repeatedly got clean looks all night because the Knicks' perimeter rotations broke down all night. Offensively, they were sloppy too, shooting 12-for-42 from deep and 19-for-35 at the line, leaving 16 points unconverted. They survived because Brunson (28) returned with just enough control, Towns dominated the glass, and Shamet hit two huge threes down the stretch before drawing the game-saving offensive foul in the final second.

The theme is clear: the Knicks can score with anybody, even when key players are out, but the defensive cracks are real. They give up too many threes, overhelp at the wrong times, and live in scramble mode far more than they should. They're talented enough to win shootouts, but not disciplined enough yet to avoid them.

It's a good team, maybe a very good one, but until the defense tightens, every game is going to feel like this: high scoring, chaotic, and riding the edge of control.

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# TWILLORY

# **Team-First? Or League-Last? Why Stars Taking Pay Cuts Hurts the Game**

**By: Aaron Boehm (5TMSL League Founder)**

When a star takes less money to “help the team,” the media praises it. Fans call it leadership. Players are celebrated for “doing what it takes to win.” But I’ve always felt strongly that pay cuts hurt the game.

These decisions rarely affect the player’s lifestyle. They’re still flying private, living comfortably, and making millions.

The problem is this: it messes with competitive balance. It changes how teams are built, how other players are viewed, and how the league functions. In this week’s rant, I’m breaking down why when players take pay cuts, even if they seem “team-first”, are not good for the league.

## **Not Everyone Can Afford to Take Less**

This is the part most people forget. Some players are sitting on generational wealth. They’ve made hundreds of millions, have endorsement deals, business investments, and long-term financial security. Taking \$10 million less won’t change their lifestyle at all.

But most players aren’t in that situation. A lot of guys are just trying to get through a short, physically demanding career. They don’t have backup careers lined up. They’re focused on staying healthy and making the most of the time they have in the league. But once a player takes a discount, it creates pressure across the league. Now the player who asks for what he deserves gets labeled as selfish. Or not committed. Or not a “team guy.” The player should not have to defend a fair contract. A player wanting to be paid what he’s worth should not be viewed as a bad thing.

## **Why Brady’s Pay Cuts Weren’t So Simple**

Tom Brady is the greatest quarterback of all time. Seven Super Bowls. Over 20 seasons of dominance. For now, that’s not up for debate. But part of the reason he kept winning in New England was because he consistently took less money than he was worth. It gave the Patriots extra room to bring in more talent. People praised it as smart, as humble, as leadership.

But here’s the truth: Brady could afford to do that. He had massive endorsement deals. He built the TB12 brand. His wife at the time was making more money than he was. He already had long-term financial security, and now he has a \$375 million broadcasting deal waiting for him. So yes, it worked for him. But most players aren’t Tom Brady.

And here’s another thing: Brady’s willingness to take less allowed the Patriots to survive through bad drafts. Contrary to popular belief, the Patriots were not a good drafting team. Outside of a few hits here and there, they missed on a ton of draft picks. But because they had cap space from Brady’s team-friendly deals, they could fill those gaps in free agency – something most teams with a star QB don’t have the ability to do.

Leagues like the NBA, NFL, and NHL use salary caps to keep things fair (MLB doesn’t – I’ve already written about how ridiculous that is). Every team has a set spending limit per year. The point of the cap is to force

teams to build smart: draft well, develop players, and manage the roster within the rules. But when a star signs for way less than they're worth, it throws the system off.

Look at the 2018 Warriors. DeMarcus Cousins - a 4-time All-Star and one of the best centers in the NBA - signed with Golden State for just \$5 million. The year before, he made \$18 million. He took a huge discount to join a team that was already loaded. The Warriors shouldn't have been able to afford him.

They already had Steph Curry, Kevin Durant, Klay Thompson, and Draymond Green. Adding Cousins was ridiculous. And even though the Warriors didn't end up winning the title that year - mostly because Durant and Klay both went down in the playoffs - the fact that they still made the Finals and pushed it to six games tells you everything you need to know.

### **The Player Should Take What They Deserve**

Getting paid full value isn't selfish. It's responsible for both the player and the league. When stars take what they've earned, it forces teams to make decisions. They can't just stack talent. They have to build carefully, develop players, and work within the cap. To win a title, a team should have to earn it the right way. Draft well. Build chemistry. Make smart moves. But teams shouldn't be able to rely on stars taking discounts so they can squeeze more talent onto the roster.

### **If the Player Doesn't Need the Money – Great**

If a player truly doesn't need the money? That's great. But instead of giving it back to the team so they can spend it on other players, the player should find better ways to use it.

That money could go to charity, community programs, or anything the player personally believes in. But the player should take their full salary and use it however they want. That's their choice.

### **Solutions**

One possible solution? Have a neutral party review all contracts. If a player is clearly being underpaid, the team should still be forced to count the real value against the cap. That way, teams can't game the system just because someone was willing to take less.

Here's the good news: for the most part, this isn't a prevalent issue. Most players do take what they're worth. Most agents push for their players to get fair value. Most deals reflect what players have earned. And that's a good thing. That's what keeps the league's competitive balance rules working the way they should.

### **Final Thoughts**

When a star player takes a pay cut, it affects more than people realize. It gives already strong teams unfair advantages. And it puts pressure on others to follow along.

If a player doesn't need the money? Great. Let them use it to do good. Help their community. But the player should still take their value. Don't give it away to other players.

Because at the end of the day, it's a good thing that when players get paid their worth. That's what makes the league competitive.

# Sports Trivia

## **NBA**

1. Which franchise is the only to complete a 16–1 playoff run (one loss or fewer) after the league expanded to a 16-team postseason?
2. Which NBA player has the most career 40-point playoff games without ever reaching the NBA Finals?
3. Which NBA team holds the record for the longest home winning streak?
4. Since 2010, there have been three players who have averaged 15 or more rebounds per game in a season. Name two of them.
5. Which franchise has the longest streak of consecutive seasons finishing above .500?

## **NFL**

1. There have been two players to throw 400 or more yards in their NFL debut. Name one of them.
2. Which team is the only franchise to appear in four straight Super Bowls?
3. Who is the youngest head coach to win a Super Bowl?
4. Which team holds the NFL record for the most points scored in a single regular-season?
5. Which NFL QB has started for the most teams?

## **MLB**

1. Who is the only catcher to lead the league in batting average three times?
2. Which franchise holds the modern record for the longest winning streak (since 2000)?
3. Who is the only full-time designated hitter in MLB history to win the MVP award?
4. Which pitcher has the lowest ERA in a full season since the year 2000?
5. Which team is the most recent to win a World Series after beginning the season with a losing record through 50 games?

## **NHL**

1. Who is the only defenseman to lead the NHL in points in a full season?
2. There have been four players who were drafted #1 overall in the 2000s and reached 500 career goals. Name two of them.
3. Which franchise has the longest Stanley Cup Final drought among Original Six teams?
4. Who is the only player to score 8 points in a single NHL game in the salary-cap era?
5. Which player has the most career shootout goals in NHL history?

**Death Question (Hardest Question of the Week)** - Which quarterback is the only QB ever to throw for 5,000 yards in a season and still finish with a losing record?

## Answers

### **NBA**

1. 2017 Golden State Warriors
2. Jalen Brunson (9)
3. Golden State Warriors (2014-15, 2015-16)
4. Andre Drummond, DeAndre Jordan, Kevin Love
5. San Antonio Spurs (22 consecutive from 1997-1998 to 2018-2019)

### **NFL**

1. Cam Newton (threw for 422 in 2011 vs. Arizona), Mike White (threw for 405 in 2021 vs. Cincinnati)
2. Buffalo Bills (lost all four between 1990-1993)
3. Sean McVay (Super Bowl LVI vs. Cincinnati; was 36 years old, 20 days)
4. 2013 Denver Broncos (scored 606 points)
5. Ryan Fitzpatrick (9; Rams, Bengals, Bills, Titans, Texans, Jets, Bucs, Dolphins, Commanders)

### **MLB**

1. Joe Mauer (2006, 2008, 2009)
2. Cleveland Guardians (22 consecutive wins in 2017)
3. Shohei Ohtani (2024 with LA Dodgers)
4. Zack Greinke (1.66 ERA in 2015 with LA Dodgers)
5. 2019 Washington Nationals

### **NHL**

1. Bobby Orr
2. Alexander Ovechkin, Sidney Crosby, Steven Stamkos, and John Tavares
3. Toronto Maple Leafs (since 1966-67)
4. Sag Gagner (February 2, 2012, playing for the Edmonton Oilers in a game against the Blackhawks)
5. Patrick Kane (53)

**Death Question** – Jameis Winston (2019; threw for 5,109 yards, team finished 7-9)