

GAME NOTES • WNBA FINALS



ATLANTA DREAM

30-14 • L10 10-0 • W10
Playoffs 5-0

HEAD COACH KARL SMESKO

CAREER	VS. GSV
60-28	2-4



GAME 1

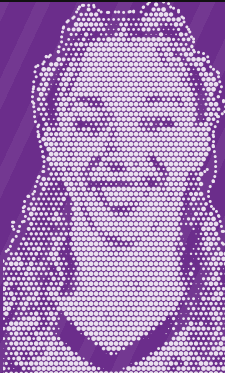
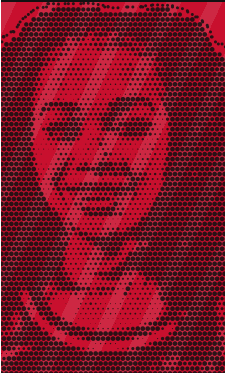


GOLDEN STATE VALKYRIES

32-12 • L10 8-2 • W4
Playoffs 5-1

HEAD COACH NATALIE NAKASE

CAREER	VS. ATL
55-33	4-2



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2026 • CHASE CENTER — SAN FRANCISCO, CA

GAME THESIS

THE SWEEP MEETS THE STREAK Tonight at Chase Center the 2026 WNBA Finals open with a first-time champion guaranteed, pitting the league's two best defenses against each other in a series built on stops. Golden State, the league's newest powerhouse, swept Atlanta 3-0 in this season's regular season and just swept the defending champion Las Vegas Aces to reach its first Finals. Atlanta, riding a 10-game win streak spanning the regular season and playoffs, may be without leading scorer Allisha Gray, whose surgically repaired shooting hand makes her a game-time decision for the opener. Everything turns on whether the Dream's guards can crack Golden State's point-of-attack pressure from Gabby Williams and Veronica Burton, and whether Angel Reese owns the glass.

TONIGHT'S GAME

1 **A RIM-AND-FREE-THROW OFFENSE, NOT A THREE-POINT ONE:** Atlanta scores 47.8% of its points in the paint and 21.0% at the line — 68.8% combined — while only 29.4% arrives from three, with a near-nonexistent midrange diet (1.8%).

2 **A THREE-POINT TREADMILL RUNNING AT THE LEAGUE'S SLOWEST SPEED:** Golden State built a No. 1 scoring identity off the arc — 38.1% of its points come from three, the highest share in the WNBA — yet it grinds at the slowest pace in the league (90.8, 15th).

3 **A HAVOC SHELL, NOT A SHOT-QUALITY WALL:** Atlanta's No. 3 defensive rating (103.5) is bought with disruption, not contests — the Dream sit just 13th in opponent field-goal percentage (46.9%) yet rank first in turnovers forced (16.0 a game, against a 13.9 league average).

4 **PROJECTED FIVES:** ATL Rhyne Howard, Angel Reese, Naz Hillmon, Jordin Canada, Jaylyn Sherrod • GSV Veronica Burton, Kayla Thornton, Kiah Stokes, Gabby Williams, Cecilia Zandalasini.

5 **TWO-WAY FRAME:** ATL ORtg 111.9 (4th best WNBA) / DRtg 103.5 (3rd best WNBA) at 97.7 pace meets GSV 108.2 (7th best WNBA) / 99.1 (1st best WNBA) at 90.8 — the tempo fight is built into both fingerprints.

6 **INJURY WATCH:** Projected five scrub.: ATL Allisha Gray.; ATL Matilde Villa.; ATL Brionna Jones..

MATCHUP NOTES

1 **FORM WATCH:** The Paint and Pace Tell: Golden State's slower, half-court identity, an 88.13 playoff pace against Vegas' 93.16, was the series' quiet separator.

2 **OPENER WAS A DEFENSIVE DECLARATION:** Golden State announced itself on the defensive end in Game 1, walling off Las Vegas in a 71-60 grind at Chase Center.

3 **THE ROAD SPINE:** Thirty wins, a No. 4 seed in the East, and the form to match — a 10-game win streak and a 10-0 mark across the last ten (regular season and playoffs) entering this Finals.

4 **SHRINK THE GAME, THEN SUFFOCATE IT:** Golden State's entire identity is compression — the WNBA's No. 1 defense (99.1 defensive rating) married to the No. 1 net rating (plus 9.1), turning every night into a fistfight the opponent never asked for.

GAME KEYS

1 **CLOSE GAMES ARE ATLANTA'S LANE:** Atlanta is 4-2 in games decided by three or fewer and 25-4 when it leads after three, 23-3 when ahead at the half.

2 **COIN-FLIP ENDINGS FAVOR THE DREAM:** Golden State is 3-3 in games decided by three points or fewer; Atlanta is 4-2.

3 **SIDELINE IDENTITY: SMESKO'S UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** Karl Smesko is the confirmed sideline lead for Atlanta, in the second season of his tenure with a 30-14 stint record and a 60-28 career mark (68.2%).

4 **TWO SECOND-YEAR SIDELINES, ONE 68% CAREER GUY:** Natalie Nakase is 55-33 (62.5%) across two Golden State seasons, 32-12 this year with a 5-3 playoff mark.

5 **ATLANTA'S FIRST FIVE IS SETTLED — AND IT'S THE ONLY ONE THAT PLAYS:** The Dream's projected five — Allisha Gray, Jordin Canada, Rhyne Howard, Naz Hillmon and Angel Reese — is the lone Atlanta unit clearing 15 minutes a night together: 40 games at +21.6 net, 114.8 offensive and 93.2 defensive rating on a 99.6 pace.

HEAD TO HEAD LEDGER



2 ATLANTA

2 WINS • 1-2 AT HOME

HEAD TO HEAD • ALL TIME

6 MEETINGS

Tonight: meeting No. 7

GOLDEN STATE

4 WINS • 2-1 AT HOME



ALL-TIME 6 meetings	AT ATLANTA 3 meetings	AT GOLDEN STATE 3 meetings	LAST 5 since 07/29/25
2-4	1-2	1-2	1-4
GOLDEN STATE 4-2	GOLDEN STATE 2-1	GOLDEN STATE 2-1	GOLDEN STATE 4-1
STREAK entering tonight	FIRST MEETING July 7, 2025	LARGEST MARGIN Aug. 17, 2025	CLOSE GAMES VS. BLOWOUTS last 5 meetings
W3	2025	+16	3-1
GOLDEN STATE	SERIES: GOLDEN STATE 4-2	ATLANTA 79-63	3 DECIDED BY 7 OR FEWER, 1 BY 15 OR MORE

LAST 5 NEWEST →	GSV 88-83 07/04/26 • at ATL	GSV 78-75 06/26/26 • at GSV	GSV 77-66 06/24/26 • at GSV	ATL 79-63 08/17/25 • at GSV	GSV 77-75 07/29/25 • at ATL
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GSV 88
ATL 83
FINAL

PREVIOUS MEETING • JULY 4, 2026 • AT ATLANTA (GATEWAY CENTER ARENA @ COLLEGE PARK)

Golden State flipped a 42-35 halftime lead into a 59-57 third-quarter deficit before closing on a 31-point fourth to win 88-83. Veronica Burton paced the winners with 21 points on 6-of-9 shooting and 7-of-8 from the line, posting a plus-13 in 30 minutes, while Gabby Williams added 19 behind four threes. Allisha Gray's 22 and Rhyne Howard's 19 kept Atlanta close, and Angel Reese's 17 points and 13 boards helped the Dream win the glass 37-30 with a 24-15 edge in second-chance points. The separator came in turnover math: Golden State's 15 steals fueled 23 points off 17 Atlanta giveaways against just 14 for the Dream, offsetting a 34-36 paint deficit. Atlanta shot 39.4% from the floor and 30.8% from three, while Golden State answered at 46.3% overall and 38.2% from deep.

ON THIS DAY OCT. 17

VANDERSLOOT DROPS 15 DIMES IN THE CLINCHER

Oct 17, 2021 • Playoffs (Finals) • Chicago 80, Phoenix 74 (CHI by 6)
15 assists plus 10 points and 9 rebounds in the title-clinching Game 4 — the most assists in any Finals game in league history outside Sue Bird's 16 in 2020, and the most ever in a Finals closeout.

AUGUSTUS AND CATCHINGS TRADE 27-POINT BODY BLOWS

Oct 17, 2012 • Playoffs (Finals) • Minnesota 83, Indiana 71 (MIN by 12)
Seimone Augustus 27 (11-of-23) and Tamika Catchings 27 (9-of-14, 3 threes) — Minnesota's lone win of the series at Target Center, before Catchings and Indiana took three straight to win the title and Catchings claimed Finals MVP.

PARKER FILLS THE SHEET TO SEAL THE TITLE

Oct 17, 2021 • Playoffs (Finals) • Chicago 80, Phoenix 74 (CHI by 6)
16 points, 13 rebounds, 5 assists and 4 steals — the only 15/10/5/4 line on the slate as the Sky closed out the series 3-1 at Wintrust Arena (Kahleah Copper took Finals MVP).

MONICA WRIGHT: 5 STEALS IN 15 MINUTES

Oct 17, 2012 • Playoffs (Finals) • Minnesota 83, Indiana 71 (MIN by 12)
Five steals off the bench in just 15:23 of floor time, part of a Minnesota defense that also got 4 blocks from Rebekkah Brunson in the 12-point Finals win.

ATL @ GSV GAME NOTES

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PREVIOUS SERIES RECAPS

CONFERENCE SEMIFINALS VS NYL

ATL 3-0 NYL (3 GAMES)

FORM

A SWEEP BUILT ON CLOSING TIME

Atlanta never let New York breathe, but this was a sweep of tightening margins, not a blitz. Game 1 by ten, a **101-98** Game 2, then an **85-83** road clincher. Each win got narrower, and Canada and Reese answered. A **3-0** that looks comfortable was three fourth-quarter tests.

CLUTCH

BONNER ICES A FRANTIC FINISH

The clincher in New York came down to the final seconds. Bonner buried three free throws for **81-75**, Canada banked a five-footer with **1:15** left for **83-79**, and Bonner added two more for **85-81** with six seconds left. Stewart's putback beat the buzzer, **85-83**.

STAR

CANADA RUNS THE SHOW

Canada authored the series at **22.3** points and **7.7** assists. The opener was **25** points on **9-of-14**, four threes and five steals in the **92-82** win. The clincher was **19** and **11** assists: she scored Game 1 and conducted Game 3.

SUPPORT

REESE OWNS THE PAINT

Reese averaged **20.7** points and **7.7** rebounds and saved her best for the road clincher: **22** points, nine boards, three assists. A putback tied Game 3 at **66** entering the fourth. When New York loaded up on Canada, paint scoring (**42** and **34** in Games 2 and 3) ran through Reese.

KEY GAME

A THIRD-QUARTER THUNDERCLAP

Game 1: the Liberty led **40-37** at half, then Atlanta ran a **32-15** third quarter and never gave the lead back. That **17**-point swing announced the Dream's defense and protected the homestand.

SUPPORT

BONNER AND THE BENCH BRING IT

Bonner, off the bench: **23** points and nine boards in Game 1, then **13** and **13** in the clincher, including the free throws that sealed it. Borlase added **11** in Game 2 and **10** on **5-of-6** in Game 3.

DATE	WL	SCORE			SITE
10/04	W	92-82			H
10/07	W	101-98			H
10/09	W	85-83			A
PLAYER	PPG	RPG	APG	G	
Jordin Canada	22.3	3.0	7.7	3	
Angel Reese	20.7	7.7	2.3	3	
Rhyne Howard	18.3	5.7	4.0	3	
DeWanna Bonner	15.3	8.7	2.0	3	
MARK	VALUE				
Series	3-0 vs NYL				
ORtg/DRtg/Pace	111.9 · #4/15 / 103.5 · #3/15 / 97.7 · #5/15				
Projected five	Rhyne Howard, Angel Reese, Naz Hillmon, Jordin Canada, Jaylyn Sherrod				

WHAT'S DIFFERENT IN THE LAST SERIES

TEAM TURNOVER FLIP FUELS SWEEP

Atlanta cut its turnovers from 13.4 to 9.0 per game and points off turnovers jumped from 18.1 to 24.0 during the NYL sweep, the largest team-level swing versus its regular-season games.

PLAYER CANADA DOUBLES HER SCORING

Jordin Canada averaged 22.3 points in the three-game sweep of New York, nearly double her 11.6 regular-season mark, and chipped in 7.7 assists as Atlanta rolled to a 3-0 series win.

HISTORY RARE 100-POINT PLAYOFF NIGHT

Atlanta's 101 points in Game 2 on October 7 marked only the third 100-point playoff game in franchise history; the Dream also reached that mark twice in the 2010 postseason.

CONFERENCE SEMIFINALS VS LVA

GSV 3-0 LVA (3 GAMES)

KEY GAME

OPENER WAS A DEFENSIVE DECLARATION

Game 1: Las Vegas held to **60** points and an **83.3** defensive rating, the glass **52-25**, including **17-2** on the offensive boards. Williams scored **25**. Stokes grabbed **14** rebounds without a point.

CLUTCH

THE THIRD-QUARTER KNOCKOUT IN VEGAS

Trailing **45-36** at half of Game 3, Golden State flipped it with a **17-7** third, then closed **87-77** on the road. Stokes was **5-of-5** for **11** points, **10** rebounds and a plus-**18**. Hayes was plus-**20** off the bench. Vegas scored seven in that quarter.

STAR

GABBY WILLIAMS SET THE TERMS

Williams opened with **25** points, **11** rebounds and five assists, then **20** in the Game 2 escape. She averaged **20.3** and totaled **61** series points, and went **4-of-7** from deep in the opener. When Vegas tilted to her, the spacing cracked elsewhere.

SUPPORT

HAYES DELIVERED THE BENCH HAYMAKER

Hayes scored **21** in **16:32** in Game 2, the highest-scoring reserve night of the series, then a plus-**20** in the clincher with **11** points, six boards and four assists.

SUPPORT

THORNTON'S STEADY TWO-WAY TURN

Thornton averaged **14.0** points and **7.7** rebounds, second in series scoring behind Williams (**42** points). She had **16** with three triples in Game 2, then **18** and nine boards at plus-**16** in the clincher.

DEFENSE

STOKES WON IT ON THE GLASS

Stokes grabbed **14** rebounds without a point in the **71-60** opener, stayed on the glass, then broke out in the clincher: **5-of-5**, **11** points, **10** rebounds, plus-**18**. Vegas never found a clean answer inside. She is the spine of a defense holding opponents to **79.8** this postseason.

DATE	WL	SCORE			SITE
10/04	W	71-60			H
10/07	W	83-81			H
10/09	W	87-77			A
PLAYER	PPG	RPG	APG	G	
Gabby Williams	20.3	5.3	3.7	3	
Kayla Thornton	14.0	7.7	0.3	3	
Tiffany Hayes	11.7	3.0	2.0	3	
Kaitlyn Chen	8.0	1.3	1.0	3	
MARK	VALUE				
Series	3-0 vs LVA				
ORtg/DRtg/Pace	108.2 / 99.1 · #1/15 / 90.8 · #15/15				
Projected five	Veronica Burton, Kayla Thornton, Kiah Stokes, Gabby Williams, Cecilia Zandalasini				

WHAT'S DIFFERENT IN THE LAST SERIES

TEAM VALKYRIES' REBOUNDING SURGE

Across the sweep of LVA, Golden State grabbed 41.7 rebounds a game — up from 33.3 in its 47 games before the series, a plus-8.4 swing powered by 12.3 offensive boards a night.

PLAYER SALAUN'S SCORING COLLAPSE

Janelle Salaun managed just 2.3 points and 0.7 rebounds a night in the three-game sweep, down from 12.2 points and 3.8 rebounds over her 43 games before it.

HISTORY STOKES' RECORD ON GLASS

Kiah Stokes' 14 rebounds and 4 blocks in Game 1 (Oct. 4) were both Valkyries playoff single-game highs — only the 15th postseason game on record with 14+ rebounds and 4+ blocks.

TEAM IDENTITIES

ATL VS. GSV: BALANCE MEETS COMPRESSION

ATLANTA'S EVERYWHERE BALANCE

Atlanta is 15-7 on the road and 15-7 at home, third in net rating (8.4). The Dream lead the WNBA in paint points (43.6) and rank second in fast-break scoring (11.9). Smesko is 6-2 this postseason.

GOLDEN STATE'S SUFFOCATING HOME FORTRESS

Golden State compresses games: a league-best 99.1 defensive rating, fewest paint points allowed (31.1) and a league-slowest 90.8 pace. They are 17-5 at Chase Center. Nakase calls that crowd the sixth man.

DREAM IDENTITY

STANDINGS

SEASON	VALUE
W-L / Seed	30-14 · #4 East
Streak / L10	W 10 · 10-0
H / A	15-7 · 15-7
HC	Karl Smesko

EFFICIENCY FINGERPRINT

EFFICIENCY	VALUE
Net	8.4 · rk 3
ORtg / DRtg	111.9 (rk 4) · 103.5 (rk 3)
Pace	97.7 · rk 5
eFG / TS	50.5% · 55.6%

A NO-HOLE PROFILE

Third in net rating (**8.4**), fourth in offensive rating (**111.9**), third in defensive rating (**103.5**), fifth in pace (**97.7**). No weak phase to attack. Balance is the identity.

THE ROAD SPINE

Thirty wins, a **No. 4** seed in the East, a **10**-game win streak and **10-0** in the last ten, regular season and playoffs, entering the Finals. Home and road are both **15-7**.

SMESKO'S PLAYOFF LEAP

Smesko is **60-28** as a head coach. The postseason is sharper: **6-2**, a **0.750** clip against his **0.682** regular-season mark, in year two in Atlanta.

A CORE DRAFTED AND KEPT

Built from the inside out. Howard and Hillmon entered in the 2022 draft and are four-year veterans. Reese (two seasons) arrived in 2024. Gray is in year nine, Canada in year eight.

WHEN THE BALL GOES UP

At Chase Center the Dream want to impose tempo on a team built to slow the game. Golden State owns the league's best defense, so the counter is balance, not one star. Game **1** asks whether that completeness holds.

VALKYRIES IDENTITY

STANDINGS

SEASON	VALUE
W-L / Seed	32-12 · #2 West
Streak / L10	W 4 · 8-2
H / A	17-5 · 15-7
HC	Natalie Nakase

EFFICIENCY FINGERPRINT

EFFICIENCY	VALUE
Net	9.1 · rk 1
ORtg / DRtg	108.2 (rk 7) · 99.1 (rk 1)
Pace	90.8 · rk 15
eFG / TS	49.9% · 54.0%

SHRINK THE GAME, THEN SUFFOCATE IT

No. 1 defense (**99.1**) married to a **No. 1** net (plus **9.1**). Every night is a fistfight. They don't outscore you; they erase possessions, then ask a good offense to do just enough.

A CONTRADICTION THAT WINS

Plus **9.1** net and the best defense sit on a 7th-ranked offense (**108.2**) and the slowest pace in the league (**90.8**, 15th). Fewer possessions shrink the offensive gap. That is the trade this staff wants.

A HOME FORTRESS AND THE WEST'S NO. 2 SEED

32-12, the **No. 2** seed in the West, **17-5** at home. They enter on a W1 and **7-3** in the last ten. The building is the spine. Game **1** opens at Chase Center. The road half (**15-7**) is what this series will stress.

THE COACH IS THE SIXTH MAN

Nakase demanded "hostility" from the Ballhalla crowd and called the fans "our sixth man." She is a former Las Vegas assistant and Team USA gold-medal staffer, **55-33** career, **5-3** in the playoffs.

BUILT TO EMPTY THE TANK

"Our style is to empty the tank for **40** minutes," Nakase said. Burton organizes, Stokes owns the glass, Thornton and Williams supply the two-way steel. Stokes leads the postseason with **57** rebounds. Williams finished second in Defensive Player of the Year voting.



OFFENSIVE APPROACH

DOWNHILL FORCE VS. PERIMETER PATIENCE

PAINT, GLASS, AND THE LINE

Atlanta ranks 1st in paint points (43.6) and 2nd in fast-break points (11.9), with a 35.5% offensive-rebound rate and a 34.1% free-throw rate. Gray scores 19.0, Canada assists 7.3, and the offense rates 111.9 (4th).

DREAM OFFENSE

ATL ORtg 111.9 (rk 4) · Pace 97.7 into GSV DRtg 99.1.

EFFICIENCY

EFFICIENCY	VALUE
ORtg / Pace	111.9 · 97.7
eFG / TS	50.5% · 55.6%
ORB / FTA	35.5% · 34.1%
Scoring diet	Paint 47.8% · 3pt 29.4% · FT 21.0%

TONIGHT EDGES

TONIGHT EDGES	ATTACK VS DEF	GAP
Corner 3	35.6% vs 0.0%	35.6 pts
Midrange	26.7% vs 34.1%	-7.4 pts

Creators: Allisha Gray 19.0/2.6 (usg 21.9%) · Rhyne Howard 17.7/3.7 (usg 20.3%) · Angel Reese 16.4/2.8 (usg 24.4%).

A RIM-AND-FREE-THROW OFFENSE, NOT A THREE-POINT ONE

47.8% of Atlanta's points come in the paint and **21.0%** at the line (**68.8%** combined). Only **29.4%** arrive from three, and midrange is **1.8%**. Offensive rating **111.9** (4th), pace **97.7** (5th), into a defense allowing **99.1** per **100**.

THE RIM IS THE FIRST OPTION – 40% OF SHOTS AT THE RESTRICTED AREA

40.3% of Atlanta's shots come at the rim, where it shoots **60.3%** and Golden State allows **61.2%**. Paint points: **43.6** a game. If the wall holds, the fallback is thin.

CANADA IS THE HUB, GRAY IS THE FINISHER

Canada runs it at **7.3** assists and a **34.4%** assist rate, on a **112.4** offensive rating. Gray finishes at a team-high **19.0** points on **21.9%** usage. One creates, one converts.

THE PAINT'S SECOND LAYER IS THE REAL MISMATCH

Atlanta shoots **36.5%** on non-restricted paint looks (**17.5%** of attempts). Golden State allows **42.2%** there, a **5.7**-point resistance. Midrange is only **4.3%** of shots. That is where Golden State wants them settling.

SLOW STARTS: Q1 IS ATLANTA'S SOFTEST QUARTER

Q1 is Atlanta's softest quarter: a **106.0** offensive rating, **48.4%** effective field goal, **22.1** points and **5.5** free throws. Golden State can bank a cushion before the offense warms.

THE CLOSE IS A FREE-THROW PARADE

By the fourth, Atlanta is at a **119.4** rating, **58.8%** true shooting and **7.2** free-throw attempts, up from **5.5**. The line is **22.9%** of those points. Defend the fourth without fouling.

THE DIET SHIFTS Q2 TO Q4: THREES EARLY, PAINT LATE

Three-point share of scoring peaks in the second quarter (**30.5%**) and slides to **26.9%** by the fourth, while paint climbs to **48.9%** and free throws to **22.9%**.

WHISTLE, GLASS AND THE BREAK

A **35.5%** offensive-rebound rate, a **34.1%** free-throw-attempt rate and **11.9** fast-break points. **19.9%** of the scoring comes off turnovers. Live-ball Golden State mistakes are gasoline.

ARC-FIRST, PACE-LAST ATTACK

38.1% of Golden State's points come from three, the league high, at a league-slowest 90.8 pace. Burton (5.7 assists) feeds Salaun (.392 from three) and Williams (14.4 points, 28% usage). Offensive rating 108.2, 7th.

VALKYRIES OFFENSE

GSV ORtg 108.2 (rk 7) · Pace 90.8 into ATL DRtg 103.5.

EFFICIENCY

EFFICIENCY	VALUE
ORtg / Pace	108.2 · 90.8
eFG / TS	49.9% · 54.0%
ORB / FTA	32.2% · 27.1%
Scoring diet	Paint 37.8% · 3pt 38.1% · FT 17.4%

TONIGHT EDGES

TONIGHT EDGES	ATTACK VS DEF	GAP
Corner 3	31.9% vs 0.0%	31.9 pts
Midrange	34.3% vs 40.2%	-5.9 pts

Creators: Gabby Williams 14.4/2.2 (usg 28.0%) · Janelle Salaun 12.7/1.2 (usg 22.8%) · Veronica Burton 12.2/5.7 (usg 19.0%).

A THREE-POINT TREADMILL RUNNING AT THE LEAGUE'S SLOWEST SPEED

38.1% of Golden State's points come from three, the highest share in the WNBA, at the slowest pace (**90.8**, 15th). Efficiency does not match the volume: **.499** effective field goal (12th), **54.0%** true shooting (13th), paint share **37.8%** (last). Atlanta allows **103.5** per **100**.

BURTON DISTRIBUTES, WILLIAMS DECIDES

Burton is the organizer: **5.7** assists, a **34.0%** assist rate, **19%** usage, **12.2** points. Williams has the volume: **28%** usage, **14.4** points, **.404** from the field, **17.9%** assist rate. Team assists are **19.3**, 13th.

ABOVE THE BREAK IS THE WHOLE BATTLEGROUND

38.8% of Golden State's attempts come above the break, at **.352** against an Atlanta defense allowing **.368**. Restricted area is **.635** versus **.650** allowed. Paint non-restricted is **.416** to **.408**. Midrange **.343** sits **5.9** points under what Atlanta usually allows. They don't shoot enough inside to lean on it.

FIRST QUARTERS ARE A CRAWL, NOT A STATEMENT

This playoff run, the first quarter is **19.7** points on a **50.9** effective field goal, a plus-**1.3**. Free-throw attempt rate is **25.5%** in the first and **35.1%** by the fourth. Atlanta can be the aggressor early.

THE THIRD QUARTER IS NOW THE HAMMER

The third was Golden State's one losing regular-season quarter (minus-**0.3**). In the playoffs it is the best frame: **22.7** points and plus-**4.3**, with a **31.8%** free-throw attempt rate, up from **20.1%** in the first. If Game **1** is tight at half, the third is where they have been breaking games.

DOWN THE STRETCH, THEY ABANDON THE THREE

Playoff fourths: **18.5** points, a minus-**0.8** margin, **42.5** effective field goal, the worst quarter of the run. Paint rises to **44.2%** of points and the three-point share falls to **23.3%**, against a **36.6%** regular-season fourth-quarter three share.

EXTRA POSSESSIONS ARE THEIR QUIET EDGE

Offensive-rebound rate **32.2%** (4th). **19.6%** of points come off turnovers (4th). Free-throw attempt rate grows from **20.1%** in the first quarter to **38.2%** by the fourth in the regular season.

A FRANCHISE FIRST, BUILT ON DEFENSE-FIRST BONES

First Finals. They have already played four more postseason games than the entire 2025 cameo (**2**). Burton, the franchise's first Most Improved Player (2025) and an All-Defensive pick, runs the show. Salaun (**.392** from three) is the low-usage stretch valve.



DEFENSIVE APPROACH

ATL VS. GSV DEFENSIVE COLLISION

ATL'S HAVOC SHELL, EXPOSED ARC

Atlanta's No. 3 defense (103.5) forces 16.0 turnovers and allows a league-low 6.9 fast-break points. Howard (2.3 steals) and Canada (1.9) pressure the ball. Reese (12.1 boards) seals the glass. The crack is .368 allowed above the break.

DREAM DEFENSE

ATL DRtg 103.5 (rk 3) · Opp paint 38.8 into GSV ORtg 108.2.

SHELL

DEFENSE	VALUE
DRtg / Net	103.5 · 8.4
Opp eFG	53.1%
Opp paint / FB	38.8 · 6.9
TOV%	16.4%

TONIGHT EDGES

EDGE	OPP VS US	GAP
Corner 3	Opp 31.9% vs allow 0.0%	31.9 pts
Midrange	Opp 34.3% vs allow 40.2%	-5.9 pts

Disruptors: Rhyne Howard 2.3 STL / 0.9 BLK · Angel Reese 1.8 STL / 0.7 BLK · Jordin Canada 1.9 STL / 0.3 BLK.

A HAVOC SHELL, NOT A SHOT-QUALITY WALL

Defensive rating **103.5** (3rd) with opponent field-goal percentage only 13th (**46.9%**). The bargain only pays if the takeaways come: **16.0** forced a game, against a **13.9** league average. Golden State commits **11.5** a game (**15.1%**).

REESE IS THE ANCHOR; HOWARD IS THE PICKPOCKET

Reese anchors the shell at a **98.9** defensive rating and **12.1** rebounds. Howard is the wing ball-hawk: **2.3** steals, **0.9** blocks, a **101.9** rating, with Canada (**1.9** steals) and Gray (**1.4**) at the point of attack. Golden State's half-court runs through its wings.

THE ARC IS THE CRACK THE SHELL CAN'T HIDE

Above-the-break threes: Atlanta allows **.368**, 14th of **15**, against a **.343** league average, and **.650** at the rim (11th). Golden State takes **38.8%** of its shots above the break and gets **38.1%** of its points from three. In the playoffs the leak is **.366**.

THE SHELL THINS WHEN THE BENCH BIGS CHECK IN

The starting five (Gray, Canada, Howard, Hillmon, Reese) defends at **93.2** with a plus-**21.6** net across **40** games, against a **107.4** league mark. Swap Reese for Brionna Jones (**107.9**) and Jones-Hillmon units have bled at **127.1** and **127.8**.

THE THIRD QUARTER IS THE ONE WINDOW THE SHELL CRACKS

Regular-season third quarter: **108.2** defensive rating and **56.9%** opponent effective field goal, Atlanta's worst quarter. Golden State's playoff third is its best: plus-**4.3** and **22.7** points. The Valkyries have weaponized that frame.

GLASS DISCIPLINE MEETS A SECOND-CHANCE ENGINE

Atlanta allows a **26.4%** offensive-rebound rate and **9.5** second-chance points. Golden State rebounds **32.2%** of its misses (top four) and scores **11.1** second-chance points, **13.0** in the playoffs.

A FOUL-PRONE SHELL MEETS A LOW-WHISTLE OPPONENT

Atlanta commits **19.6** fouls and puts opponents on the line at a **31.7%** free-throw-attempt rate, **34.4%** in the playoffs. Golden State draws fouls at **27.1%** and only **18.9** a night. Stay aggressive, but past **20** fouls the free points arrive without the shell breaking.

ELITE TRANSITION DEFENSE WITH NOTHING TO CHASE

Atlanta allows a league-low **6.9** fast-break points. It will not get to show it. Golden State plays at **90.8** pace and scores **6.8** fast-break points. There is no break game for this shell to win.

GSV'S LOCKDOWN, NO SOFT SPOTS

Golden State's No. 1 defense (99.1) leads the league in paint points allowed (31.1), fast-break points (7.2) and opponent effective field goal (47.8%). Stokes posts a 94.5 rating and 1.7 blocks. Atlanta takes 40.3% of its shots at the rim.

VALKYRIES DEFENSE

GSV DRtg 99.1 (rk 1) · Opp paint 31.1 into ATL ORtg 111.9.

SHELL

DEFENSE	VALUE
DRtg / Net	99.1 · 9.1
Opp eFG	47.8%
Opp paint / FB	31.1 · 7.2
TOV%	15.1%

TONIGHT EDGES

EDGE	OPP VS US	GAP
Corner 3	Opp 35.6% vs allow 0.0%	35.6 pts
Midrange	Opp 26.7% vs allow 34.1%	-7.4 pts

Disruptors: Kiah Stokes 0.6 STL / 1.7 BLK · Veronica Burton 1.6 STL / 0.5 BLK · Gabby Williams 1.6 STL / 0.2 BLK.

A NO. 1 DEFENSE WITH NO SOFT CATEGORY

Defensive rating **99.1**, opponent effective field goal **47.8%**, opponent scoring **75.1**, all league-best. Also **No. 1** in paint points allowed (**31.1**), fast-break points (**7.2**) and second-chance points (**10.3**). Atlanta takes **40.3%** of its shots at the rack. The paint wall is the first domino.

THE SHELL HAS SOFTENED IN THE PLAYOFFS

Six playoff games: defensive rating **104.1** and opponent effective field goal **48.8%**, up from **99.1** and **47.8**. Opponent free-throw attempts rose from **19.8** to **23.2**. Atlanta scored **113.2** per **100** in its sweep.

STOKES IS THE RIM'S ERASER

Stokes anchors the league's best defense at a **94.5** defensive rating, with **1.7** blocks on **8.5%** usage. She does not need a touch. Atlanta's live paint touches have to end in rim-outs.

TWO BALLHAWKS FEED THE TURNOVER ENGINE

Burton and Williams each average **1.6** steals in front of a defense that forces **14.5** turnovers, best in the league. Canada's offense is careful with the ball.

THE ZONE MAP: LET THE MIDRANGE BREATHE

Golden State allows **.342** above the break, best in the league. Atlanta takes **33.4%** of its shots there and makes **.324**. The leak is midrange: Atlanta shoots **.267**, Golden State allows **.341**, a **7.4**-point gap, the widest zone tonight. Dare the pull-up.

A SWITCHABLE SHELL, NOT A DROPPING ONE

Four starters sit better than the team **99.1**: Stokes **94.5**, Zandalasini **95.0**, Burton **95.7**, Williams **98.6**, so the shell can switch onto screens without giving up the rim. Amihere (**96.4**) and Charles (**97.0**) keep the shape with the second unit.

THE SECOND QUARTER IS WHERE THE SHELL BENDS

Playoffs: **18.3** points allowed in the first and the third, **20.3** in the second, the softest frame. That is when the benches cycle, and when Atlanta can hunt paint against a mixed unit. The second-quarter math can decide a game in the 70s.

GLASS AND WHISTLE ARE THE ONLY DOORS LEFT

No. 1 in defensive rebounding (**68.9%**), opponent offensive rebounds (**7.9**) and fast-break points allowed (**7.2**). The opening left is the line: opponent free throws rose from **19.8** to **23.2** in the playoffs. Atlanta lives on that pressure.

ATL VS. GSV: CLUTCH COLLISION

DREAM THRIVE WHEN CLOCKS BLEED

Atlanta is 4-2 in games decided by three or fewer, with the No. 2 clutch net (plus-17.1). Late clock: 59.1% from the field and 88.7% at the line, second in the league. Gray has 40 of those points on 72.1% shooting.

DREAM CLUTCH

Q4 ≤5:00 within 5 · REG+PST before tip · vs GSV.

CLOSE-GAME LEDGER

LATE CLOCK	VALUE
≤3pt games	4-2
Ahead / behind Q3	25-4 · 5-10
Ahead / behind half	23-3 · 7-11
10+ games	18-8

CLUTCH WINDOW

CLUTCH	VALUE
FG	104/176 (59.1%)
3PT	11/34
PTS / TOV	157 · 16
Fouls / Drawn	123 · 52

CLUTCH SCORERS

PLAYER	PTS	FG	FG%
Allisha Gray	40	31/43	72.1%
Rhyne Howard	35	22/41	53.7%
Jordin Canada	25	16/29	55.2%
Angel Reese	23	17/28	60.7%

CLOSE GAMES ARE ATLANTA'S LANE

Atlanta is **4-2** in games decided by three or fewer, **25-4** when leading after three, **23-3** when ahead at half. Golden State is **26-5** after three, **3-3** in one-possession games, **6-7** when trailing at the third.

THE CLUTCH FLOOR TILTS TOWARD THE DREAM

Final five, inside five: Atlanta **59.1% (104-of-176)**, **157** clutch points. Golden State **55.1%** on **97-of-176**. Both threes dry up late. Atlanta was **11-of-34 (32.4%)** from three.

POSSESSION DISCIPLINE SEPARATES THE CLOSERS

Atlanta turns it over **14** times in the late-clock window, Golden State **21**. For the league's slowest offense, **21** clutch giveaways are a tax it cannot outrun. Assist-to-turnover: Atlanta **1.56**, Golden State **1.35**.

WHISTLE AND THE CHARITY STRIPE

Golden State commits **3.1** clutch fouls a game to Atlanta's **2.3**. Atlanta shoots **88.7%** from the line in the clutch, second in the league, against Golden State's **77.3%**.

ATLANTA CLOSES BY COMMITTEE

Spread across four: Gray **40** clutch points on **72.1%** shooting, Howard **35**, Canada **25**, Reese **23**, Hillmon **16**. No isolation hub. The points come from Gray's drives, Canada's pull-ups and Reese's second-chance work.

GOLDEN STATE'S CLUTCH OFFENSE RUNS THROUGH ONE ENGINE

Williams averages **3.3** points in the late-clock window, more than any Dream closer there. The support thins fast. Burton and Hayes are at **1.6**, Thornton **1.3**.

THE FIVE-MINUTE EDGE IS REAL

Clutch net: Atlanta plus-**17.1** (2nd), Golden State minus-**1.9** (10th). Per clutch game: plus-**1.5** against plus-**0.1**. In the final five, Golden State's best late look, the above-the-break three, is the shot Atlanta defends worst (14th of **15**).

VALKYRIES WIN WIDE, NOT TIGHT

Golden State is 3-3 in one-possession games and 26-5 when ahead after three, with 199 clutch points on 125-of-220 (56.8%). The leak is 25 late turnovers and a 1.35 assist-to-turnover ratio. Williams has 68 clutch points at 55.3%.

VALKYRIES CLUTCH

Q4 ≤5:00 within 5 · REG+PST before tip · vs ATL.

CLOSE-GAME LEDGER

LATE CLOCK	VALUE
≤3pt games	3-3
Ahead / behind Q3	26-5 · 6-7
Ahead / behind half	27-6 · 4-6
10+ games	21-3

CLUTCH WINDOW

CLUTCH	VALUE
FG	125/220 (56.8%)
3PT	16/48
PTS / TOV	199 · 25
Fouls / Drawn	213 · 62

CLUTCH SCORERS

PLAYER	PTS	FG	FG%
Gabby Williams	68	42/76	55.3%
Veronica Burton	35	23/37	62.2%
Janelle Salaun	22	17/33	51.5%
Kayla Thornton	17	10/12	83.3%

COIN-FLIP ENDINGS FAVOR THE DREAM

Golden State is **3-3** within three points. Atlanta is **4-2**. Ahead after three: Valkyries **26-5**, Dream **25-4**. Neither closes from behind. Trailing entering the fourth: Golden State **6-7**, Atlanta **5-10**. Game **1** hinges on who owns the third-quarter cushion.

THE RIM, NOT THE ARC, CLOSES FOR GOLDEN STATE

Late clock (fourth quarter, under **5:00**, within five): **125-of-220 (56.8%)** from the floor, **16-of-48** from three, **199** points. The three-reliant season offense goes to the rim. Atlanta's late shell allows **61.2%** there.

CLEAN HANDS VS. A WHISTLE BLEED

Atlanta: **14** clutch turnovers. Golden State: **25** turnovers, **213** fouls, **62** drawn. Late possessions change hands. That sends the Dream to a line where they shoot **88.7%**, second in the league on the within-five board.

TWO NAMES CARRY GOLDEN STATE'S CLUTCH

Golden State's late offense funnels through those two. Williams: **68** clutch points, **42-of-76 (55.3%)**. Burton: **35** on **23-of-37 (62.2%)**. Thornton: **10-of-12 (83.3%)**. Atlanta is spread: Gray **2.6** per game, Bonner **2.4**, living at the line.

ATLANTA WINS LATE AT THE LINE, NOT THE ARC

Atlanta is **9-6** with a plus-**1.5** clutch margin, shooting **40.8%** from the floor and **26.5%** from three in that window. The engine is free throws (**88.7%**) and the best clutch offensive-rebound rate.

THE ARC ATLANTA CAN'T HIDE — IF GOLDEN STATE LOOKS

Atlanta allows **.368** on above-the-break threes, 14th of **15**. Golden State's late diet barely tests it: **16-of-48** from three in the window.

PROTECT THE THIRD-QUARTER LEAD

Leading after three: Atlanta **25-4**, Golden State **26-5**. Game **1** may be decided before the final five. Neither gives a late lead back. The pressure case is whoever trails entering the fourth. Both are under **.500** there.

TIMEOUT CHESS, ATL VS. GSV

SMESKO'S LATE-GAME STACK

Karl Smesko is 60-28, and 92 of Atlanta's 153 timeouts land inside the final four minutes. Only 20 come with 7:00 or more left. Howard takes the first look at 9-of-24. Gray converts 10-of-21.

DREAM COACHING

SIDELINE

COACH	VALUE
Head coach	Karl Smesko
Stint W-L	30-14
Career W-L	60-28 (68.2%)
Playoff / Titles	6-2 · —

TIMEOUT CLOCK

TIMEOUTS	VALUE
Total T0s	153
Q1 / Q2 / Q3 / Q4	12 / 45 / 27 / 69
≥7 / 4-7 / <4	20 / 41 / 92

ATO FIRST SHOT

PLAYER	FG	FG%
Rhyne Howard	9/24	37.5%
Allisha Gray	10/21	47.6%
Naz Hillmon	6/14	42.9%
Jordin Canada	5/13	38.5%

SIDELINE IDENTITY: SMESKO'S UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Smesko, year two in Atlanta: **30-14** this stint, **60-28** career (**68.2%**), **6-2** this postseason, no title. Tonight is unfinished business for the bench.

TIMEOUT CLOCK: 133 AND BACK-LOADED

Atlanta has called **133** timeouts: **59** in Q4 (**44%**) against **8** in Q1, and **80** of them (**60%**) inside four minutes. Smesko saves his cards for the finish.

ATO FIRST SHOT: HOWARD BY VOLUME, GRAY BY RATE

Howard takes the ATO volume at **9-of-21**. Gray is the sharper option at **10-of-20**. Hillmon and Canada log **12** attempts each.

ROTATION CHECK-IN: EARLY FOULS DRIVE THE FIRST SUB

Opening five: Howard, Reese, Gray, Hillmon, Canada. Early Q1 fouls on Reese (**5**), Gray (**4**) and Hillmon (**4**) can force the first sub.

MATCHUP SIDELINE TELL: BOTH BENCHES EMPTY LATE

Golden State ATOs through Williams (**12-of-26**) and calls **67** Q4 timeouts, **45%** inside four minutes. Both benches empty late, into Atlanta's **No. 1** turnover shell.

LATE-CALL TIMING: REESE'S FOUL LOAD

Reese leads Atlanta with **169** fouls and is the most frequent early-Q1 fouler. Sixty percent of Dream timeouts land inside four minutes, so a late stop is a Reese decision.

NAKASE CLOSES THROUGH WILLIAMS

Natalie Nakase used 174 timeouts, 77 of them in the fourth and 82 inside four minutes. Forty-three came with 7:00 or more left. Williams leads first looks at 15-of-35. Hayes is 6-of-9 on the second call.

VALKYRIES COACHING

SIDELINE

COACH	VALUE
Head coach	Natalie Nakase
Stint W-L	32-12
Career W-L	55-33 (62.5%)
Playoff / Titles	5-3 · —

TIMEOUT CLOCK

TIMEOUTS	VALUE
Total T0s	174
Q1 / Q2 / Q3 / Q4	13 / 44 / 40 / 77
≥7 / 4-7 / <4	43 / 49 / 82

ATO FIRST SHOT

PLAYER	FG	FG%
Gabby Williams	15/35	42.9%
Veronica Burton	3/22	13.6%
Janelle Salaun	5/14	35.7%
Cecilia Zandalasini	6/14	42.9%

TWO SECOND-YEAR SIDELINES, ONE 68% CAREER GUY

Nakase is **55-33 (62.5%)** in two Golden State seasons, **32-12** this year, **5-3** in the playoffs. Smesko is **60-28 (68.2%)**, **30-14** and **6-2**. Neither has a title.

GOLDEN STATE SAVES ITS STOPS FOR THE CLOSE

Golden State has used **149** timeouts: **67** in the fourth (**45%**), **40** in the second, **67** inside four minutes. Nakase saves her stops for the close.

SMESKO'S TIMEOUTS ARE A FOURTH-QUARTER HABIT

Atlanta's **133** timeouts lean later still: **59** in the fourth, **80 (60%)** under **4:00**, **19 (14%)** at **7:00** or more.

AFTER A GSV TIMEOUT, FIND WILLIAMS

After a timeout, find Williams (**12-of-26**). Burton has the volume and not the make (**2-of-20**). Zandalasini is **6-of-13**, Salaun **5-of-13**.

ATLANTA'S ATO SHOT IS A TWO-MAN QUESTION

Howard takes the most ATO looks (**9-of-21**). Gray is busier and sharper (**10-of-20**). Hillmon and Canada get **12** each.

THE EARLY-FOUL LEASH DECIDES THE FIRST ROTATION

Early Q1 foul risk: Burton **5**, Zandalasini and Stokes **4**. Atlanta's side of the same leash is Reese (**5**) and Gray (**4**).

TIMEOUT TIMING MEETS THE THIRD-QUARTER CRACK

Nakase's **33** third-quarter timeouts hit the quarter Atlanta defends worst. She can hunt the above-the-break three Atlanta allows at **.368**, with Williams as the ATO look.

LINEUPS & ROTATIONS

ATL VS. GSV: ROTATION COLLISION

ATLANTA'S ONE IRONCLAD FIVE

Gray, Canada, Howard, Hillmon and Reese are the only Dream five over 15 minutes: 40 games, plus-21.6 net, 93.2 defense. Bonner for Hillmon is the stretch look, plus-28.2 net and a 78.9 defensive rating in five games.

DREAM LINEUPS

PROJECTED FIVE

PLAYER	MPG	PPG	STARTS
Rhyne Howard	33.5	17.7	12
Angel Reese	32.0	16.4	12
Allisha Gray	31.7	19.0	12
Naz Hillmon	28.3	9.1	12
Jordin Canada	29.4	11.6	11

BENCH WINDOW

PLAYER	MPG	PPG
DeWanna Bonner	20.8	8.6
Isobel Borlase	14.1	4.8
Jaylyn Sherrod	10.1	2.3
Madina Okot	9.9	5.4
Te Hina Paopao	9.4	3.7

FIVE-MAN NETS

UNIT	GP	NET	ORTG	DRTG
Gray · Canada · Howard · Hillmon · Reese	40	21.6	114.8	93.2
Gray · Jones · Canada · Howard · Reese	9	14.5	105.6	91.1
Gray · Howard · Hillmon · Reese · Borlase	10	-28.2	67.6	95.8
Gray · Canada · Howard · Kone · Reese	9	-16.2	88.5	104.8
Gray · Canada · Hillmon · Reese · Paopao	8	-31.6	96.2	127.8
Gray · Canada · Howard · Reese · Borlase	14	8.2	111.6	103.3

TWO-MAN CHEMISTRY

UNIT	GP	MIN	NET	ORTG	DRTG
Gray · Howard	43	28	12.6	111.4	98.8
Howard · Reese	42	28	11.6	110.0	98.4
Canada · Howard	42	28	13.3	113.1	99.9
Gray · Reese	43	27	14.7	110.8	96.1
Gray · Canada	43	26	14.5	113.3	98.7

ATLANTA'S FIRST FIVE IS SETTLED – AND IT'S THE ONLY ONE THAT PLAYS

Projected five: Gray, Canada, Howard, Hillmon, Reese. The only unit over 15 minutes together: **40** games, plus-**21.6** net, **114.8** offense, **93.2** defense, **99.6** pace. Every other five is under six minutes.

WHY HILLMON STARTS: BUYING REESE THE FREEDOM TO ROAM

Hillmon's **28.3** minutes are not about **9.1** points. They keep Reese off the ball on defense. With Hillmon at the four, the five defends at **93.2** per **100**, about **13** points under a **107.4** league mark.

BONNER GIVES ATLANTA A SWITCHIER CLOSING ALTERNATIVE

Bonner for Hillmon: plus-**28.2** net and a **78.9** defensive rating across five games, **4.9** minutes a night. A smaller, more switchable look for Golden State's perimeter half-court when the big shell gets stretched.

SECOND UNIT RUNS THROUGH BONNER, THEN BORLASE

Bonner, the only reserve over 15 minutes: **20.8** a night, **8.6** points, **50%** shooting, **46.7%** from three. Borlase is next (**14.1**). Okot, Sherrod and Paopao each get about nine to ten.

GOLDEN STATE'S MOST-USED FIVE GRINDS RATHER THAN BLOWS YOU OUT

Golden State's heaviest unit, Thornton, Stokes, Zandalasini, Williams and Burton, has **33** games and **10.7** minutes at a plus-**0.7** net, **95.2** offense and a **90.6** pace. It grinds.

GOLDEN STATE'S REAL LATE-GAME WRINKLE: CHARLES IN, ZANDALASINI OUT

Charles for Zandalasini (Thornton, Stokes, Williams, Charles, Burton): plus-**16.3** net, **85.9** defense, **20** games. Charles' **21.1** bench minutes are the closing answer when paint pressure forces a smaller group.

THE CORE FOUR STAY GLUED – CHEMISTRY CONFIRMED

Gray-Reese plus-**14.7**, Gray-Canada plus-**14.5**, Canada-Reese plus-**14.3**, Canada-Howard plus-**13.3**. Each clears **25** minutes across **40**-plus games. That is why the starting five rarely fractures.

ONE SUB UNLOCKS THE VALKYRIES

Thornton, Stokes, Zandalasini, Williams and Burton play 10.7 minutes across 33 games at plus-0.7 net. Charles for Zandalasini lifts that group to plus-16.3 and an 85.9 defense over 20 games.

VALKYRIES LINEUPS

PROJECTED FIVE

PLAYER	MPG	PPG	STARTS
Veronica Burton	28.4	12.2	12
Kayla Thornton	22.3	7.7	12
Kiah Stokes	21.5	3.6	11
Gabby Williams	25.5	14.4	9
Cecilia Zandalasini	21.3	8.6	9

BENCH WINDOW

PLAYER	MPG	PPG
Kaila Charles	21.1	6.3
Janelle Salaun	20.9	12.7
Tiffany Hayes	19.1	9.0
Kaitlyn Chen	17.8	7.2
Laeticia Amihere	13.0	3.9

FIVE-MAN NETS

UNIT	GP	NET	ORTG	DRTG
Thornton · Stokes · Zandalasi · Williams · Burton	33	0.7	95.2	94.6
Thornton · Stokes · Williams · Charles · Burton	20	16.3	102.2	85.9
Hayes · Charles · Amihere · Salaun · Chen	24	-2.8	101.0	103.8
Hayes · Thornton · Stokes · Charles · Burton	11	24.4	98.7	74.4
Thornton · Zandalasi · Williams · Burton · Amihere	8	22.4	112.1	89.7
Thornton · Stokes · Zandalasi · Charles · Burton	8	-4.1	87.8	91.8

TWO-MAN CHEMISTRY

UNIT	GP	MIN	NET	ORTG	DRTG
Williams · Burton	39	22	8.7	106.2	97.5
Thornton · Burton	44	21	14.0	106.4	92.5
Stokes · Burton	43	19	7.2	99.7	92.4
Thornton · Williams	39	19	6.4	103.0	96.6
Stokes · Williams	38	18	2.4	99.5	97.1

THE CONTINUITY FIVE IS THE DEFAULT, NOT THE HAMMER

The projected five, Thornton, Stokes, Zandalasini, Williams and Burton, logs **10.7** minutes across **33** games at a plus-**0.7** net (**95.2** / **94.6**) and wins **73%** of its minutes. The staff trusts it. It does not blow games open.

THE REAL NET LIVES ONE SUBSTITUTION OVER

Swap Zandalasini for Charles and the five jumps to plus-**16.3** with an **85.9** defensive rating over **20** games (**4.7** minutes). Charles supplies the defensive lift the starters lack. Thornton-Stokes-Williams-Charles-Burton is the tight-game look.

BENCH WINDOW BELONGS TO SALAUN AND HAYES

Salaun **12.7** points in **20.9** minutes. Hayes **9.0** in **19.1**. The all-bench five (Hayes, Charles, Amihere, Salaun, Chen) is minus-**2.8** over **24** games, **4.5** minutes. They do not swing games by themselves.

CLOSING TELL: A DEFENSE-FIRST ALIGNMENT, NOT THE STARTERS

The late look is Hayes, Thornton, Stokes, Charles and Burton: plus-**24.4** net and a **74.4** defensive rating across **11** games. It trades Zandalasini's shooting for resistance against a paint team. Expect that shell when Game **1** gets late and physical.

THORNTON-BURTON IS THE WIRING THAT HOLDS IT TOGETHER

The most-used pair is Thornton and Burton, **21** minutes a night across **44** games at plus-**14.0**, the best high-volume net on the roster. Williams-Burton is second in minutes (**22**) at plus-**8.7**.

DON'T CHASE THE SMALL-SAMPLE BOMBS

Thornton-Zandalasini-Williams-Burton-Salaun is plus-**56.3**. Williams-Charles-Burton-Amihere-Salaun is plus-**59.6**. Each is under **3** minutes over **6** to **11** games. Flexibility, not a bankable rotation. The nets compress toward reality on the groups clearing **10** minutes.

THE MATCHUP TELL VS ATLANTA'S LOCKED FIVE

Atlanta's Gray-Canada-Howard-Hillmon-Reese group: plus-**21.6** net, **93.2** defense, **40** games, **15** minutes. Golden State's default five is plus-**0.7**. Starters against starters loses. The edge is the Charles and Stokes variants, and the bench holding.

ATL STARTERS



#5 ANGEL REESE ▶ F (ATL)

Age 24 · Louisiana State

Season: 16.4/12.1/2.8 · 45.1% FG · 19.3% 3P · 31.0 MPG · usg 24.4%

Last Game: 2026-10-09: 22/9/3 in 37.5 min (7/18 FG)

Window: L5: 18.0/8.4/2.0 · 33.7 MPG

Awards: 2025 WNBA Peak Performers · 2024 All-Rookie Team · 2024 WNBA Peak Performers · 2024 WNBA Rookie of the Month

THE STORY

Baltimore Barbie, Playoff Problem

- ▶ **Double-double engine:** 16.4 points · 12.1 rebounds · 2.8 assists on 45.1% in the regular season, and she posted 32 double-doubles in 43 games — 74% of her nights — the relentless glass-and-paint engine that.
- ▶ **Postseason range + rim protection:** Across five playoff games the shot has expanded and the defense has climbed a level — 38.5% from three on 2.6 attempts a game (up from 19.3% on 1.3 in the regular season) while her blocks have more than tripled to 2.2 a night from 0.7, a.
- ▶ **Free-throw + rim pressure:** She lives at the stripe (6.3 FTA/game) and has converted 87.1% of playoff free throws (5.4-of-6.2) after a 72.1% regular season — the closing-quarter weapon Atlanta's whistle-hunting late-game surge runs through, with 67.2% of.
- ▶ **Baltimore to Baton Rouge:** Born in Randallstown, Md., and a St. Frances Academy product whose No. 10 was the first girls' jersey retired there, she insists she's 'Baltimore Barbie before I'm Bayou Barbie' — and grew up shooting against her brother Julian in the driveway while her mother, Angel.
- ▶ **A champion's résumé:** She spent two seasons at Maryland as the highest-rated recruit in program history before transferring to LSU, where she won the 2023 national title as Most Outstanding Player and set the NCAA single-season record with 34 double-doubles; she then went No. 7 overall to Chicago in 2024, made the All-Star team as a rookie and set.



#00 NAZ HILLMON ▶ F (ATL)

Age 26 · Michigan

Season: 9.1/4.6/1.6 · 46.1% FG · 30.6% 3P · 28.7 MPG · usg 13.3%

Last Game: 2026-10-09: 0/4/3 in 31.8 min (0/7 FG)

Window: L5: 5.2/4.4/2.6 · 33.1 MPG

Awards: 2025 WNBA Sixth Woman of the Year

THE STORY

Quiet Engine, Loud Minutes: Hillmon Wins the Floor Without the Ball

- ▶ **No-shot plus-minus:** Hillmon posts a +10.7 net rating and +6.0 plus-minus while using just 13.3% of Atlanta's possessions — ranks 11th of 89 qualified players in both categories. She is the starter who tilts.
- ▶ **Cold trigger in the playoffs:** Her postseason line is 5.2 points on 33.3% FG and 17.6% from three in 33.1 MPG, capped by an 0-of-7 clunker in the Game 3 clincher at New York — yet Atlanta was +8.4 in her minutes across the sweep. The shot.
- ▶ **Rim under review:** Across 16 opponent restricted-area attempts per game on her floor, opponents shoot .660 at the rim against Atlanta's shell — the interior crack Golden State's late-game diet shifts inside to hunt (they abandon the three for paint looks down the stretch).
- ▶ **Cleveland to Ann Arbor:** A Cleveland native out of Gilmour Academy (Gates Mills, OH), she left Michigan as the program's all-time rebounding leader (1,063) and the only Wolverine — man or woman — ever to reach 2,000 points and 1,000 rebounds.
- ▶ **From bench spark to Finals starter:** The 2025 WNBA Sixth Player of the Year — the first Dream player ever to win it — made 53 threes that season after hitting just one across her first three years combined; her mother NaSheema played college ball at Vanderbilt and professionally in the ABL.



#15 ALLISHA GRAY ▶ G (ATL)

Age 31 · South Carolina

Season: 19.0/3.5/2.6 · 46.2% FG · 33.8% 3P · 32.6 MPG · usg 21.9%

Last Game: 2026-10-04: 7/1/0 in 10.8 min (1/5 FG)

Window: L5: 17.8/2.4/1.8 · 29.1 MPG

Awards: 2025 All-WNBA · 2025 WNBA Player of the Month

THE STORY

One Lish: Atlanta's homegrown closer shakes off a shooting-hand scare to open the Finals

- ▶ **Finger-shaped cloud:** Gray's postseason has been a health story, not a form collapse — she lasted just 10.8 minutes in the semifinal opener (7 points on 1-of-5) before a left shooting-hand finger injury cost her Games 2-3 vs. New York. She's off tonight's 7:45 PM injury board, and the two games before the scare were 22-and-22 in the first-round sweep of.
- ▶ **Career-best bucket-getter:** At 19.0 points on 46.2% FG, Gray again leads Atlanta's attack — and her 33.8% from three is up over last year, with a 58.7% true-shooting clip. She suited up for all 44 regular-season games, so the scoring leap (from a reported 18.4 in 2025) came with.
- ▶ **The Williams wall:** Gray is Atlanta's perimeter stopper and draws the Finals' hardest cover — Golden State's engine Gabby Williams, who has scored 22.7 a night on 40.5% from deep this postseason. Gray's counter is two-way: 1.4 steals a game in the regular season, 2.0 across the.
- ▶ **Georgia homecoming:** Born in Greenwood, SC and raised a few hours southeast in Sandersville, GA (Washington County High), Gray returned to her home state when Atlanta acquired her in 2023 — then doubled down in April 2026 with a three-year extension reportedly worth over \$1M.
- ▶ **Tar Heel turned Gamecock legend:** She began at North Carolina, then transferred to South Carolina and won the program's first NCAA championship under Dawn Staley in 2017 — the same spring she went No. 4 overall and claimed Rookie of the Year. She's since stacked four All-Star nods, a 2025 All-WNBA First Team selection, and a feat no one had done.



#3 JORDIN CANADA ▶ G (ATL)

Age 31 · UCLA

Season: 11.6/3.5/7.3 · 43.1% FG · 29.2% 3P · 31.1 MPG · usg 17.2%

Last Game: 2026-10-09: 19/3/11 in 38.4 min (5/8 FG)

Window: L5: 19.2/3.8/8.8 · 36.2 MPG

Awards: 2023 All-Defensive Team · 2019 All-Defensive Team

THE STORY

Jordin Canada peaked at the perfect time — Atlanta's steady hand turned into a playoff flamethrower

- ▶ **Form trending:** Atlanta's incumbent point guard flipped a full scoring gear when the lights got bright — 11.6 points and 7.3 assists across 43 regular-season games became 19.2 points and 8.8 assists over five playoff games, with her field-goal clip.
- ▶ **The three is suddenly live:** A 29.2% regular-season shooter from deep on 3.2 attempts a game has caught fire in the postseason — 50.0% on a bigger 4.8 attempts — while her paint scoring climbed from 5.7 to 8.0 points, so she is now punishing.
- ▶ **Low-mistake engine:** She is creating and scoring more without leaking possessions — her assist-to-turnover ratio spiked from 2.98 in the regular season to 4.4 in the playoffs while.
- ▶ **Point-of-attack pest:** Atlanta's on-ball disruptor draws Golden State's lead guards, carrying 1.9 steals in the regular season and 2.2 in the playoffs as a two-time All-WNBA Defensive First Teamer and.
- ▶ **SoCal to Westwood:** The Los Angeles native grew up a USC fan but spent four years at rival UCLA (All-American, two-time Pac-12 Defensive Player of the Year) — and now runs at Golden State's program, whose coach Natalie Nakase is herself a former Bruin who noted this summer that Canada 'looks.



#10 RHYNE HOWARD ▶ G (ATL)

Age 26 · Kentucky

Season: 17.7/3.8/3.7 · 40.5% FG · 35.5% 3P · 34.2 MPG · usg 20.3%

Last Game: 2026-10-09: 21/2/0 in 38.3 min (7/21 FG)

Window: L5: 19.2/4.2/3.4 · 38.2 MPG

Awards: 2025 All-Defensive Team · 2022 All-Rookie Team · 2022 WNBA Rookie of the Month

THE STORY

Rhyne Howard: the homegrown No. 1 whose downhill attack and rising defense are carrying a cold jumper into the Finals

- ▶ **Season shape:** Atlanta's 6-2 starting wing averaged 17.7 pts / 3.8 reb / 3.7 ast across 43 games at 34.2 MPG on a light 20.3% usage — and the shot is arc-built: 8.8 of her 14.3 attempts (61%).
- ▶ **Postseason form:** The jumper has gone cold at the worst time — through five playoff games she's at 32.2% FG and 32.4% 3P, down from 40.5% / 35.5% in the regular season, capped by a 7-of-21.
- ▶ **Downhill shift:** She's traded jumpers for the rim this run — FGA up to 17.4 (from 14.3) and free-throw attempts nearly doubled to 6.4 a game (from 3.5), where she converts 90.6% — a snug fit.
- ▶ **Block-party wing:** The defensive arrow points up — 0.9 blocks and 39 rejections in 2026 are both career bests for a 6-2 guard (prior best 27), a switchable stopper who projects onto Golden.
- ▶ **Homegrown No. 1:** A Chattanooga, Tennessee native (Bradley Central in Cleveland, TN) barely two hours from Atlanta — "to be so close is huge," she said on draft night — the Kentucky star went No. 1 overall in 2022, won Rookie of the Year, is an All-Star and 2025 All-Defensive second-teamer, and became the.

GSV STARTERS



#1 GABBY WILLIAMS ▶ F (GSV)

Age 30 · Connecticut

Season: 14.4/3.3/2.2 · 40.4% FG · 34.2% 3P · 25.1 MPG · usg 28.0%

Last Game: 2026-10-09: 16/0/3 in 28.5 min (6/16 FG)

Window: L5: 23.2/5.2/4.0 · 31.9 MPG

Awards: 2025 All-Defensive Team · 2022 All-Defensive Team

THE STORY **Gabby Williams: Golden State's October Volume Switch**

- ▶ **Playoff switch flipped:** She was a volume-but-inefficient regular-season option — **14.4** points on **40.4%** FG at **28.0%** usage — then morphed into Golden State's **No. 1** scorer in the postseason: **22.7** points, **4.8** rebounds and **4.0** assists across six playoff games on **.449/.405** shooting, a **.576** true-shooting mark and a **+9.5** net.
- ▶ **The arc is the swing factor:** Her playoff **3-point** clip (**.405**) sits well above her **34.2%** regular-season mark, and the misses cluster — **4-of-7** from deep in the **25-point** Game 1 against Las Vegas, then **0-of-4** in the **16-point** clincher. For a Golden State offense that leans hardest on the three of any team, whether her jumper.
- ▶ **Two-way stopper, not a specialist:** A two-time WNBA All-Defensive Team wing (Seattle, 2022 and 2025) logging **1.6** steals a game in the regular season and **1.7** in the playoffs — she is the point-of-attack cover Atlanta's perimeter creators (Rhyne Howard, Allisha Gray) will have to solve. Her on-court impact swings hard: **+27**.
- ▶ **Sparks to Storrs:** Before she was a basketball star she was a track phenom — she cleared **6-2¼** in the high jump at the 2012 U.S. Olympic trials at age **15**, finishing fifth and earning alternate status [**3**]. She chose UConn, won two national titles (2015, 2016), was the 2017 National Defensive Player.
- ▶ **French blood, Bay homecoming:** A dual citizen through her French mother, she grew up speaking French with her grandmother and now stars for France's national team (Tokyo bronze, Paris 2024 silver) [**2**]. This is her first season in Golden State, where she calls the Bay her "safe space" — a homecoming.



#5 KAYLA THORNTON ▶ F (GSV)

Age 33 · Texas-El Paso

Season: 7.7/4.5/0.7 · 36.1% FG · 34.7% 3P · 24.3 MPG · usg 14.9%

Last Game: 2026-10-09: 18/9/0 in 32.8 min (5/12 FG)

Window: L5: 11.0/5.8/0.4 · 28.4 MPG

THE STORY **From Undrafted Nomad to October Sniper: Thornton's Quiet Finals Turn**

- ▶ **Playoff leap from deep:** Thornton flipped a middling regular-season stroke into a postseason weapon — **34.7%** from three (**1.5-of-4.3**) and a **.516** true-shooting clip in the regular season jumped to **42.3%** (**1.8-of-4.3**) and **.626** in the playoffs, lifting her to **10.8** points over six.
- ▶ **Low-usage spacer, real two-way value:** At **14.9%** usage she is a catch-and-shoot release valve — **58.2%** of her regular-season points come from beyond the arc — yet Golden State plays to a **+11.5** on-court net rating with her on the floor behind a **95.3** defensive rating.
- ▶ **Atlanta has seen both versions:** She torched the Dream for **17** points on **5-of-10** from three on **6/24/26**, then managed **0** and **2** points on a combined **0-of-7** from deep in the next two meetings — and she also drew Atlanta in the 2024 playoffs with New.
- ▶ **A journey worth a graphic:** Born in Germany and undrafted in 2015, Thornton built her launchpad at UTEP — the first Miner ever to average a double-double (**19.5** points, **10.1** rebounds as a senior) — and has since logged pro seasons in Australia, Egypt, Israel, Italy, Puerto Rico.
- ▶ **Been here before:** Thornton played all four games of New York's October 2023 Finals run with the Liberty, so tonight's Game 1 is her second Finals, not her first — the **6-1** forward brings a been-here calm to a.



#41 KIAH STOKES ▶ C (GSV)

Age 33 · Connecticut

Season: 3.6/5.8/1.3 · 43.4% FG · 29.0% 3P · 22.3 MPG · usg 8.5%

Last Game: 2026-10-09: 11/10/3 in 37.5 min (5/5 FG)

Window: L5: 3.4/9.8/2.0 · 30.7 MPG

Awards: 2015 All-Defensive Team · 2015 All-Rookie Team · 2015 WNBA Rookie of the Month

THE STORY **Iowa Muscle, UConn Rings: The Zero-Usage Anchor Golden State Wins Ugly With**

- ▶ **Season line:** **3.6** pts / **5.8** reb / **1.3** ast in **22.3** MPG over **43** games — a textbook low-usage (**8.5%**) interior center whose real value is rim protection (**1.7** blocks) and the defensive glass, not her TS.
- ▶ **Playoff step-up:** She has been Golden State's most improved piece this postseason — **9.5** rebounds and **2.0** blocks a night in **28.9** MPG across six games, with a **111.1** offensive / **97.6** defensive rating and a **+13.6** net that trails only the stars. Her rebounding is running.
- ▶ **Score-when-needed punch:** Over her last five she's at **3.4** pts / **9.8** reb / **2.0** ast in **30.7** MPG, and she saved her best for the clincher — **11** points on a perfect **5-of-5** from the field with **10** rebounds, **3** blocks and **2** steals in **37.5** minutes. When she gets a touch near the.
- ▶ **Paint wall vs Atlanta:** Her assignment is the Dream's favorite real estate — Atlanta leans on the rim (a prior page's **60.3%** restricted-area shooting, **47.8%** of points in the paint), so Stokes is Golden State's last line in the interior at **6-3**, and the matchup lives or dies on how.
- ▶ **Personal — Iowa to Storrs:** Born in Cedar Rapids and raised in Marion, Iowa, she was the state's 2010 Gatorade Player of the Year out of Linn-Mar High School and left with an Iowa-record **515** career blocks — but she picked UConn over hometown Iowa and won three straight national championships (2013-15) plus AAC Defensive Player of the Year.



#22 VERONICA BURTON ▶ G (GSV)

Age 26 · Northwestern

Season: 12.2/3.6/5.7 · 42.2% FG · 35.5% 3P · 28.6 MPG · usg 19.0%

Last Game: 2026-10-09: 8/6/4 in 37.1 min (3/9 FG)

Window: L5: 9.4/4.2/3.8 · 31.1 MPG

Awards: 2025 All-Defensive Team · 2025 WNBA Most Improved Player

THE STORY **Veronica Burton: Golden State's Defensive Spark Plug — and Its Postseason Cold Snap**

- ▶ **Form trending:** Across six playoff games Burton's shot has deserted her — **9.5** points on **35.3%** FG and **31.6%** from three (**.480** true shooting), well off a **12.2-point** regular season at **42.2%** / **35.5%** (**.564** TS). The last five games (**9.4** / **4.2** / **3.8** in **31.1** minutes) haven't broken the slump, capped.
- ▶ **Defensive spark plug:** Burton's **1.6** steals a game rank fifth in the league among **153** qualified players, and she's the perimeter stopper who draws Atlanta's engine, Jordin Canada. A 2025 All-WNBA Defensive Second Team selection, she has a **6-steal** game on the 2026 ledger (Sept. **18** vs.
- ▶ **Volume scorer when it's rolling:** Her **12.2** points come efficiently (**42.2%** FG, **83.6%** FT), and she flashed a two-way ceiling with **16** points, **10** rebounds and **6** assists in the Dallas series opener (Oct. **2**). When the jumper falls she's a genuine secondary scoring complement to.
- ▶ **Roots run through Boston:** Burton grew up in Newton, Massachusetts, where her father Steve — a WBZ sports broadcaster — ran **5** a.m. shooting sessions with her before his night shifts. Her grandfather Ron Burton starred at Northwestern and played for the Boston Patriots, part of a family where everyone competed: dad quarterbacked the Wildcats, mom was an All-American swimmer, brother Austin QB'd at.
- ▶ **From waiver wire to hardware:** A Newton South standout and Northwestern's Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year — she led Division I with **111** steals as a senior — Burton went 7th overall to Dallas in 2022, only to be waived before the 2024 season. Golden State grabbed her in the 2025 expansion draft, and she answered with the WNBA's Most Improved Player award, the.



#24 CECILIA ZANDALASINI ▶ F (GSV)

Age 30 · PF Schio

Season: 8.6/2.1/1.7 · 39.3% FG · 32.4% 3P · 19.0 MPG · usg 23.4%

Last Game: 2026-10-09: 7/3/0 in 25.5 min (2/9 FG)

Window: L5: 5.8/2.6/0.8 · 19.6 MPG

THE STORY **From Broni to the Bay: the Valkyries' Italian spacer is chasing a second ring nine years after her first**

- ▶ **Season profile:** **8.6** points, **2.1** rebounds and **1.7** assists in **19.0** minutes across **37** games — a low-volume starter shooting **39.3%** from the field and **32.4%** from three on **4.0** attempts a night, with a **+2.9** plus-minus and a.
- ▶ **Playoff shooting flip:** her three-point stroke has sharpened in the postseason — **42.1%** from deep, the same as her overall clip, across **6** games at **8.5** points and **19.0** minutes, up from **32.4%**.
- ▶ **Boom-bust ceiling:** her best night came Sept **27** vs Dallas — **22** points on **7-of-11** with **4-of-5** from three in just **15:52** for a **+17** — but the floor is live: **7** points on **2-of-9** in.
- ▶ **Lombardy roots:** born in Broni, Italy, she rose through Geas Basket in Sesto San Giovanni, commuting roughly an hour each way to practice as a teen and winning six Italian youth club.
- ▶ **Ring chase:** a 2017 WNBA champion with Minnesota at **21** and a EuroBasket 2017 All-Star Five pick (**19.0** ppg, **9.6** rpg), plus 2016 U20 Euro MVP and a 2025 EuroBasket bronze with Italy — now, nine years later and taken in the 2025 expansion.

BENCH

#20 ISOBEL BORLASE ▶ BENCH (ATL)	#24 DEWANNA BONNER ▶ BENCH (ATL)
Age 22 · Adelaide	Age 39 · Auburn
Season: 4.8/1.5/1.0 · 43.3% FG · 32.4% 3P · 13.0 MPG · usg 16.4% Last Game: 2026-10-09: 10/2/1 in 19.6 min (5/6 FG) Window: L5: 5.6/1.8/0.8 · 13.2 MPG	Season: 8.6/5.4/1.8 · 50.0% FG · 46.7% 3P · 20.8 MPG · usg 15.2% Last Game: 2026-10-09: 13/13/1 in 31.7 min (4/8 FG) Window: L5: 13.2/6.4/1.6 · 26.5 MPG Awards: 2020 All-WNBA · 2015 All-Defensive Team · 2015 All-WNBA · 2011 WNBA Sixth Woman of the Year
THE STORY Atlanta's quietest guard saves her best for the bright lights — 55/43 playoff splits off the bench, right as Golden State's arc defense springs a leak. ▶ Playoff leap: Borlase has flipped her efficiency in the postseason — 55.0% FG and 42.9% from three (65.7% TS, +5.2 net) over five playoff games, against 43.3% / 32.4% (53.9% TS, +1.9 net) in 44 regular-season games. The. ▶ Rim-and-corner diet, zero midrange: Her shot chart is binary — 1.5 restricted-area attempts a game (56.1% there) plus 2.5 threes, with corner threes converted at a perfect 1-for-1 clip and above-the-break looks at 29.6%. Midrange is a rounding error (0.1). ▶ Matchup: a leaking Valkyries arc: Golden State's playoff 3-point defense has loosened to .378 allowed (from .326 in the regular season) — exactly the shot Borlase is now hitting at 42.9% in short bursts off the bench. If the pace crawls (GSV playoffs at 88.1), her. ▶ Short-burst impact: She swings games in tiny windows — 11 points on 3-of-5 from three in Game 2 and 10 points on 5-of-6 in the clincher at New York, plus a team-high +19 in just over 17 minutes against. ▶ Australian pipeline: The 22-year-old (born Sept 12, 2004) is a South Australia product who played at Adelaide and went No. 20 overall in the 2024 draft — yet 2026 is her first WNBA season, giving Atlanta a rookie.	THE STORY A three-time Sixth Woman of the Year and two-time champion who's already won everything — at 39, Bonner is the rare Finals reserve whose résumé outshines the starting five she backs up. ▶ Bench conversion: Bonner opened 2026 as a Phoenix starter (37 games, 26.2% from three) before landing in Atlanta and flipping to a pure second-unit role — five regular-season games off the bench at 20.8 MPG, where her efficiency jumped to 50.0% from the floor and 46.7%. ▶ Spacing release valve: In a Finals built on half-court grind, she's Atlanta's catch-and-shoot pressure off the pine — 36.8% from three across the playoff run on 1.4 makes and 3.8 attempts a night, the. ▶ Form trending: Her workload climbs when it matters — 26.5 MPG and 13.2 points across the last five versus 20.8 and 8.6 on the Atlanta regular-season card, and she posted a +6.6 average plus/minus in her. ▶ Sixth Woman royalty: The bench role is literally her signature — three-time WNBA Sixth Woman of the Year (2009, 2010, 2011, all Phoenix), plus a six-time All-Star résumé, All-WNBA First Team (2015) and Second Team (2020), All-Defensive. ▶ 39 and counting: Born Aug. 21, 1987, she'll be 39 for Game 1 — a 6-4 Auburn product taken No. 5 overall in the 2009 Draft, now a two-time champion (Phoenix, 2009 and 2014) and one of only two players in league history with 7,000+ points, 3,000+ rebounds.

#00 JAYLYN SHERROD ▶ BENCH (ATL)	#2 TE HINA PAOPAO ▶ BENCH (ATL)
Age 24 · Colorado	Age 24 · South Carolina
Season: 2.3/0.9/1.1 · 29.2% FG · 40.0% 3P · 7.1 MPG · usg 18.4% Last Game: 2026-08-16: 0/2/1 in 8.4 min (0/2 FG) Window: L5: 1.4/1.2/0.8 · 7.8 MPG	Season: 3.7/0.8/1.4 · 35.4% FG · 35.7% 3P · 11.6 MPG · usg 14.8% Last Game: 2026-10-09: 0/0/0 in 2.8 min (0/1 FG) Window: L5: 1.2/0.2/0.0 · 4.7 MPG
THE STORY Barely seven minutes a night, four jerseys in three years, and a 25th birthday landing right in the middle of these Finals — Sherrod is Atlanta's low-wattage, high-energy change-of-pace. ▶ Spark scorer: Atlanta's best per-minute scorer off the bench — 2.3 points in only 7.1 minutes — and it comes in bursts: 7 points in 8.6 minutes vs Seattle (Jul 31) and 7 in 7.5 vs Las Vegas (Aug 3), both on 2-of-4 shooting. Her 18.4% usage on that short run is. ▶ Three-point spacer: She hit 40.0% from deep (2-of-5) across her 10-game Atlanta stint, a career high, and buried a triple in each of her two 7-point nights. On a Dream roster that lives on paint and free throws, she's a rare reserve guard. ▶ Ball-pressure matchup: At 5-7 she plays bigger than the frame — 0.5 steals in 7.1 minutes, plus a five-steal game earlier this season (Sep 17). That on-ball energy is the change-of-pace profile that could bother Golden State's. ▶ Undrafted survivor: A 5-7 Colorado product who went undrafted, Sherrod has still stacked three WNBA seasons across four franchises — New York (2024), Minnesota (2025), then Atlanta and Seattle in 2026 — a. ▶ Finals birthday + playoff reps: She turns 25 on Oct 21, four days after Game 1, and brings postseason minutes from each of her first two pro seasons (New York 2024, Minnesota 2025) — including a 4.3-minute cameo against.	THE STORY Te-Hina Paopao is the Dream's designated floor-spacer — a Samoan shooter from Oceanside with a national-title resume, whose one marketable skill, the three, is aimed straight at the best three-point defense in the WNBA. ▶ Three-or-nothing: Two-thirds of her shot attempts (66.1%) and nearly 70% of her points (69.8%) come from beyond the arc — in 11.6 minutes a night she hoists 2.4 threes at a 35.7% clip. She isn't a downhill second-unit guard; she's a catch-and-shoot. ▶ Form trending down: Her second season is a step back from a promising rookie year — 2025 gave Atlanta 16.7 mpg, 5.8 points, 44.0% FG / 38.6% 3P with a +11.4 net rating and +4.0 plus/minus; 2026 has trimmed her to 11.6 mpg, 3.7 points, a 35.4% clip and a -2.3 net. Fewer minutes, colder shot — and in this postseason she's down to a 4.7-mpg cameo (1.2). ▶ Worst-case matchup: Golden State owns the league's best three-point defense — a WNBA-low 32.6% allowed versus the 34.0% league norm. The single shot Paopao lives on is exactly the one the Valkyries erase better than any team, so every bench stint is a live stress. ▶ Heritage on her sleeve: A Samoan and Tokelauan guard from Oceanside, California, she wore traditional Samoan attire at the 2025 draft, where roughly 300 friends and family packed a hometown watch party to watch Atlanta take her No. 18. "I didn't have a female Samoan basketball player growing up, so. ▶ Champion's pedigree: She led the nation in three-point accuracy (46.8%) during South Carolina's undefeated 38-0 national-title run in 2024 and set an NCAA tournament record with 14 made threes — and the La Jolla Country Day alum now gets.

#11 MADINA OKOT ▶ BENCH (ATL)
Age 22 · South Carolina
Season: 5.4/3.3/0.3 · 58.0% FG · 11.1% 3P · 9.1 MPG · usg 24.6% Last Game: 2026-10-07: 0/0/0 in 0.9 min (0/0 FG) Window: L5: 1.2/2.2/0.0 · 3.4 MPG
THE STORY Nine minutes a night, one job: cash the rim. Madina Okot — Kenya's first-ever WNBA draft pick — is a 6-6 rookie who barely plays but finishes almost everything she gets, and against Golden State's walled-off half-court those catch-and-finish windows may be the whole point of her bench minutes. ▶ Per-minute rim engine: Okot's 5.4 points and 3.3 rebounds come in just 9.1 minutes a game — a per-36 pace of roughly 21 points and 13 rebounds. She lives entirely at the basket: 3.1 restricted-area attempts per game at 66.1%, the third-best rim percentage in Atlanta's rotation (behind only Naz Hillmon at 68.8% and Allisha Gray at 66.8%, minimum 1.0 RA attempt). Her 4.2 paint points and 62.2%. ▶ Walled-off paint test: Golden State's shell is the stingiest interior matchup in this pairing — 31.1 opponent paint points a game versus Atlanta's 38.8 — behind a 99.1 defensive rating and the league's slowest pace (90.8). Okot is a run-the-floor, catch-and-dunk big, so her value is squeezing rim production out of a defense that funnels teams away from the basket. ▶ Spark windows: Her best regular-season night was 12 points on 5-of-7 with six boards in 16:32 at Los Angeles (Aug 20), and her lone extended playoff run was a +12 in 7:02 against Washington (Sep 27) — 4 points, 5 rebounds, a block and a steal. The catch: her postseason role has tightened to 3.5 minutes across four games (from 9.1 in the regular season), and the last five. ▶ Kenyan trailblazer: Born in Mumias, western Kenya, she became the first Kenyan ever selected in the WNBA Draft when Atlanta took her 13th overall on April 13, 2026 — a milestone Kenyan President William Ruto publicly celebrated as filling the nation with. ▶ Six-year climb: She didn't pick up a basketball until she was 17 in 2020, then went from Zetech University in Kenya to Mississippi State, landing at South Carolina, where she posted 12.8 points and an SEC-leading 10.6 rebounds, 22 double-doubles (third-most in the nation), and reached the NCAA title game. "I had to be obsessed with.

BENCH

#15 TIFFANY HAYES ▶ BENCH (GSV)	#13 JANELLE SALAUN ▶ BENCH (GSV)
Age 37 · Connecticut	Age 25 · France/France
Season: 9.0/2.0/2.5 · 46.0% FG · 28.3% 3P · 17.0 MPG · usg 23.2% Last Game: 2026-10-09: 11/6/4 in 22.0 min (4/14 FG) Window: L5: 11.8/3.2/2.0 · 18.3 MPG Awards: 2024 WNBA Sixth Woman of the Year · 2018 All-Defensive Team · 2018 All-WNBA · 2018 WNBA Player of the Month	Season: 12.7/4.0/1.2 · 42.5% FG · 39.2% 3P · 22.0 MPG · usg 22.8% Last Game: 2026-10-09: 3/1/0 in 9.6 min (1/1 FG) Window: L5: 4.2/1.2/0.6 · 11.4 MPG Awards: 2025 All-Rookie Team
THE STORY Golden State's most decorated bench weapon is a 37-year-old who spent a decade building the franchise she's now trying to bury — and she runs hot, cold, and to the rim. ▶ Boom or bust: Hayes is the swing game in a bench role — across six playoff games she has three 18-plus nights (21, 18, 21 points) and two duds of six or fewer (6, 3), a variance trend that makes her the highest-usage scorer on the second. ▶ Rim over arc: her value is interior, not perimeter — 62.2% at the restricted area on 2.2 attempts a game and 3.1 free-throw attempts at 78.3% in just 17.0 MPG, while she shoots only 25.0% above the break. In GSV's three-heavy script she's the. ▶ Playoff pickup: she jumps a level in the postseason — 13.3 points (43.1% FG) over six playoff games versus 9.0 in the regular season, a plus-4.3 leap that reframes her as a legitimate. ▶ Atlanta homecoming: Atlanta drafted her No. 14 overall in 2012 and she spent a decade (2012-2022) there before the franchise traded her rights in February 2023 — so the Finals are a reunion against her original. ▶ Decorated résumé: a UConn product with 2018 All-WNBA First Team honors, a 2018 All-Defensive Second Team nod, and 2024 Sixth Woman of the Year with Las Vegas — and at 37 she's the oldest player on the.	THE STORY Golden State doesn't rebuild its spacing when the starters sit — it hands the ball to a 25-year-old French stretch four who launched 5.4 above-the-break threes a night at 39% and went undrafted getting there. ▶ Spark plug: 12.7 points in 22.0 minutes a game off the bench, hitting double figures in 27 of 40 regular-season games (14 of them 15-plus) — the second. ▶ Catch-and-shoot value: 5.4 above-the-break threes per game at 38.9% (plus 39.3% on 1.5 corner attempts), and she beats expectation by +6.7 points from deep and +5.5 overall — the. ▶ Wins her minutes: a +9.4 net rating and +4.0 plus-minus in the regular season, and still +10.4 net across her playoff run — Golden State doesn't spring. ▶ Postseason squeeze: her playoff role has shrunk to 13.0 minutes and 4.0 points on 31% shooting across six games, down from 22.0 and 12.7 — the spark has to. ▶ Undrafted to All-Rookie: born in France (Sept 5, 2001; 25 years old), she entered the league undrafted and then cracked the 2025 All-Rookie First Team with the expansion.

#2 KAITLYN CHEN ▶ BENCH (GSV)	#3 LAETICIA AMIHERE ▶ BENCH (GSV)
Age 24 · Connecticut	Age 25 · South Carolina
Season: 7.2/1.1/1.9 · 52.7% FG · 41.7% 3P · 15.3 MPG · usg 20.2% Last Game: 2026-10-09: 6/1/2 in 7.9 min (2/2 FG) Window: L5: 5.6/1.4/1.0 · 11.6 MPG	Season: 3.9/3.0/1.0 · 49.1% FG · 41.2% 3P · 11.7 MPG · usg 15.9% Last Game: 2026-09-27: 0/1/0 in 6.1 min (0/1 FG) Window: L5: 6.6/2.0/0.8 · 12.1 MPG
THE STORY Golden State's Finals spark is also a history-maker: Kaitlyn Chen became the first Taiwanese-American drafted into the WNBA, and in Year 2 she's turned spare minutes into some of the league's most efficient bench offense. ▶ Bench-efficiency elite: Among the 61 WNBA players logging 10-20 minutes a game this season, Chen ranks 8th in plus/minus (+2.5) and 8th in true shooting (60.6%) — a 52.7% FG / 41.7% 3P / 72.1% FT slash in 15.3 MPG, with scoring more than. ▶ Playoff ascension: Across six postseason games she's holding 12.5 MPG and 6.0 PPG on 57.1% from three with a +7.9 net rating, peaking with 11 points in 22.4 minutes in the Oct 4 semifinal clincher at Las Vegas — her. ▶ Atlanta-specific value: She lit this Dream defense for 13 points in 17.8 minutes on Jun 26 — a live catch-and-shoot release valve for Golden State's slow, three-heavy attack against an Atlanta shell built to win with turnovers. ▶ Pioneer path: A San Marino, California native and daughter of Taiwanese immigrants, Chen is the first Taiwanese-American ever drafted into the WNBA (No. 30 overall, Golden State, 2025) — and she earned it twice, waived in May of her rookie year. ▶ Champion's DNA: She arrives with a winner's résumé — 2023 Ivy League Player of the Year and a three-time Ivy League Tournament MOP at Princeton, then all 40 starts at point guard for UConn's 2025 national title.	THE STORY Amihere is Golden State's spark-plug with receipts: a first-round pick Atlanta drafted, developed, waived and watched walk — now a rim-running, shot-swatting bench piece staring across the court at her former team in the Finals. ▶ Rim-and-paint spark: Amihere plays only 11.7 MPG but 64.5% of her scoring comes in the paint, and she has two genuine detonations on the year — 17 points on 6-of-10 (2-of-4 from three) vs Portland on Sep 18 and 16 on a perfect 7-of-7 vs Chicago on Aug 21. Her playoff-window heater (L5: 6.6 PPG on 12.1 MPG, more than double her 3.9 season clip) makes. ▶ Block-and-length injection: At 0.8 blocks in under 12 minutes a night — a per-minute swat rate that rivals starters — she is the length Natalie Nakase deploys to protect the rim behind a perimeter-first, three-point-hungry Valkyries shell. Against an Atlanta offense that takes 40.3% of its shots at the restricted area and converts 60.3%, her off-the-bench rim presence is the specific. ▶ Second-unit glass: The 6-3 forward grabs 1.2 offensive boards a night — roughly 40% of her 3.0 total — feeding Golden State's top-four 32.2% offensive-rebound rate. On a team that plays the league's slowest pace, every extra possession she generates off the bench is a possession. ▶ Return-to-Atlanta thread: This is a homecoming with an edge — Atlanta took Amihere 8th overall in the 2023 WNBA Draft and she spent two seasons (2023-24) in a Dream uniform before being waived in Feb 2025 and claimed by the Valkyries. She has never scored a playoff point in a Golden State jersey (1 career GSV postseason game, 6.1 minutes, 0 points), so Game 1 is a live. ▶ The Black Queen: Mississauga, Ontario-born and the first Canadian woman to dunk in a game at age 15, Amihere is also the first player of Ghanaian-Ivorian descent drafted into the WNBA — a two-time Canadian Olympian (Tokyo 2020, Paris 2024) who won a 2022 national title at South Carolina and arrived in the Bay after a first-team All-WNBL season with the Perth Lynx. She brings a genuinely.

#6 KAILA CHARLES ▶ BENCH (GSV)
Age 28 · Maryland
Season: 6.3/4.7/1.4 · 40.6% FG · 27.6% 3P · 20.2 MPG · usg 16.2% Last Game: 2026-10-09: 7/4/0 in 16.9 min (2/5 FG) Window: L5: 7.0/4.0/0.8 · 20.4 MPG
THE STORY Golden State's bench runs on hidden possessions — Kaila Charles turns 20 minutes of paint attacks and glass-crashing into the grimy points Finals games are decided by, and she now meets the one other WNBA franchise that ever signed her. ▶ Paint-first, not a spacer: Charles takes 1.5 restricted-area shots a game and converts 60.4% of them, with 54% of her scoring coming in the paint — against just 1.8 above-the-break threes a night on a 27.6% stroke. She's a downhill interior finisher off the bench, the opposite of Golden State's arc-heavy starting identity, and the kind of. ▶ Second-chance engine: She pulls 4.7 rebounds in only 20.2 minutes a night, 1.6 of them on the offensive glass — a putback threat who feeds directly into the Valkyries' top-four offensive-rebounding identity. When Atlanta's glass discipline slips. ▶ Postseason riser at plus-money: Across six playoff games she's logged 20.2 MPG at +2.5 with a 43.3% FG / 35.7% 3P line — both up from her 40.6%/27.6% regular season — and Golden State has gone 5-1 in her playoff appearances, including 14 points vs Dallas (9/30) and 10 more (10/2). Her minutes are. ▶ Hoop-and-track bloodlines: Her mother, Ruperta Charles, ran track at Howard from 1980-84, was inducted into Howard's Hall of Fame in 2014, and competed in the 1984 Olympic Games — one of three siblings in elite athletics. The motor that. ▶ A Dream reunion in the Finals: Charles' only Atlanta stint came on a 2022 hardship contract with the Dream (she played two minutes vs New York on 8/12) — the first-round Maryland star and No. 23 overall pick in 2020 now faces that same franchise for a ring, with a record book full of Terrapin lore (top-6.

MATCHUP MISC INFORMATION

OFFICIALS

Tonight's officials are Maj Forsberg, Randy Richardson and Ashley Gloss, 943 combined career games. Forsberg has worked 525, 5th among 136 officials since 2008, with 78 postseason games. Richardson has worked since 2017, Gloss since 2019.

MAJ FORSBERG

38 games this season

525

CAREER GAMES

since 2008

5th

WNBA WORKLOAD

5th of 136

38.2

FOULS / GAME

WNBA 39.6

ATL 3-1, FOUR GAMES

ATL is 3-1 in four Forsberg games: wins by 9, 36 and 18, and a loss by 18 to Portland on Aug. 28.

GSV 2-2, FOUR GAMES

GSV is 2-2 in four: wins by 4 at Seattle and 25 at Connecticut, losses by 8 at Indiana and 11 to Minnesota.

RANDY RICHARDSON

14 games this season

268

CAREER GAMES

since 2017

25th

WNBA WORKLOAD

25th of 136

38.9

FOULS / GAME

WNBA 39.6

ATL 1-0, ONE GAME

ATL's one Richardson game was a 95-84 win at New York on Sept. 21, with 53 free throws.

GSV 1-2, THREE GAMES

GSV is 1-2 in three Richardson games: an 11-point win over Las Vegas on Oct. 4, losses by 8 at Indiana and 10 at home to Las Vegas.

ASHLEY GLOSS

30 games this season

150

CAREER GAMES

since 2019

34th

WNBA WORKLOAD

34th of 136

38

FOULS / GAME

WNBA 39.6

ATL 5-1, SIX GAMES

ATL is 5-1 in six Gloss road games: wins by 7, 7, 1, 7 and 18, and a 5-point loss at Washington.

GSV 2-1, THREE GAMES

GSV is 2-1 in three: wins by 18 over Portland and 11 over Toronto, and a 19-point loss at Las Vegas.

WHISTLE		EXPECT	
01	CREW WHISTLE RUNS LIGHT Over 76 games this crew averages 38.1 fouls and 38.8 free throws, under the league's 39.6 and 41.6. Technicals are flat, 0.36 against 0.37.	01	CREW RUNS A LIGHT WHISTLE This crew's 76-game rate is 38.1 fouls and 38.8 free throws, about 2.8 fewer free throws than the league's 41.6.
02	NO HOME-ROAD FOUL TILT Road-minus-home fouls are 0.00 over 76 games, against a plus-0.72 league baseline. Richardson is minus-1.79 in 14 games. Forsberg is plus-0.95 in 38.	02	NO VENUE EDGE EITHER WAY Forsberg leans home (plus-0.95 fouls in 38 games). Richardson leans road (minus-1.79 in 14). The crew as a group is flat against a plus-0.72 league baseline.
03	JOCYTE, WILLIAMS GET THE BENEFIT Jocyte draws 0.96 fouls per 40 in 5 crew games against 4.86 in 12 others. Williams is 1.01 against 2.41. Borlase is 5.38 against 3.46. Paopao is 5.94 against 3.52.	03	ATLANTA WINGS CARRY THE RISK Borlase draws 5.38 fouls per 40 in 12 crew games against 3.46 in 37 others. Paopao is 5.94 against 3.52. Charles is 5.81, with two foul-outs. Burton is 4.58 against 3.59.

MILESTONE WATCH				
PLAYER	TM	GAP	MARK	NOW SIGNIFICANCE
Rhyne Howard	ATL	1 from 40	season REG blk	39 16th in season blocks
Jordin Canada	ATL	1 from 500	season REG pts	499 39th in season points
Allisha Gray	ATL	1 from 1,500	career REG reb	1,499 67th in career rebounds
Kiah Stokes	GSV	1 from 75	season REG blk	74 2nd in season blocks
Kayla Thornton	GSV	2 from 200	season REG reb	198 30th in season rebounds
Kiah Stokes	GSV	2 from 250	season REG reb	248 17th in season rebounds
Kaila Charles	GSV	2 from 500	career REG reb	498 278th in career rebounds
Cecilia Zandalasini	GSV	2 from 50	season REG 3PM	48 43rd in season threes
Naz Hillmon	ATL	4 from 200	season REG reb	196 31st in season rebounds
DeWanna Bonner	ATL	4 from 50	season REG stl	46 28th in season steals
Veronica Burton	GSV	4 from 200	career REG stl	196 180th in career steals
Janelle Salaun	GSV	7 from 100	season REG 3PM	93 8th in season threes
Angel Reese	ATL	8 from 40	season REG blk	32 19th in season blocks
Gabby Williams	GSV	8 from 75	season REG 3PM	67 22nd in season threes
Tiffany Hayes	GSV	8 from 40	season REG stl	32 55th in season steals
Madina Okot	ATL	10 from 150	season REG reb	140 53rd in season rebounds

TEAM MILESTONES		
TM	W-L	WATCH WINS
ATL	30-14	5 from 35-win season 30
GSV	32-12	3 from 35-win season 32

ATL peak offense is **Q4** (ORTg 119.4). GSV best defensive quarter is **Q2** (DRtg 84.4). GSV offense peaks in **Q2** (ORTg 112.1).

PLAYER STAT RANKING

PLAYER	TM	STAT	VALUE	LEAGUE RK
Reese	ATL	REB%	19.2%	#1/212
Okot	ATL	REB%	18.2%	#4/212
Thornton	GSV	AST%	4.7%	#208/212

SEASON SERIES

DATE	SCORE	WINNER
Series	ATL 0-3 GSV	completed
2026-07-04	GSV 88-83 ATL	GSV
2026-06-26	ATL 75-78 GSV	GSV
2026-06-24	ATL 66-77 GSV	GSV

Quarter Splits (ATL / GSV)				
Q	PTS	ORTG	DRTG	PACE
Q1	22.1 / 20.0	106.0 / 105.0	99.6 / 96.6	99.6 / 91.5
Q2	22.3 / 20.7	108.8 / 112.1	103.2 / 84.4	97.1 / 89.0
Q3	23.0 / 20.5	112.8 / 108.5	108.2 / 109.4	97.7 / 91.1
Q4	23.8 / 20.8	119.4 / 109.8	102.6 / 104.1	95.6 / 91.4

Streaks			
TM	Who	Mark	Type
ATL	Team	W10	active
GSV	Team	W4	active
ATL	Reese	9/10 10+ REB	form
ATL	Canada	3 straight 5+ AST	active
GSV	Burton	7/10 5+ AST	form

Streak Form vs Season						
TM	Span	PPG	OPP	ORTG	DRTG	Net
ATL	Streak W10	93.9	78.5	115.3	96.3	19.0
ATL	Season	91.5	84.3	112.0	103.4	8.7
GSV	Streak W4	79.5	72.8	107.2	98.2	8.9
GSV	Season	82.7	75.7	108.9	99.5	9.4

Rest & Last Game			
TM	Rest	WL	Prior
ATL	7d rest	W	ATL 85 @ NYL 83
GSV	7d rest	W	GSV 87 @ LVA 77

Record When...		
Situation	ATL	GSV
Home	15-7 (#1/7 conf)	17-5 (#1/8 conf)
Road	15-7 (#1/7 conf)	15-7 (#3/8 conf)
Last 10	10-0 (#1/7 conf)	8-2 (#3/8 conf)
Last 10 home	7-3 (#2/7 conf)	8-2 (#3/8 conf)
Last 10 road	9-1 (#1/7 conf)	7-3 (#2/8 conf)
vs East	1-1 (#3/7 conf)	3-2 (#4/8 conf)
vs West	5-2 (#1/7 conf)	3-2 (#3/8 conf)
Conference	15-5 (#1/7 conf)	15-8 (#3/8 conf)
vs .500+	14-11 (#1/7 conf)	18-9 (#2/8 conf)
Led FG%	17-0 (#1/7 conf)	23-1 (#2/8 conf)
Led rebounds	26-7 (#2/7 conf)	18-6 (#4/8 conf)
Fewer turnovers	19-7 (#2/7 conf)	23-9 (#3/8 conf)
Scored 100+	11-0 (#1/7 conf)	—
Opponent 100+	1-5 (#4/7 conf)	—
Ahead at half	23-3 (#2/7 conf)	27-6 (#3/8 conf)
Behind at half	7-11 (#2/7 conf)	4-6 (#3/8 conf)
Tied at half	—	1-0 (#3/8 conf)
Ahead after 3Q	25-4 (#2/7 conf)	26-5 (#3/8 conf)
Behind after 3Q	5-10 (#2/7 conf)	6-7 (#1/8 conf)

Key Metrics (#N/15)		
Metric	ATL	GSV
ORTg	111.9 (#4/15; 4th best WNBA)	108.2 (#7/15)
DRtg	103.5 (#3/15; 3rd best WNBA)	99.1 (#1/15; 1st best WNBA)
Net	8.4 (#3/15; 3rd best WNBA)	9.1 (#1/15; 1st best WNBA)
Pace	97.7 (#5/15; 5th best WNBA)	90.8 (#15/15; 1st worst WNBA)
eFG%	50.5% (#8/15)	49.9% (#12/15; 4th worst WNBA)
TS%	55.6% (#9/15)	54.0% (#13/15; 3rd worst WNBA)
ORB%	35.5% (#1/15; 1st best WNBA)	32.2% (#4/15; 4th best WNBA)
TOV%	16.4% (#5/15; 5th best WNBA)	15.1% (#2/15; 2nd best WNBA)
FTA rate	34.1% (#3/15; 3rd best WNBA)	27.1% (#12/15; 4th worst WNBA)
AST%	67.9% (#4/15; 4th best WNBA)	67.3% (#5/15; 5th best WNBA)
%FGA 3s	38.5% (#5/15; 5th best WNBA)	44.6% (#1/15; 1st best WNBA)
%Pts paint	47.8% (#4/15; 4th best WNBA)	37.8% (#15/15; 1st worst WNBA)
%Pts 3s	29.4% (#9/15)	38.1% (#1/15; 1st best WNBA)
%Pts FB	13.1% (#2/15; 2nd best WNBA)	8.3% (#14/15; 2nd worst WNBA)
%Pts off TOV	19.9% (#1/15; 1st best WNBA)	19.6% (#4/15; 4th best WNBA)
Paint PPG	43.6 (#1/15; 1st best WNBA)	31.0 (#15/15; 1st worst WNBA)
FB PPG	11.9 (#2/15; 2nd best WNBA)	6.8 (#14/15; 2nd worst WNBA)
2nd-chance	13.5 (#2/15; 2nd best WNBA)	11.1 (#6/15)
STL	9.1 (#1/15; 1st best WNBA)	7.8 (#4/15; 4th best WNBA)
BLK	3.3 (#13/15; 3rd worst WNBA)	4.0 (#8/15)
Opp paint	38.8 (#8/15)	31.1 (#1/15; 1st best WNBA)
Opp FB	6.9 (#1/15; 1st best WNBA)	7.2 (#2/15; 2nd best WNBA)
Opp FG%	46.9% (#13/15; 3rd worst WNBA)	41.4% (#1/15; 1st best WNBA)
Opp 3P%	34.8% (#10/15)	32.6% (#1/15; 1st best WNBA)
Opp eFG%	53.1% (#11/15; 5th worst WNBA)	47.8% (#1/15; 1st best WNBA)
Opp TOV%	19.5% (#15/15; 1st worst WNBA)	19.2% (#14/15; 2nd worst WNBA)

Zone Collision (Share · FG% · Allowed)						
ATL			GSV			
Zone	Share	FG%	Allwd	Share	FG%	Allwd
Restricted area	40.5%	60.3%	65.0%	20.8%	63.5%	61.2%
Paint, non-RA	17.6%	36.5%	40.8%	22.7%	41.6%	42.2%
Midrange	4.4%	26.7%	40.2%	11.8%	34.3%	34.1%
Left corner 3	2.4%	39.7%	37.7%	2.9%	30.6%	28.6%
Right corner 3	1.5%	29.3%	38.0%	2.9%	33.3%	46.3%
Above-break 3	33.6%	32.4%	36.8%	38.9%	35.2%	34.2%

 BETTING LINES & MARKET

GAME LINE (espn_scoreboard · DraftKings)

MARKET	HOME	AWAY
Spread	GSV -2.5 (–)	ATL 2.5 (–)
Moneyline	GSV -135	ATL +114
Total	O 154.5 (–)	U 154.5 (–)

MARKETS

ATL @ GSV

VALKYRIES OPEN THE FINALS AS A SLIM HOME FAVORITE

Golden State is favored by **2.5** at Chase Center for Game **1 (2026-10-17)**, priced **-111** on the Consensus, **-114** at FanDuel and **-108** at DraftKings. Atlanta returns **+2.5** — **-108** Consensus, **-106** FanDuel, **-112** DraftKings. A two-and-a-half-point home number frames the Finals opener as a lean, not a statement.

THE 154.5 TOTAL SITS DEAD EVEN

The game total is **154.5** with Over and Under both at **-110** across Consensus, FanDuel and DraftKings — a perfectly neutral number. Both finalists rate near the top on net rating (Atlanta **+8.4**, Golden State **+9.1**), but the tempo split is the swing: Atlanta **97.7** versus Golden State's league-slowest **90.8**. The number hinges on which pace governs.

MONEYLINE HANDS THE HOME SIDE A MODEST EDGE

Golden State's moneyline is **-149** on the Consensus (**-146** FanDuel, **-142** DraftKings) — an implied **59.8%**. Atlanta, which swept both prior rounds, sits **+124** (**+124** FanDuel, **+120** DraftKings), roughly **44.6%** implied. The tell: the market awards the home Valkyries only a modest edge and won't fully fade a Dream side that has been closing games out.

TEAM TOTALS SPLIT THE TEMPO QUESTION

The team-total market assigns Golden State **78.5** (both sides **-115**) and Atlanta **76.5** (Over **-107**, Under **-122**). Summed, that is **155** — a half-point above the **154.5** game total. The **-122** Under on Atlanta's team total reads as respect for Golden State's league-slowest pace capping possessions, not a knock on the Dream offense.

THE ARC IS THE NUMBER'S SPINE

The **2.5**-point spread maps onto Golden State's identity as an above-the-break three team (**38.8%** of attempts) colliding with an Atlanta defense ranked 14th of **15** defending that shot (**.368** allowed). If the Valkyries' signature action lands, the favorite covers; if the **No. 3**-ranked Dream defense disrupts it, the number flips.

HOME-COURT TAX PRICED INTO A COIN-FLIP SPREAD

A **2.5**-point home number prices Chase Center at roughly one possession, with the two clubs nearly level on net rating (**+8.4** Atlanta, **+9.1** Golden State). Strip home court and this is a pick'em Finals opener — which is why the Consensus favorite is only **-111**, the softest side of a short spread.

PROP WATCH

Player props

REESE OWNS THE BOARD'S BIGGEST NUMBER

Angel Reese's rebound line — **10.5**, shaded **-128** to the over — is the largest single-stat ask in the game, and her **14.5** points sit at **-110** both ways.

WILLIAMS IS THE PRICIEST SCORER ON THE CARD

Gabby Williams' **18.5** points is the highest scoring line on the board, priced **-115** over / **-117** under — a near coin flip. Golden State also has her points + rebounds at **22.5** and points + assists at **21.5**, so the market stacks every Williams reading around one tight number.

HOWARD'S THREES CARRY THE LOUDEST LEAN

Rhyné Howard's **2.5** threes (**-125** over / **-105** under) is the only three-point prop shaded meaningfully toward the over among Atlanta's wings. Her **15.5** points sit flat at **-115** both ways, telling you the deep shot, not the total scoring, is where the market leans.

CANADA'S ASSISTS ARE THE STEEPEST ASK

Jordin Canada's **6.5** assists come at **-152** over / **+114** under — the most juiced number on the entire prop board. Her **11.5** points are far closer to even (**-119** over), and Golden State's **90.8** pace will test whether the Dream's hub can keep feeding at that clip.

THE TWO HUBS SHARE A CORRELATION

Prize Picks pairs Veronica Burton and Jordin Canada at **22** combined points (over), tying the game's two primary distributors — Canada at **6.5** assists, Burton at **4.5** — to one scoring threshold.

BURTON'S POINTS ARE BUILT FOR THE UNDER

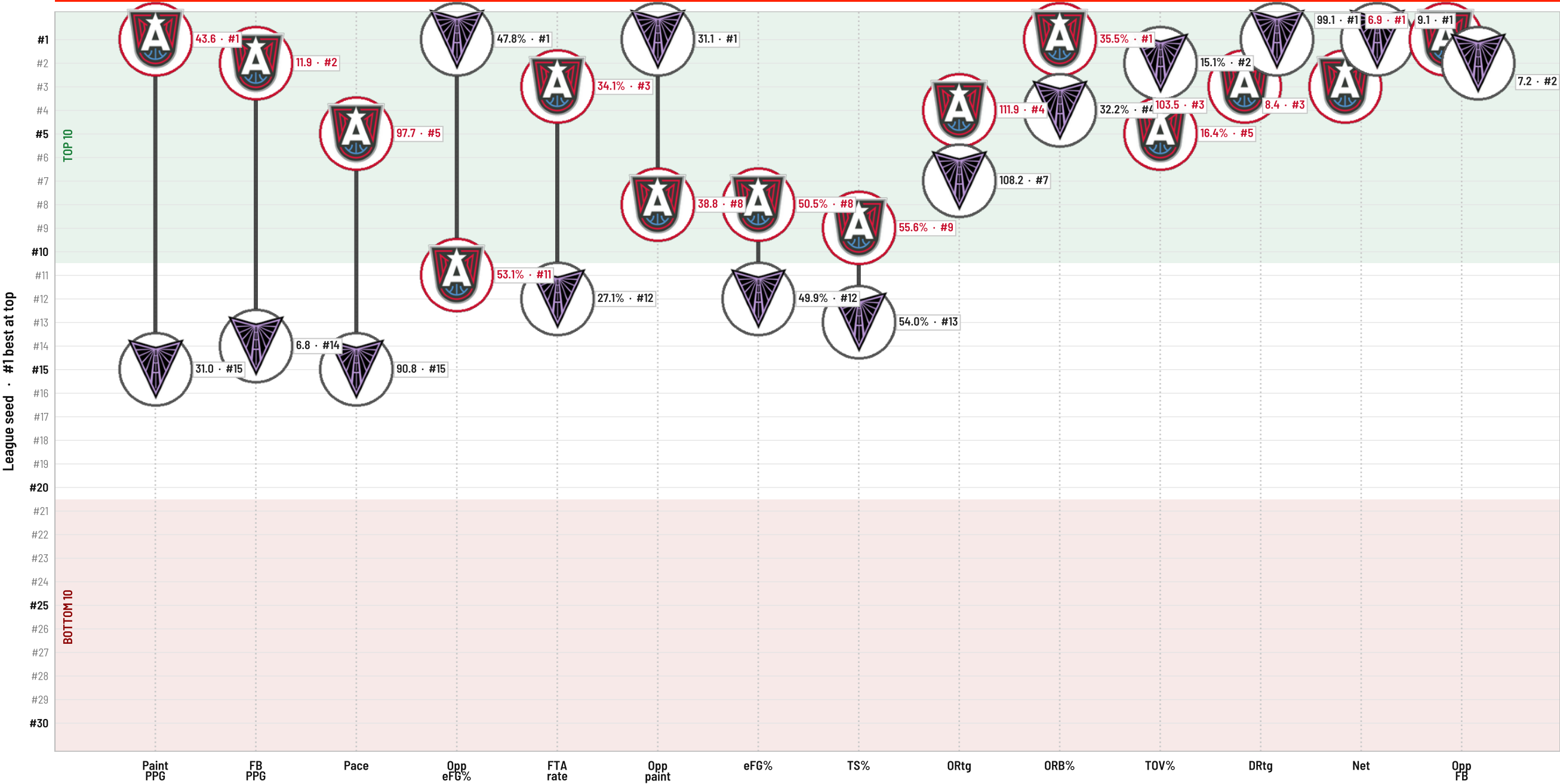
Veronica Burton's **10.5** points are shaded **-131** to the under while her **4.5** assists sit **-130** to the over — a market saying she'll distribute, not score.

WHERE THE RIM MEETS THE LINE

Golden State concedes **.368** above the break while Atlanta generates a **34.1%** free-throw-attempt rate — the shooting backdrop behind tonight's numbers.

KEY METRICS

ATL vs GSV · 2025-26 REG · League seed #1 is best (lower-better metrics still map best to #1)

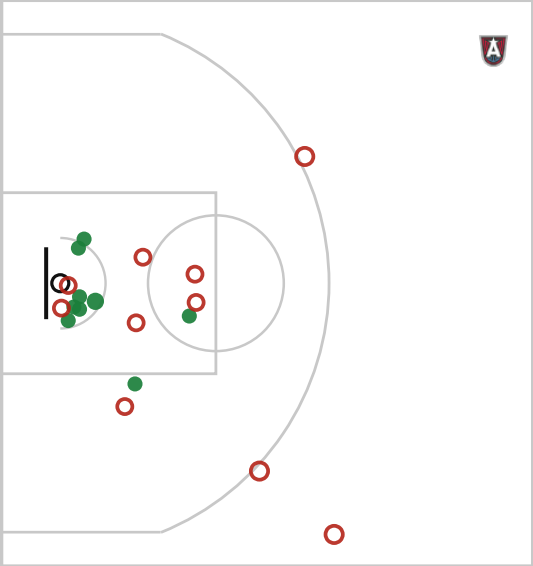


MATCHUP READ

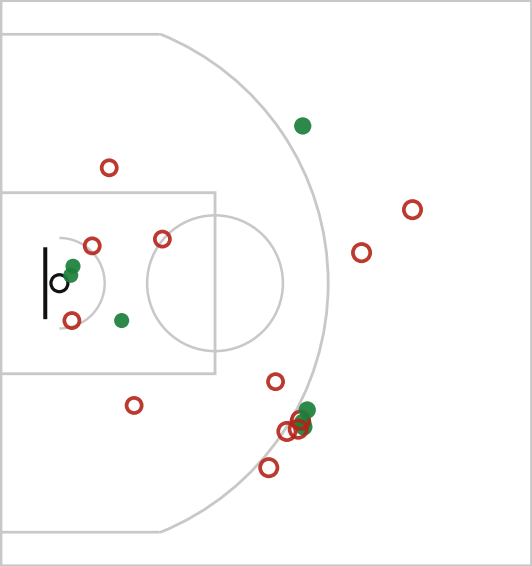
Golden State should own the halfcourt: **Net #1 / DRtg #1** and **Opp eFG% #1** point to a cleaner possession-by-possession edge. Bottom line: Valkyries win on efficiency and paint pressure; Dream' path is defending the restricted area and controlling the glass (**ORB% #1**).

BOARD 1 · LAST FIVE / CLUTCH

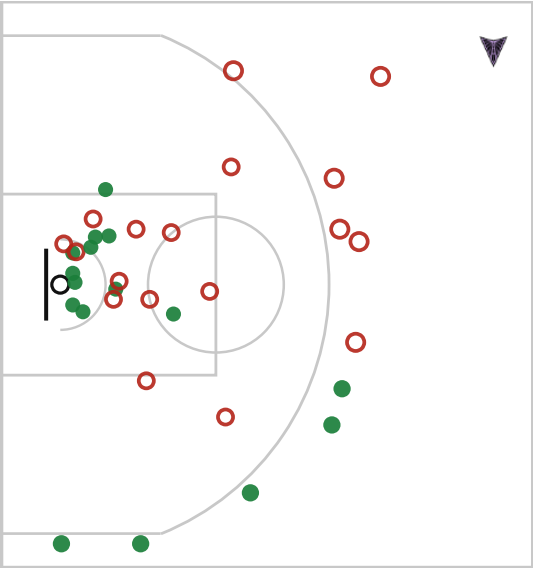
Top scorers · 2025-26 regular season · Q4 last five minutes, score within five



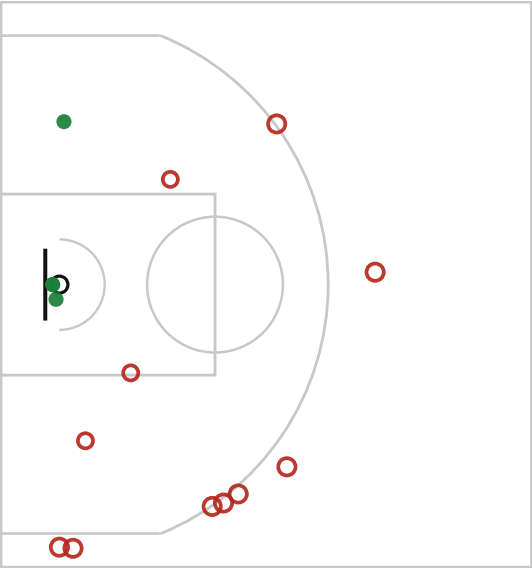
ATL · Gray · 9/20 (45.0%)



ATL · Howard · 7/19 (36.8%)



GSV · Williams · 16/34 (47.1%)



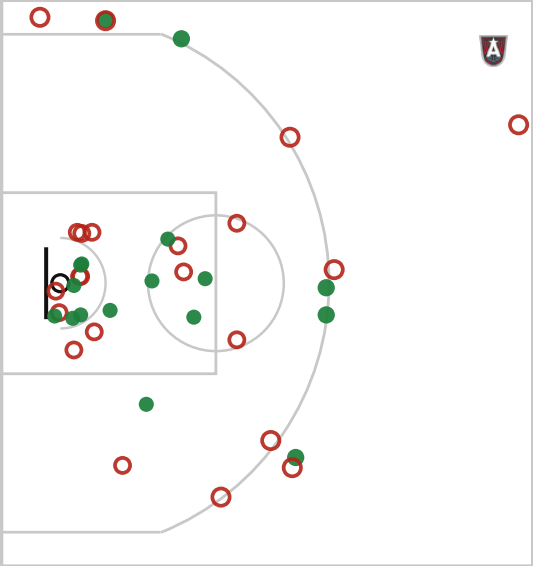
GSV · Salaun · 4/15 (26.7%)

	Player	FG	FG%	3PT	Rim	Mid	3s	Shot types (attempts)
	Allisha Gray ATL · 19.0 PPG	9/20	45.0%	1/5	9	7	3	6× Layup 4× Catch-and-shoot 3
	Rhyne Howard ATL · 17.7 PPG	7/19	36.8%	4/10	4	5	10	5× Pull-up 3PT 4× Catch-and-shoot 3
	Gabby Williams GSV · 14.4 PPG	16/34	47.1%	5/11	8	15	11	7× Layup 6× 2PT jumper
	Janelle Salaun GSV · 12.7 PPG	4/15	26.7%	0/8	3	4	8	7× Catch-and-shoot 3 3× Layup

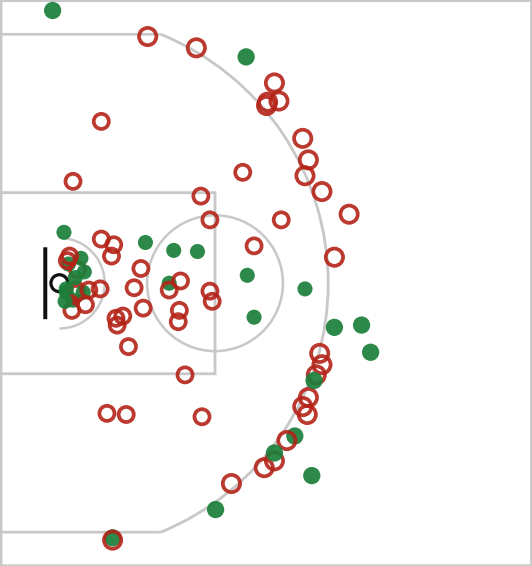
MATCHUP READ
Gray (ATL) converts clutch at 9/20 (45.0%) with 9 rim and 3 threes. Howard (ATL) converts clutch at 7/19 (36.8%) with 4 rim and 10 threes. Williams (GSV) converts clutch at 16/34 (47.1%) with 8 rim and 11 threes. Salaun (GSV) converts clutch at 4/15 (26.7%) with 3 rim and 8 threes.

BOARD 2 · PREVIOUS 5 GAMES

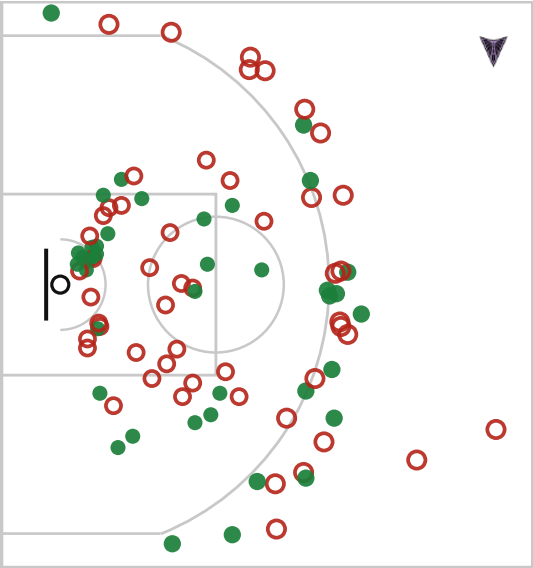
Top scorers · each club's last 5 games before tip · all field-goal attempts



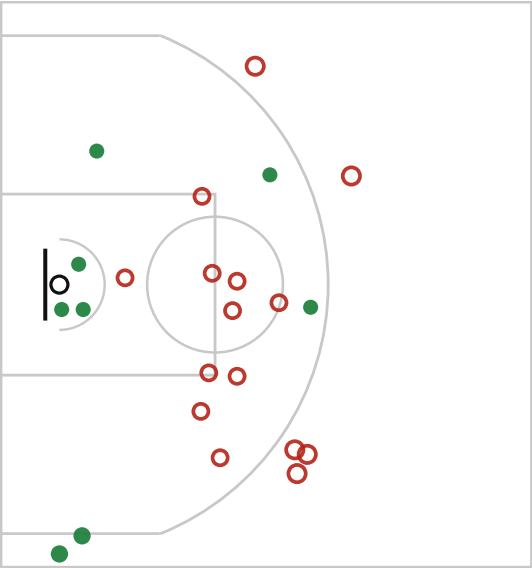
ATL · Gray · 17/39 (43.6%)



ATL · Howard · 28/87 (32.2%)



GSV · Williams · 40/91 (44.0%)



GSV · Salaun · 8/23 (34.8%)

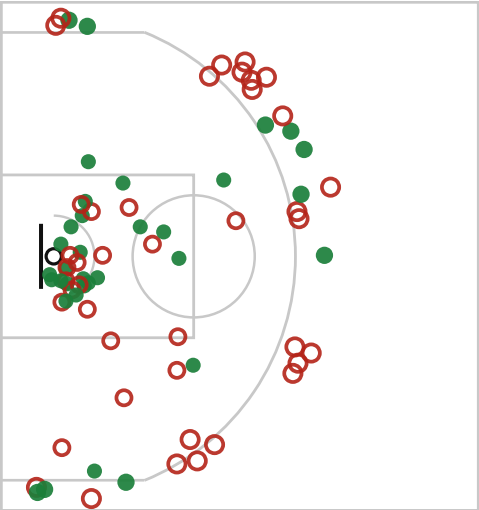
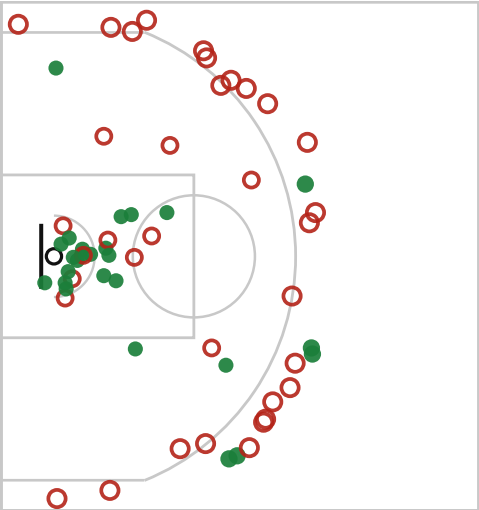
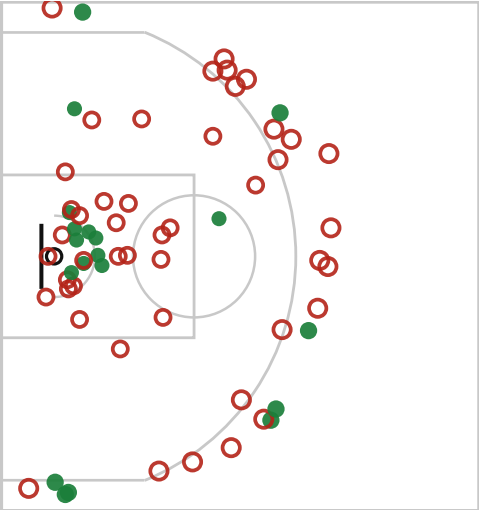
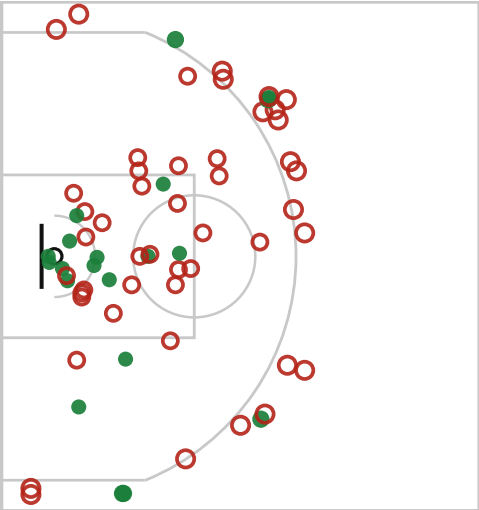
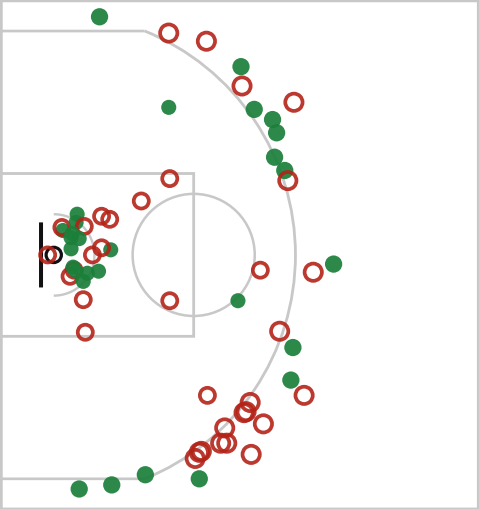
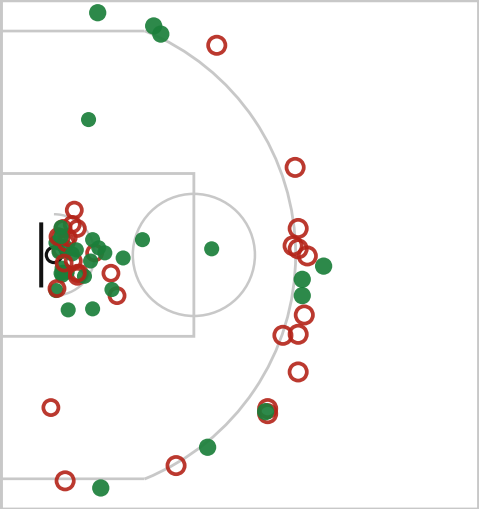
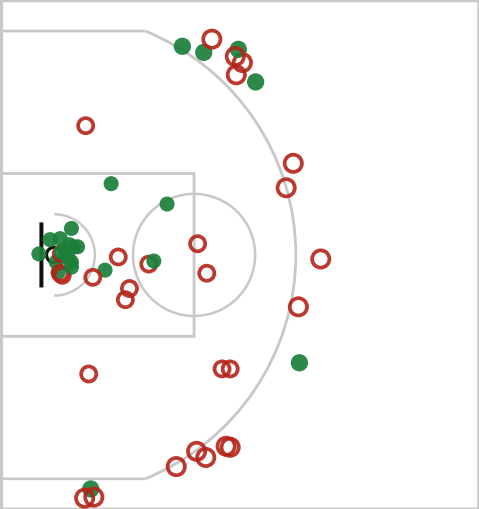
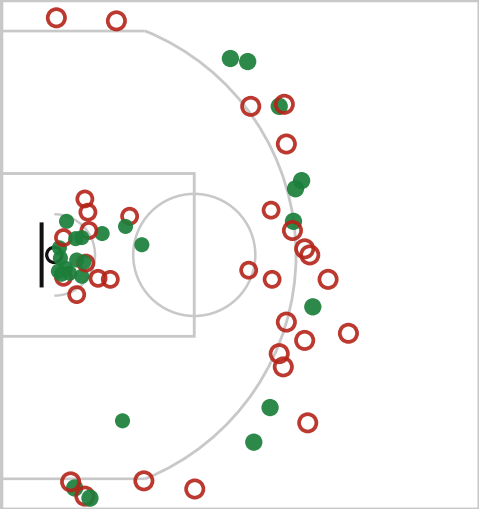
	Player	FG	FG%	3PT	Rim	Mid	3s	Shot types (attempts)
	Allisha Gray ATL · 19.0 PPG	17/39	43.6%	5/13	10	16	13	10× Catch-and-shoot 3 10× Pull-up 2PT
	Rhyne Howard ATL · 17.7 PPG	28/87	32.2%	11/34	19	33	35	20× Catch-and-shoot 3 19× Layup
	Gabby Williams GSV · 14.4 PPG	40/91	44.0%	15/37	11	43	37	20× Pull-up 2PT 20× Pull-up 3PT
	Janelle Salaun GSV · 12.7 PPG	8/23	34.8%	2/7	3	12	8	7× 2PT jumper 6× Catch-and-shoot 3

L5 READ

Gray (ATL) 17/39 (43.6%) over the last five with 10 rim and 13 threes. Howard (ATL) 28/87 (32.2%) over the last five with 19 rim and 35 threes. Williams (GSV) 40/91 (44.0%) over the last five with 11 rim and 37 threes. Salaun (GSV) 8/23 (34.8%) over the last five with 3 rim and 8 threes.

BOARD 3 · OPEN QUARTER

First six possessions of each quarter · each club's last 10 games before tip



TEAM COMPARE		
Metric	ATL	GSV
Open FG%	46.9%	36.8%
Q1 FG%	45.8%	29.9%
Q2 FG%	45.3%	29.2%
Q3 FG%	50.7%	42.6%
Q4 FG%	45.3%	44.7%
3PT att	109	119
At rim	83	58

EARLY CREATORS	
Player	FG
ATL	
Rhyne Howard	28/60
Allisha Gray	28/53
Angel Reese	23/40
GSV	
Veronica Burton	18/39
Cecilia Zandalasini	11/35
Kayla Thornton	7/33

MATCHUP READ

ATL opens hottest in Q3 (50.7%) and coolest in Q2 (45.3%). ATL early volume: Howard, Gray, Reese. GSV opens hottest in Q4 (44.7%) and coolest in Q2 (29.2%). GSV early volume: Burton, Zandalasini, Thornton. First-six threes ATL 109 / GSV 119; at-rim ATL 83 / GSV 58.