

## Rockets Look to Close Deal with Howard

Written by Nicholas Norman  
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The Houston Rockets pulled out all of their tricks during their meeting with Los Angeles Lakers free agent Dwight Howard as free agency began in the wee hours of Monday morning. The Rockets did not get an answer from Dwight Howard and none was expected. They did, however, get just the questions that they hoped to receive.

After more than 2 ½ hours meeting with Howard and his representatives at the Bel-Air Hotel, the Rockets were encouraged by many things, but mostly that Howard's interest seemed to be about the potential to win championships with the Rockets.

The Rockets have reportedly emerged as the frontrunners to land Howard. In addition to Rockets owner Leslie Alexander, general manager Daryl Morey and coach Kevin McHale, the team also brought along former greats Hakeem Olajuwon and Clyde Drexler to vouch for the franchise. Yao Ming was even involved in the presentation, as he checked into the meeting from China via Skype. Current Rockets James Harden and Chandler Parsons also delivered their pitch, telling Howard that they would love to have him as a teammate and that they would immediately become championship contenders if he chose Houston.

The youngest team in the NBA last season, the Rockets were prepared to argue that they would keep their young core untouched and would have the salary-cap exceptions and first-round picks in coming seasons. The youth was expected to be a point of emphasis. James Harden will be 24 next season, Chandler Parsons 25.

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