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Hawks are closest team to rare Atlanta title

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The NFL's championship will be decided next Sunday. Let me break the bad news to you now: Atlanta will not win it.

The city too busy to hate, but with plenty of time on its hands for a victory parade, has one major sports professional championship on its resume: The Braves in 1995. The Falcons have never won a title. The Hawks' last one came in 1958, when they called St. Louis home.

Georgia's last football national championship: 1980. Georgia Tech's: 1990 (half share). Neither's basketball program has ascended such altitudes.

Which brings us to 2015, and these fantastical thoughts that the Hawks are creating. Can this team — the *Hawks* — actually bring a championship to the city? I know one thing: They have a better chance than the other six. Here's how I rank the seven major sports teams in terms of their proximity to a title:

1. Hawks

It turns out an NBA team can win a lot of games by playing defense and passing the ball. Who knew? If word of this gets around, imagine the chaos it's going to cause.

The Hawks held the NBA's second-best record going into the weekend. That's not because of one or two great players but rather a bunch of really good ones. Will this work in the playoffs? It did for San Antonio to some degree, although there's no Tim Duncan or Tony Parker on the Hawks' roster. The playoffs are a different animal than the regular season. Coaches have more time to figure out ways to attack opponents. But the fact the Hawks gave Indiana so many problems as a No. 8 seed last year and probably should have won that series — without Al Horford — projects well for them. Mike Budenholzer is a great coach, and the team is even-keeled, a reflection of him.

Dare to dream, Atlanta.