

THE MARSHALL PLAN

Written by

Tuesday, 04 December 2012 17:34 -



If I were to take a poll to see where Bright Siders fall on the [Kendall Marshall](#) line [see below], I would guess that many felt his selection with the 13th

pick was a waste. I would assume that most of you would point out how he has been used sparingly, has not been able to supplant a journeyman for a backup role, and go through a laundry list of reasons why Marshall is not fit for NBA duty. Among the plethora of traits lacking are athleticism, defense, shooting ability, scoring, and creating offense, while all will concede his otherworldly passing skills.

After being assigned to the D-league affiliate Bakersfield Jam, and playing in his first action as a Jam [?], we can actually point to game minutes to dissect Marshall's ability, albeit only 31 of those minutes. For some, Marshall "[dominated](#)". For others, Kendall "[outshined](#)" all.

For me, as much as I want to see Marshall succeed, and as much as a stat line of 21 points and 8 assists might suggest a solid, if not dominating performance, I think Marshall has some work to do.

While I am an advocate for Kendall, I did not think he played particularly well. It might possibly be the fact that the three NBA guys just sent down were haphazardly thrown together and didn't seem to mesh. Or maybe the agenda for NBA players is contrary to the goals of the team or the other individuals that play there on a more permanent basis. Let's face it, a guy making \$30,000 riding buses and staying in cheap motels is now sitting in favor of spoiled millionaires – it has got to be frustrating. Then again, it is also an opportunity for NBDL players to showcase themselves knowing NBA guys are being looked at, which is not always conducive to team ball.

In any case, the game was ugly. Both teams turned the ball over incessantly, failed miserably on point blank attempts at the rim, took terrible shots and generally showed why they are in the DL. The other two "NBA" players weren't particularly impressive either. [Mike Scott](#) went three for eight from the field and had little impact on the game.

[John Jenkins](#)

got hot in the middle part of the second half to get Bakersfield back into the game, but I am not

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sure who the stat guy was watching when he recorded an 8-13 shooting night for him. I personally saw Jenkins miss at least seven shots, badly. In fact, Jenkins looked like he was doing his best impersonation of [Shannon Brown](#), dribbling around the court only to pull up a 22 foot fade away as the shot clock wound down. Impressed I was not.

So how did Marshall look?

Marshall came out looking to shoot early and it wasn't pretty – he missed his first two jumpers badly. Yet that is why he was there and it was good to see him be aggressive looking to score. As the game developed, Marshall seemed to be able to get where he needed to on the floor and direct the offense. He eventually hit a nice eighteen foot jumper and that opened the door to get down the lane later in the half. He even hit a three.

As would be expected, Marshall had some nice passes early on, finding guys for easy shots. His teammates flubbed a few of those passes or were not able to convert in the lane, otherwise he might have had double digit assists.

Surprisingly, Kendall was able to dribble penetrate without much issue. He continually exploded into the lane beating his man off the dribble, with or without picks. He showed solid command of the pick and roll, but for the most part was penetrating and looking for his shot. Going to his left, Marshall was able to convert a few tough lay ins over bigger defenders.

Going to his right, well that is a work in progress. Several attempts on that side of the floor showed one aspect of Marshall's game that needs serious work. While he was able to get a step on his man going right, once he met resistance by the helping big man, Marshall forced shots using his left hand attempting to scoop under the defenders arms. Unfortunately, this is the way someone compensates for a weak off-hand and usually results in both a badly missed attempt as well as no possible way to get a foul called. Marshall needs to force himself to use his right hand on those attempts, as well as utilize his body to protect himself and draw fouls. The ability to go either way will play a pivotal role in his effectiveness at the next level.

In terms of drawing fouls, Marshall did a decent job. Although two of his free throw attempts

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were the result of late game intentional fouling, he did draw four fouls in the lane [despite the fact that the stats show 6-8, he was actually 6-10 – I saw four misses].

Going 7-18 from the field and 1-3 from the three point line, Marshall's offensive grade was a C+ in my mind. He gets points for being aggressive and taking shots, which is something he usually refrains from doing. He also gets points for generally doing a good job commanding the offense despite the dysfunction on that team. He showed nice passing, although he needs to learn to stay on the floor, as well as keep his dribble alive for longer while getting into the lane. Too often he picks up his dribble with no outlet and is forced to take a tough shot. Learning the ability to continue your dribble through and out of the lane in order to shift the defenders and find open guys is certainly something he can add to his repertoire. I also believe he needs to take 20+ shots a game, with at least half from the outside – how else is he going to get better unless he starts shooting it. We don't need to see him pass, as we already know he can do that. He needs to score big, and do it efficiently.

On the defensive end, Marshall started out clearly focused on trying to pressure the ball, and deny when off the ball. That lasted about one quarter, when Kendall fell back to his old habits of being relatively lax on that end of the floor. While he looks to position himself for team defense, he tends to stand and stare when shots go up. He also gets bogged in traffic eliminating longer outlet passes and getting out into the open floor. On his man, he did a decent job of staying in front early, but was beaten off the dribble easily as the game wore on. On pick and rolls, Marshall had a difficult time fighting through the picks and staying in the play defensively. This is something he is going to need to work on [as all the [Suns](#) do].

Defensively I grade Marshall a solid D+, mostly because the competition at this level shouldn't pose a problem for him, yet he did nothing to separate himself on that end of the floor. Granted, defenders usually are at a disadvantage, even in the DL, but Marshall needed to prove something and certainly did not provide any evidence that he can guard efficiently enough at the next level right now.

Keep in mind this was his first game playing with a bunch of guys thrown together. His game conditioning obviously affected his ability to stick with the defensive intensity that will be required at the next level. This game was a starting point and it had bright spots – showing an ability to beat his man off the dribble, getting into the lane and to the free throw line. I give him an overall grade of C, for doing some nice things, but needing to stay focused on the tasks at hand.

Here is my recipe for Marshall to continue in the DL:

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1. Continue to attack the rim when closely guarded.

Focus on using your right hand to finish on that side of the floor, no matter how uncomfortable it is. You also need to keep your dribble in the lane longer to draw out defenders when you have no clear path to the rim – stop gathering the ball prematurely.

2. Shoot the ball from the perimeter.

Despite the call for attacking the rim, you also need to mix in shooting from the perimeter. Use those pick and roll situations and shoot at least ten shots a game. You will never get comfortable doing it unless you take a lot of shots. Even if you miss, you need to work through the jitters of shooting and gain confidence that you can hit those shots in a game.

3. Forget passing.

We already know you can do that. You need to change your mentality for the brief period you are down at the DL. I am not suggesting a permanent change, just a dramatic shift from pass-first to score first mentality. By over-compensating, you can gain confidence in your scoring ability enough to affect your production.

4. PJ Tuckerize the opponent.

You should be picking up full court and basically harassing the ball handler every second you are on defense. While you are not attempting steals, you are forcing yourself to stay with and keep ball handlers in front of you at all times. That is the intensity that will improve your on-ball defense. Fight through every pick like it pisses you off. Stay in every defensive play. When your man gives the ball up, don't let him get it back. **AND DEFINITELY DO NOT SAVE YOUR SELF FOR OFFENSE.** Give everything you have on the defensive end and your conditioning will take

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care of itself.

Poll **What are your feelings regrading the Suns drafting Kendall Marshall?**

- Great for the long term future of the Suns
- Decent pick that will contribute in some role for the Suns
- Will probably be shipped out in some deal, so it doesn't matter
- Was a terrible waste of a pick

109 votes | [Results](#)