Written by
Thursday, 10 January 2013 10:00 -

It only took 2,144.9 miles for him to find it, but Sebastian Telfair has found his home in the NBA. The Brooklyn, New York native baller went straight from high school off the toughest streets in the world to the toughest league in the world. He came in with acclaim and a big contract from Adidas, but has bounced from around five different destinations before settling in with the Phoenix Suns .

Sometimes that is how the cards are dealt to you and "Bassy" as he is affectionately known as evolved from high school phenom, to draft bust, to one of the better back-up point guards today.

"I played for some pretty bad teams," said Bassy with a bit of a laugh as he thought back to his early days in the league. "A lot of times it is the right time and the right place. Where you get drafted and where you end up, it works for some guys, but for some guys you end up where it is not to be at that point in time. I have been a victim of that a little bit."

He was a victim of circumstance with the Portland Trail Blazers as well as the Minnesota Timberwolves
when he was brought in there and expected to be more than what he was ready to be at that time.

The Blazers were a team in transition with minimal veteran leadership expecting Bassy to step in as a leader taking over the team, at 19 years old, straight out of high school. It was a similar situation with both Minnesota and after a brief stint with the Boston Celtics where he started 180 games combined in his first four seasons -- on three different teams in 349 games.

At that point he was 23 years old and in terms of veteran leadership the only consistent voice in his ear was Theo Ratliff who followed Bassy around to all three stops early in his career.

In four years Bassy played for Maurice Cheeks , Kevin Pritchard, Nate McMillan , Doc Rivers , Randy Wittman , and Kevin McHale. Zero consistency in coaching, in a message, gameplans, or a commitment to a young player needing guidance.

"Last year was the first veteran team I have played on," says Bassy talking about his early struggles. "Playing with veterans is important and provides structure. "It makes your job a lot easier, you pick up on veterans with things like how to carry yourself and to be consistent on-and-off the court. That helped me last year."

Since playing for six coaches in five years the structure has been there for Bassy starting only 12 games in 176 games finding his niche off the bench as a player that brings energy, defends, and while growing as a leader. Having consistency here has been a major factor

The biggest transition for me was basketball itself. I came from Lincoln High School -- a public school -- so in high school it wasn't as structured a program as a prep school or the upper high schools in the country. The practices, the shoot-arounds, the mental part of the game, there is just so much more to preparing for a game. I didn't expect all that.

That structure is in part a young player coming into his own based on his experiences like what Bassy has gone through, but also because of the structure here. He has known one coach, one general manager, and one way of playing basketball for the past two seasons. He is no longer that young, naive, 19 year old. He is a veteran.

Structure for a player starts with the head coach, in this case that has been Alvin Gentry who fought to get Bassy here two years ago.

"I think he feels an acceptance here," said Gentry. "I think he fills a need for us, I think he feels he is wanted here, and we fought to get him here. I've always liked him, his tenacity, and just his energy that he plays with."

Now that he is here the tenacity and energy he plays with has to be the spoils for younger players as the fourth oldest player and harboring the second most NBA experience on the roster. Funny to think a 27 year old is in that role as a veteran that younger players are turning to, but that is the NBA where a veteran team turns into a re-building team overnight.

"That changed fast, right?" said an emphatic Bassy. "Go from having those guys (Steve Nash , Grant Hill , and Channing Frye) for a season, enjoying it, and then going back to a young; half rebuilding team. I have to step into that role for a lot of these young guys now."

He has done that now as a mentor for younger guys on the bench like Kendall Marshall and Diante Garrett who struggle to get on the court, as well as other young guys who need to have the game broken down for them like Michael Beasley , Wesley Johnson , and P.J. Tucker who have to have different complex schemes pointed out to them.

It has all come full circle -- clear across the country -- for Bassy as a basketball player. He is a vastly different player and person than that 19 year old excited to sign with Adidas before taking the Blazers to a Championship.

Obviously he had a lot to learn along his path to where he is today, which is the opposite of the traditional cautionary tale that is told about the ones that do not make it through struggles. Sebastian Telfair didn't fit in a cookie-cutter or with either of his previous teams, but as a frequent victim of circumstance he is finally the benefactor of chance. A chance the Suns gave him that turned into a positive situation for the Brooklyn Baller.