Lon Babby has not been making himself readily available to media in the past week, likely because he has a few things on his plate such as negotiating potential trades that look to the future and/or planning a potential next step in his career.

He did go on his weekly show with Doug and Wolf on KTAR yesterday, agreeing with coach Gentry that it was time to start looking forward to upcoming seasons and begin to develop players.

The Suns President of Basketball Operations Lon Babby is, like head coach Alvin Gentry , on the last year of his contract. On June 30, 2012, Lon Babby and Alvin Gentry will be free agents unless managing partner Robert Sarver extends their contracts into future years.

Both can boast only a declining product replete with declining revenues for the last three years of their lives with the Suns.

## Conflicting Expectations

When Lon Babby took over in the summer of 2010, he had a tough job to do. Clearly, his job was to move the franchise past their aging all-star point guard and into a brave new world. His task was to be the bad guy.

He had to accomplish this with an otherwise pedestrian roster on long-term contracts (Childress, Turkoglu). His task was to clean the slate and start anew with a level of dignity and amicability not often seen when the face of the franchise outlives his top-level effectiveness.

To his credit, he's done all that. But the problem is that he was expected to win lots of games too, and that's where he has fallen short.

"That wasn't our intent to be in this position that we are in now," he said on the Doug and Wolf show yesterday. "To be honest, it was our intent to be competitive and fight for a playoff spot."

Lon has been very candid about the Suns' dual purpose for the past three years, and you have to believe that this edict came from higher up than him. Change, but don't forget to win.

## NEXT STARTS NOW...But it's not pretty

Saddled with long-term deals on the books, it wasn't until the beginning of year 3 of this 3-year contract that Babby was able to clear enough cap space and players to reboot the franchise. Until then, they just treaded water in the purgatory of the NBA called "just outside the playoffs".

You have to think that, if the entire edict was to reboot the franchise as quickly as possible - to pull the band-aid off fast - then Babby would not have waited two years to do it.

But he had to win games right away, and expecting the lottery balls to improve your win totals immediately is folly.

"[OKC] were awful for a number of years," he said. "And then they got Durant, Westbrook, Harden...

"It's all about good fortune and that's why I don't like relying on the lottery."

Remember that before Durant, Seattle drafted (in inverse years) Saer Sene at #10, Johan Petro at #25,

Robert Swift
at #12,
Nick Collison
at #12, Peter Fehse at #20,
Vladimir Radmanovic
at #12. Look familiar? Looks a lot like the Suns recent draft positions. From 1998 from 2006, Seattle made the playoffs twice and not once did they hit on a star with their middling "just missed the dance" picks.

It wasn't until they started losing big (and changed their GM), that Seattle drafted better. Sure Sam Presti is good, but it also helps when you have the #4, #2 and #3 picks in successive years (2007-2009).

No wonder Lon Babby used them as an example to emulate. That frachise tried to win for years, even in the year they ended up with the #2 pick Kevin Durant (their first high pick in 2007). But once that season was over and the #2 pick was in their hands, they decided it was time to reboot. They let Rashard Lewis
go and traded
Ray Allen
for the #5 pick to pair with Durant.

Fast forward to the Suns, who are sitting in the same position as Seattle in 2007.

It's time to embrace the high picks. Middling picks get you nowhere.

Babby has acquired assets for the future. The Suns have two unprotected picks from the Lakers in
2013 and 2015.Dreamers hope those become lottery picks. But the biggest assets the Suns will have are their own high picks, and the higher the better.

"I am steadfast," Babby said to KTAR regarding keeping the picks, even through this trade deadline season. "That's going to be the lifeblood of how we get better."

They have the kind of supplemental guys on the roster that help you win games, but Babby knows you need that star talent to carry those guys.

"We just need to add a significant talent. I think everything is in place that we will be very receptive to that player."

Babby referenced New Orleans as a team who benefited greatly from returning one player from injury this year - Eric Gordon . With Gordon in the lineup, New Orleans beats playoff teams. Without him, they won the fewest games in the West.

The Suns could potentially make that same case. They have up to $15 million to spend in free agency plus at least one lottery pick this summer alone. And four more first round picks in the 24 months after that. Those guys need role players to help them, and Gortat, Dudley and Dragic can do just that.

Will Lon Babby get a chance to realize the assets he's accumulated?

Or will he be replaced by someone who gets to bear the fruit of Babby's (admittedly late-coming) work?

Either way, the Suns are in a position to truly reboot the franchise this summer whether the current PBO, GM or coach are here to see it or not.