This is an important trade deadline for the Phoenix Suns . They are at the crux of nearly every trade rumor and have their eyes on some talent, but they need to be wary of overpaying for the wrong players.

The overwhelming consensus is that Josh Smith of the Atlanta Hawks is the prize and silver lining to an overall dismal season, but he may be the panic move that reserves the Suns into mediocrity for the next 5-7 seasons. Smith is not a franchise guy, hence the Hawks willingness to let him go to the highest bidder. In eight years in the league Smith has been the best player on his team once (this year), an All-Star zero times, and a member of an All-NBA Team once (All-Defensive Second Team, 2009-2010).

His Hawks teams have been above .500 five times in nine seasons, four of which were teams led by Joe Johnson on the perimeter and Al Horford in the paint. Advanced stats need to be taken with a grain of salt, but Smith has an average of 5.1 Win Shares each year for the Hawks. In his four years with the Suns as arguably the teams fourth or fifth best player Jared Dudley has an average Win Share of 4.9. Does that scream franchise player?

He is equipped to be the third or fourth guy on a Championship team, or if he was still in his prime to be the second or third best player on a team with Championship aspirations. A Max Contract used to mean you are the man.

If the teams interest in Smith is legitimate, it will take a Max to get to get him to stay here, which locks the team into a perennial third wheel until he is 34 years old sacrificing 25% of the teams cap room for five seasons. The Suns went that route before when they acquired Stephon Marbury in an effort to stop-gap the losing by handing the keys over to the habitually average point guard.

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over while expecting different results.

This is a new regime, but it looks like 11 years later history could be repeating itself.

There in lies a concept the team could key in on.

Instead of acquiring the third wheel masked as the franchise changer -- be the third wheel.

Most (if not all) trades in the NBA revolve around one team wanting a specific piece from another team, or two teams with mutually appealing assets they want to swap. In those situations there is always room for a virtuous front office to grab some assets as the prying vulture keeping a watchful eye out.

Scoping the landscape of the NBA there is not a franchise altering player on the horizon that can be had with the assets available.

Dudley, Marcin Gortat , Jermaine O'Neal, and Sebastian Telfair are all quality assets, but they are not the presence that makes teams come calling to unload a Dwight Howard , Chris Paul , or James Harden . All of which at one point were traded for packages more appealing than what the Suns are able to offer.

Without the assets to garner a star to the Valley, the next best option is to latch onto a trade as a third or fourth party to bring in some newer, potentially better assets to build off of.

In the recent past the Denver Nuggets were able to turn Arron Afflalo and Al Harrington into Andre Iguodala. The Memphis Grizzlies were able to turn the draft rights to Donte Greene

into Darrell Arthur. Also, the
Los Angeles Clippers
turned
Brian Cook
into
Nick Young
and the
New Orleans Hornets
turned
Brad Miller
and
Jerome Dyson
into
Robin Lopez
.

All of those were assets collected while assisting another team get what they wanted. It is safe to say none of those assets outside of Afflalo provide the impact that Dudley or Gortat would today. So who is to say this is not the avenue for the Suns?

Those trades can backfire costing the team an asset for something that does not pan out like a second round pick or fringe NBA talent like Anthony Randolph . That is the risky element of making a move, but the risk factor is drastically reduced when the return is a Young, Iguodala, or Lopez type for a few years rather than a Smith type for five years.

In the past seven years there have been 23 trades involving three or four teams all of which are not homeruns for the third wheel.

That is an average 2.38 big trades a year, including the two that have already happened this season, the odds are on the Suns side to step in as a facilitator. The Hawks are eying the Milw
aukee Bucks
Monte Ellis
while the
Knicks
and
Magic
are exploring a swap of
Iman Shumpert

and
J.J. Redick
.

Sift through the Magic, Knicks, Bucks, and Hawks roster to see what spare parts could be beneficial to the long-term future of the Suns; because Smith would be the Adam Dunn of NBA Trade Homeruns.