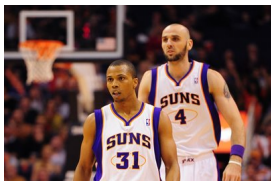


Written by
Thursday, 21 February 2013 09:06 -



The Plan

Suns President of Basketball Operations Lon Babby did his weekly radio show with KTAR/Arizonasports.com yesterday and laid out the [Phoenix Suns](#) blueprint for the trade deadline with less than 24 hours left on the clock.

"The standard for us has to be that we need to be looking long-term, not short-term," Babby said to Doug and Wolf. "We have to be extremely cautious about giving up picks, particularly first round picks. That's going to be our lifeblood for getting better."

"Any trade we make is going to have to be a trade that advances our cause in the long-term either by getting a young asset or getting more picks or something of that nature."

Important words to remember: **long term, young assets, more picks**

Within hours of that interview, the Phoenix Suns acquired second-year player [Marcus Morris](#), the 14th pick in the 2011 draft, for their 2013 second-round draft pick (likely around #35 overall). As you know, Marcus is the twin of Suns player

[Markieff Morris](#)

. Between the two, Marcus is the scorer while Markieff is the rebounder.

What other ground rules do the Suns have on deadline deals?

Regarding whether he would take on money to get a pick, Babby said: "I would take your first round pick *and* your bad contract if it didn't impact us past this year. It would have to be an expiring."

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Regarding cash to offset salary coming in: "The Suns cannot take any more cash in deals."

The new CBA does not allow any team to either accept or send out any more than \$3.1 million in any league year. Since the Suns accepted that entire amount in the Laker deal last summer, they cannot take on any more cash.

The upshot: the Suns will not use any more of their \$4 million remaining cap space to absorb a veteran's contract just to get another asset, unless it is expiring this summer.

Work to do

Now the trade deadline is less than six hours away, and the Suns have more work to do to make room for minutes for young guys. The Suns are committed to giving minutes to younger players over the last 27 games, and they should be.

That means less-to-no time for [Sebastian Telfair](#) , Jermaine O'Neal and one or more of [Jared Dudley](#) and [Shannon Brown](#) .

Sebastian Telfair has likely played his last game for the Phoenix Suns. Twitter rumors, including one from Gambo yesterday, have the Suns possibly trading Telfair to Toronto for a second-round pick.

Jermaine O'Neal has also likely played his last game for Phoenix, if only to free up more minutes for Markieff Morris and/or new acquisition Marcus Morris in a reasonable rotation. Expect the Suns to try to acquire a future second-round pick for O'Neal.

If neither Telfair nor O'Neal are traded by 1pm today, my personal opinion is that both are released before the next Suns game to allow them an opportunity to pick their next team. [Ken dall Marshall](#) and Marcus Morris need their rotation minutes.

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If the Suns want to give consistent minutes to [Wesley Johnson](#) and/or [Diante Garrett](#), who killed it in the D-League, over the rest of the season, they need to subtract something from the wing rotation of Jared Dudley, Shannon Brown and [Michael Beasley](#).

Rumors have all but dropped off entirely for Jared Dudley and [Marcin Gortat](#), once considered the Suns greatest trade assets. John Gambodoro, who likely has direct sources in the Suns front office, has vehemently killed all Gortat rumors (Atlanta, OKC). Chris Broussard reportedly has Suns connections and has killed them too.

Jared Dudley has been hardly mentioned recently, since being linked to New York for [Iman Shumpert](#).

Paul Coro of azcentral.com confirmed that the Suns have "real" interest in Shumpert, but did not confirm what package the Suns offered the

[Knicks](#)

, if any. Since then, the Knicks folks (coach and players) have been adamant that Shumpert is staying put.

My own thought bubble

Absolutely zero has been made of this, so there's no...nada...zilch intel, but if I were to connect the dots, I'd notice that Minnesota has reportedly been interested in acquiring "big wing" help and been willing to trade a #1 pick for that player.

Wouldn't Dudley fit in nice there? The Wolves could remove protections from their pick starting in 2014, or give the Suns the Memphis pick outright this season.

Shannon Brown, who has \$1.75 million guaranteed for next season, has not played the last two nights due to back and ankle pain and has lost most of his rotation minutes recently. If he's not traded or released, it seems likely that he will get a lot of chair-time on the bench the rest of the season. Brown won't want that to happen, so that's why I see a release on the horizon. This is just my opinion though. Not a single piece of intel to support it. But if he's released this season, the Suns would have to pay his salary but can spread his cap hit over several seasons. And that would allow him to hook on with a team of his choice for the remainder of the season.

On trade rumors

Whatever happens today, I would be SHOCKED if an actual deal resembles anything rumored out there right now.

"Information should be confidential," Babby said on KTAR. "As much as it might be interesting for you, the more we can keep things secret the better for the basketball team."

Of course, this makes total sense. And it's no surprise coming from Lon Babby. I have had a few conversations with him myself this year, and the prevailing theme is that most information in the media is un-sourced speculation.

Let's look at the Suns **actual** deals since Lon Babby and Lance Blanks took over.

- Suns-Orlando trade in December 2010: Turkoglu/Richardson/Clark for Gortat/Carter/Pietrus
- Suns-Houston trade in February 2011: Dragic/Orlando's pick for [Aaron Brooks](#)
- Suns- [Lakers](#) trade in July 2012: Nash for four draft picks
- Suns-Houston trade yesterday: a second round pick for Marcus Morris

Not one of these deals was leaked to the media before it was consummated. Every single one of them out of "thin air" as far as media are concerned.

In that same time period, media and bloggers across the country have rumored dozens of "offers" and "trades" that never came to pass.

Lon Babby, rightly so, would rather be graded on the trades that actually happened - which he would be the first to admit were hit and miss - than make any attempt to justify any "plan" or "position" on rumors that were never fully founded or sourced, and never came to fruition.

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Babby talked to KTAR about lack of two-source verification on rumors anymore. He talked about bloggers and social media reporting something that was only tangentially sourced, and provided a good analogy to describe his frustration (a proposed trade of Wolf from KTAR for Gambo).

I will translate his story into a basketball scenario: If one team asks another "would you trade player x for player y" and the other team says "no, I'm not interested in doing that", someone in the media will get wind of the conversation and report "the teams are in discussions on a trade!". Bloggers would pick up the story and write about it for two weeks, and readers would take polarizing positions and say that team A has "no plan, they're idiots for considering it!". When in fact, they hadn't.

"There's not as much sourcing." He goes on to say that "no one has ever called us to ask if we are interested in a player."

He and I have had several conversations this year about proper sourcing of rumors before reporting them as fact, or sensationalizing them for the sake of readership. As a lawyer, he is very concerned with conjecture being reported as fact and that we have a responsibility to report only the facts.

Lon has told me specifically this season that it is against Suns policy to comment on any trade rumors. He told KTAR that it's bad for the team if rumors of actual negotiations leak. "I am a stickler here," he said, "that we don't have any leaks."

That's an interesting and telling comment. In a perfect world for the Suns, there would be no rumors or leaks before deals go down. And that when deals go down, the teams control the flow of information. I can completely, wholeheartedly understand that. If I were in Lon's shoes, I'd feel the same way.

Yet we all know that's not how the world works today. It's all about real-time information and page views and readership, because that drives profits. Plus, we all just like to talk...and talk...and talk. The more conversation fodder, the better.

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"I'm not saying necessarily it's a bad thing," Babby says of it all. "It's just a reality."

Most of all, he dislikes leaks of actual negotiations. Lon mentioned a trade that was made last summer, without naming names, in which he got buy-in on his usual request not to let anything about the trade leak to the media until it was finalized with the league. Sure enough, the story was on twitter within twenty minutes. Needless to say, Lon did not like how that happened.

To illustrate his point that there are tons of conversations that almost never come to fruition, yet a handful of them get leaked to media as if they are about to happen, Lon dropped a nugget that might cause local media to drool.

"We keep a trade log in which we record every single conversation," he said in a candid moment. "I know we have well over 100 entries in it over the past months or so."

Will any of those turn into a deal today, by 1pm Arizona time?

Probably. But don't expect it to be anything that was rumored in the media so far.

Except maybe Bassy to Toronto for a second-round pick, which is being repeated over and over the last 24 hours.