Written by Sunday, 10 March 2013 20:51 -



Earlier this season, I sat down with <u>Phoenix Suns</u> President of Basketball Operations Lon Babby while the team was entrenched in a seven game losing streak. At that point, key acquisition of the summer Michael Beasley was not proving itself fruitful.

"It is 20 games into a three-year project, and we knew it was going to be a project," Babby said after a fifth straight loss back in December. "If we can help him become successful, then it will be as gratifying as anything I have ever done in my career, or Lance Blanks has done in his career, and Alvin Gentry has done in his career. That is the goal."

That was nearly four months ago to the day.

At that time, Beasley was putting up a paltry 11.4 points per game (27.4 minutes per game) on 37.4% shooting from the field. He was struggling with consistency as he had all throughout his career. The coaching staff was working to figure out where Beasley was most successful. They started him, played him at the three, the four, and with all different combinations.

All season, the opinion of Babby was the consensus of the coaches, front office, and his teammates, which was that Beasley was an untapped mine of talent. The lure of his potential and talent has worn lifeless and the shtick is not amusing anymore as the battle to determine if the mine was filled with gold or coal has seemingly revealed its answer.

"I don't know if it is that, but it is hard to put your finger on it," interim head coach <u>Lindsey</u> on

Beasley as of late. "Some nights, he comes out and he has a better focus. Some nights, he doesn't. The hard thing is finding out why and trying to repeat the process to get him to be more consistent. I think the onus is on him to figure out the formula for himself. I think we have given him all the tools here to help him, but he hasn't figured the rest of it out."

## Michael Beasley has been given all the tools. It is up to him to use them now

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Patience only goes so far. It is a lot easier to have a willingness and desire to help a player improve. It is another thing to put that player on the court when you are trying to win games with the way Beasley is playing.

The defensive culture that Hunter is trying to establish requires the type of focus and energy that <u>P.J. Tucker</u>, <u>Marcus Morris</u>, <u>Wesley Johnson</u>, and <u>Jared Dudley</u> provide, or at least on a more consistent level.

IF HE MISSES A ROTATION, HE IS GOING TO HEAR IT FROM ME. I TELL HIM THAT I AM NOT GOING TO LET UP ON HIM. JUST BECAUSE YOU SCORE DOESN'T MEAN YOU HAVE EARNED THE RIGHT TO PLAY. -Hunter on Beasley.

Sometimes, Beasley can get complacent on the defensive end. Sometimes, he does not play with the energy that is required to give his team an advantage. Not much has changed over the course of the season as, during Hunter's time as coach, Beasley has averaged 11.4 points per game (21.1 minutes per game) and 43.2% shooting from the field.

The Suns gave Beasley 18 million dollars over the course of three seasons to find himself and reach his potential here. This is only 63 games into a 246-game commitment, but depending on how you say that sentence, it can have a very different meaning.