

## Phoenix Suns &quot;will make a quick decision&quot; on Lindsey Hunter

Written by

Wednesday, 17 April 2013 09:59 -

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For those wondering about the future of interim head coach [Lindsey Hunter](#) , here's the latest from recently-extended PBO Lon Babby to arizonasports.com on his weekly radio show last Wednesday.

"I would say we will make a quick decision," Babby said. "We can't afford to have an elongated process. It might be immediately or in short order. But we can't let it linger on, and I don't see why we would let it linger on."

Babby did give the smallest hint on the direction he was leaning.

"I think you have to look at the results, because it's a results business," Babby said. "But I think you have to put the results in context, where we are in the season, how difficult it is to persevere, which we haven't done by any stretch of the imagination."

Hunter, 12-28 as coach after an 8-13 start, has given a lot more minutes to younger players since taking over than his predecessor [Alvin Gentry](#) did. Gentry amassed a nearly identical 13-28 record in his half-season, playing the best possible rotation of talent and having a healthy Marcin Gortat and Jermaine O'Neal.

While Gentry had the team playing passable offense, only 5 of his 13 wins came against winning teams (one was against Utah, who might now miss the playoffs by a single game).

Hunter, on the other hand, has presided over record-setting blowouts and losing streaks, yet has tallied 8 of his 13 wins against playoff-bound teams (2 were over the [Lakers](#) , who may just

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end up in the lottery thanks to those losses to the [Suns](#) ).

Gentry was a player, media and fan favorite whose team was frustrated from day one this season.

Hunter is a task-driven coach who cares less about being anyone's favorite than he does about demanding consistent effort from his young guys or they won't see the floor.

"There came a point in the season we realized whatever aspirations we made for the season, weren't going to be met." Lon Babby said of the midseason change of mindset from winning to developing players. "The losing is still painful, but we're putting the accent on a different note. And the note now is the future and development."

The key question here is whether Lindsey Hunter has developed any players during his stint, and whether he has set any new standards that lay the foundation for consistency and positive results next season.

To many of us, Lindsey Hunter was not ready to be an NBA head coach this season. He'd never coached before on any level in any capacity, and none of his assistants been a head coach at the NBA level either.

Gorey Gaines, a part-time assistant, has coached the WNBA's Phoenix Mercury for years, while [Igor Kokoskov](#) has coached the Georgian team during summers. Both have been successful, though in different settings. But that's it. It was a coaching staff of rookies bent on playing (yet expecting maturity from) the youngest guys. Not a recipe for success.

None of the players are clamoring for Hunter's return, though none are asking for his ouster either.

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When asked what needs to change and what needs to stay the same, the players focus on the missing talent on the team and the commitment to excellence of the young guys. Point guard

[Goran Dragic](#)

, swingman

[Jared Dudley](#)

and forward Luis Scola are all skeptical that the current roster could dramatically improve next season after a summer of work. They are who they are as a unit, and change needs to happen. Including some of the younger, less-focused players.

When pressed about Hunter, the players have spoken of the increased accountability and commitment being demanded by the staff as a good and necessary thing for a young team.

Hunter has clashed with young players who he perceives as not committing themselves enough or showing enough consistency. [Marcus Morris](#) and [Michael Beasley](#), in particular, have lost playing time and earned sharp, public rebukes from the coach. Even front office favorite

[Kendall Marshall](#)

has seen fewer minutes than many expected, often getting pulled for lack of aggressiveness and production. To be fair, each has garnered praise from Hunter when they played well.

"No one has earned their spot," Hunter is fond of saying, referring to old and young alike.

Hunter has also lessened the roles of Suns veterans who'd gotten used to big minutes last year and in the first half of this season (albeit on a 13-28 team). After re-signing with the Suns last summer, [Shannon Brown's](#) minutes have all but disappeared in favor of [Wesley Johnson](#).

Jared Dudley lost minutes and his starting job to Johnson, while

[P.J. Tucker](#)

has often gotten the "vet" minutes ahead of Dudley when Hunter smells a win coming on.

Before an injury ended his season,

[Marcin Gortat's](#)

minutes dwindled under Hunter as well, though that was strictly in favor of an older Jermaine O'Neal who was much more consistent and productive at the time.

[Luis Scola's](#)

minutes had declined during Hunter's initial 8-13 start, but when Gortat and O'Neal went down Scola was the first player Hunter turned to.

On the plus side, some young players have improved, albeit marginally. [Markieff Morris](#) has

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earned consistent minutes and become a better NBA player in the last two months of the season. Wesley Johnson has stepped from the shadows to play a smart, consistent role at shooting guard, and Kendall Marshall has gradually asserted himself at backup point guard.

None are future all-stars, but they don't have all-star talent either. Heck, none of them are surefire NBA starters. But they did improve. You can't make a diamond out of a rock, no matter how much you cut and polish it.

Also on the plus side, Hunter has gotten this team some big wins. Two wins each over the Lakers and [Rockets](#) at home. And a big win over San Antonio, when they were playing really well, IN San Antonio. Biggies over the [Clippers](#) , and Memphis and Atlanta as well.

The other day, I wrote that Babby has an opportunity to make big changes in his organization, that it has to start with Blanks and to let the chips fall where they may with Hunter.

That's still my stance on the matter. While Hunter just may turn out to be a good NBA coach, the guy who hired him could very well be out of a job in a few days. And new GMs want to bring in their own coach.

But if Lance Blanks stays on, and there's no evidence to the contrary, I am a bit surprised how tight-lipped the front office has been over the past week. Lon Babby, a fixture in the tunnels and at the games and always available to the media, has politely asked to wait on further impromptu interviews until after a decision has been made. Babby has also decided not to give an end-of-season "State of the Team" press conference yet.

Generally scheduled for the day after the season, all the players' exit interviews will have already taken place before tonight's tipoff. Tomorrow's locker cleanout is just that. Nothing more. No team meetings on the final day, no public addresses. No State of the Team press conferences.

It's always calmest before the storm, they say. Then again, it's always calm when there's no

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storm coming either.

No matter what, we will find out soon enough.

Babby sees no reason to let it linger on.