

The History of the No. 30 Overall Pick, because the Phoenix Suns have the No. 30 Overall Pick

Written by
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Pop quiz! How many times in NBA history has a team drafted at No. 30 position of the first round of an NBA Draft? The answer is eight times to date and the [Phoenix Suns](#) are in position to be the ninth team in just under two months.

This pick has traveled a lot this season. It started in South Beach with the Miami Heat, but was subsequently moved to the Cleveland Cavaliers as part of the LeBron James "trade." The Cavs then sent it to the Los Angeles Lakers in the Ramon Sessions deal and then they shipped it to the Suns for Steve Nash. There is a winner in there somewhere.

The pick itself has wielded mixed results, but has offered two not so subtle themes over the years.

Over the years the trend for the last pick in the first round has become either a college senior or an international prospect that may or may not pan out.

Five times a senior has been selected with the No. 30 pick because it came from a team with title aspirations.

[David Lee](#) (Knicks, 2005), [J.R. Giddens](#) (Celtics, 2008), [Lazar Hayward](#) (Wizards, 2010), [Jimmy Butler](#) (Bulls, 2011), and [Festus Ezeli](#) (Warriors, 2012) have all gone with the final pick in the first. They all filled a need for a team with the potential of making the playoffs or even making a deep run. Aside from Giddens the group as a whole has produced at a high level for having 29 others taken in-front of them.

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Players like Butler help teams in ways that do not necessarily show-up in the boxscores, but then again they do. With all the injuries to the Chicago Bulls this season he has become an Ironman in some respects playing all game when needed and defending three positions.

The Suns have Goran Dragic and to some extent P.J. Tucker that can do that, but Dragic is supposed to be the teams star and Tucker is limited.

He is somewhere between a Lee and an Ezeli as a perfect role player that does not hurt you when he is one the court. Butler plays both ends of the floor with vigor and is not a liability for the coaching staff.

Internationally there have been three picks at No. 30 in [Joel Freeland](#) (2006), [Petteri Koponen](#) (2007), and [Christian Eyenga](#) (2009). All three have had not had much semblance of a career in the NBA today.

There has been a run of three years with a senior selected and four in the past five years with Eyenga sliding in-between Giddens and his peers. Eyenga was and still is a player with potential to become a productive player in the NBA, but the same cannot be said for Koponen and Freeland. Up until this season (Freeland came over this year) neither had dressed for an NBA game and the picks were throwaways.

Adding a proven talent that knows their role and value provides in itself some inherent value. These prospects are different than a typical rookie. They are borderline veterans at ages 21, 22, and sometimes older in the increasingly younger NBA game.

The Suns have the 30th pick, but the last pick in the draft in general over the past 20 years has produced some hits and some misses, but with the margin of error on a smaller cliff.

Over the years the likes of [Mark Madsen](#) (2000) and [Nazr Mohammed](#) (1998) became quality role players with elongated careers as the last pick in the first round. Both won championships and were key producers for their teams, coming out of college as seniors that knew their roles.

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[Josh Howard](#) (2003), [Tony Parker](#) (2001), and Lee have all played in All-Star Games with Parker and Howard leading their teams to the NBA Finals.

Parker is the ultimate example of maximizing value at the end of the first round. He is a multi-time NBA Champion, All-Star, and widely looked at as one of the top point guards in the league today. That is an expectation nobody has with the No. 30 pick. It can be a throw-away as seen in many years.

Even taking a senior here can be seen as a throw-away, but they are the ones that produce.

For every Parker, Lee, Butler, or Howard there are a dozen David Harrison's (2004), Leon Smith's (1999), or Malcolm Mackey's (1993). Suns historians will remember (or maybe not) the 22 game stint of Mackey on the 1993-1994 Suns team that that lost in the Conference Semifinals.

Whether the Suns go with a seasoned college player or an international risk, there will be choices for both in the upcoming draft.

There are three seniors ranked between 20-40 on the [NDI Big Board](#) this year in [Brandon Paul](#) (SG, Illinois)

,
[Richard Howell](#) (PF, N.C. State)

, and

[Solomon Hill](#) (F, Arizona)

that could be options. In some ways they all fill a need with shooting/scoring (Paul), leadership/rebounding (Howell), and leadership/basketball IQ (Hill) that would be welcome with the value of No. 30.

The internationals that fall in that same ranking window are [Dennis Schroder](#) (PG, Germany) ,
[Giannis Adetokunbo](#) (SF, Greece)

,
[Mouhammadou Jaiteh](#) (F/C, France)

,
[Lucas Nogueira](#) (C, Brazil)

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,
[Livio Jean-Charles \(F, France\)](#)
, and
[Nemanja Nedovic \(G, Serbia\)](#)
.

That group has some ultimate risk/reward talents in Schroder, Adetokunbo, and Nedovic. All three could be pedestrian NBA players, but they also have the upside of a Tony Parker type.

With that the Suns can explore the options of taking the calculated risk or an international prospect, a college veteran, or the best player available with the last pick in the first round. All strategies have seen success and shortfalls. The good teams seem to find the success stories.