

Ryan McDonough comes in with pedigree, a vision, and a plan with a proven track record of success

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With Lon Babby at his side emitting a visual beam of confidence, his newly hired general manager, Ryan McDonough, was introduced to the [Phoenix Suns](#) organization and the valley. Full of quips and anecdotes mixed with plenty of cheer and candor, the introduction of McDonough seemed to be a huge sigh of relief after a few tumultuous years for the team.

"First of all, let me introduce a couple special guests," Babby began the press conference. "As you all know by now, the Phoenix Suns have a little bit of a fetish for brothers. Let me introduce a couple of Ryan's family members..."

Along with a plug for some special issue Suns' team neckties that Ryan was wearing that can also be found in the team shop, it was clear from the beginning that Babby and the Suns were nothing short of elated to welcome in another era of Suns basketball.

The sigh of relief comes from the team getting their man. Three years ago, there was a list and Lance Blanks only rose to the top after others pulled out. There was no question where McDonough ranked in the eyes of the team this time around.

They got their guy.

For McDonough, being the first man in the gym and the last man out of the film room has certainly paid off, as his ten-year journey in the NBA has led up to this point.

"I am beyond excited, thrilled to be here," were McDonough's first public words as the team's general manager.

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This was not his natural setting. Sitting at a podium answering questions is not where he is most natural, McDonough is a gym rat and a video junkie that was able to rise from the film room to leading a team of his own through years of hard work. His career began with the [Boston Celtics](#) in the film room and as a scout for a handful of years before becoming an assistant to current Celtics GM, and former Suns mainstay, Danny Ainge.

As McDonough described Ainge, he was a "professional mentor" and the person that believed in him enough to bring him up from the lowest ranks to help build a championship-caliber team.

Bringing in an elite basketball mind that is as meticulous and organized as McDonough is a positive move for the Suns. When McDonough got the call to interview, he was given a precursor of five questions. He came prepared with doctoral-caliber essays that were thoroughly written to answer those five questions along with any other questions about his work ethic or preparation.

There was not a lot of candor from McDonough, although he showed his human side while discussing his two brothers being in the room as he was being introduced. That tender moment where he choked up in front of his family endeared McDonough to the media and the fans more than the three collective years of what was the Lance Blanks Era ever did.

Now that the pleasantries are out of the way, now begins the grind of being an NBA general manager and decision-maker.

"There are some good young pieces in place here," McDonough began assessing the Suns roster. "Lon and Robert (Sarver) have done a good job of acquiring draft picks and young players and positioning themselves for sustainable success."

One of the first orders of business is to move swiftly on naming the franchise's next head coach. That is a question that seems to have already begun to be answered with a small list of names already being rumored: [Brian Shaw](#) (Indiana), [Kelvin Sampson](#) (Houston), Quin Snyder (Russia), and [Mike Budenholzer](#) (San Antonio).

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Finding both a "teacher and a leader" are the criteria for the team's next head coach, according to McDonough and Babby. Those four, along with [Lindsey Hunter](#) and potentially a few others, will be on the short list of coaching candidates.

The coach has to be an extension of what the front office is trying to instill for the organization as a whole. That is a necessary factor for game planning, communication, and overall success for the team. A teacher to bring along a young team in the midst of a rebuild, while having the command and respect of the locker room, is invaluable. Bridging analytics and feel for the game is a challenge. That is a trait very few have.

McDonough is a scout at heart that has worked with the likes of Chris Wallace (current Memphis GM) and Danny Ainge over the years to develop a feel for the game. The next coach needs to be an extension of that.

"There are different ways to build a team," McDonough explained. In Boston, they built through the draft with [Al Jefferson](#) , [Delonte West](#) , [Gerald Green](#) , [Rajon Rondo](#) , [Kendrick Perkins](#) , and two lottery picks that were shipped off for a future Hall of Famer in Ray Allen. All of those assets were then subsequently used to acquire [Kevin Garnett](#) and as they say, the rest is history.

With the way this current roster is constructed, the draft is the most important platform to build off of at this juncture. The team has two first round picks and a pick in the second round as well. "We have to nail these picks" was McDonough's first thought and called this year's draft the "first focus" of his.

Then, there is the NBA Draft Combine next week, player workouts for a month after that, and the draft itself in June before free agency.

McDonough probably has written more player profiles than Merriam-Webster has written words over the years, so he knows this class. The Celtics were preparing to draft 15th overall while the Suns will draft in the top half of the lottery and at the very end of the first round. He likely has a plan already, but now he gets to look at the top of the draft.

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There has not been one negative word written about the hiring of McDonough, but as he has stated and every Suns fan has to keep in mind, this is not an overnight fix.

It will be a process that takes time and might take all four of McDonough's contracted years before the Suns are back to the success that they are used to having. They have six picks over the next four years in the first round and a few bricks laid in the foundation. McDonough can be a part of the foundation in the slow build to the re-ascension of a proud and successful franchise.

The Suns are ushering in another era of Suns basketball, but instead of advertising it, they are putting in the work. You can try to sell a bad team or you can be progressive with necessary change. The Suns are done selling.