

NBA Draft Prospects McLemore vs. Oladipo - A Phoenix Suns Perspective

Written by

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With the 5th overall pick in the upcoming 2013 NBA draft, the [Phoenix Suns](#) will have their fair share of options. Lacking a true, bonafide star, this year's draft class has been said to be relatively weak in terms of top-flight talent. Regardless of whether those "expert" assessments are true or not, this draft will go a long way in determining the direction of the Suns' future. Although the team is lacking talent at almost every position and in every department, the shooting guard spot is one that stands out more than others. Therefore, the Suns have regularly been named as a great fit and ideal destination for the top two shooting guards in this year's draft: Ben McLemore and Victor Oladipo.

**Now, a disclaimer for readers: this discussion may be moot because both McLemore and Oladipo could very well be gone by the time the Suns are picking. There's a good chance the two of them could go in the top four, leaving the Suns to choose between several other candidates. There's also an extremely high likelihood (as in close to guaranteed) that one of the two will definitely be gone, leaving the other as a strong and likely pick for Phoenix. Ignoring that, let's move to assessments and comparisons of the two players.

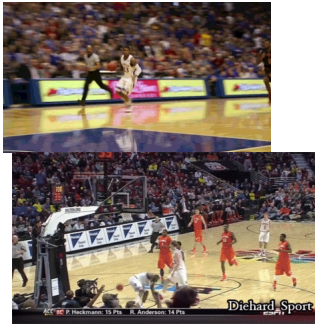
Measurements

Height w/Shoes	Wingspan	Weight	No Step Vert.	Ma
Ben McLemore	6'4.75"	6'7.75"	189	32.5
Victor Oladipo	6'4.25"	6'9.25"	213	33.0

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At the draft combine last week, both players registered remarkably similar numbers. They both measured out to be similar heights - McLemore is a half inch taller but Oladipo offsets that with his slightly longer wingspan. Both players also displayed their impressive athleticism by posting the same exact max vertical jump - 42 inches, which is an exceptionally number. Just for shits and GIFfles, here are both players throwing down 360 dunks:



The biggest discrepancy between the two in terms of physical measurements is in their weights. **Oladipo weighs more than twenty pounds more** than McLemore, which is something that is sure to help him defend the bigger and stronger guards in the league.

Winner: Although both possess equal amounts of elite athleticism and measure similarly in most other areas, VICTOR OLADIPO slightly edges McLemore in this department due to his more NBA-ready weight.

Offense

For the following few categories, let's look at stats from each of McLemore and Oladipo's 2012-13 college seasons.

MPG	FGM-FGA	FG%	3PM-3PA	3P%
Ben McLemore	32.2	5.4-10.8	49.5%	2.0-
Victor Oladipo	28.4	5.1-8.4	59.9%	0.8-

19.2

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Shooting

Both players shot the ball at great percentages. Ben McLemore averaged about 16 points a game while shooting nearly 50% shooting from the field, 42% on threes, and 87% from the charity stripe (almost a college 50-40-90 member!). Meanwhile, Victor Oladipo posted 13.6 points while shooting a ridiculous 60% from the field, 44% from three, and a shade under 75% from the free throw line (something he'll need to improve in the league).

The stats don't tell the whole story here. While they posted similar numbers during the last collegiate season and at the combine last week, the two are extremely different offensive players.

37% of McLemore's point production came from three point shots, with 42% coming from two point shots and free throws making up the remaining 20%. McLemore possesses one of the purest jump shots of anyone in the entire draft class and is known for his ability to light it up from beyond the arc.

On the other hand, Oladipo attained his extremely high field goal percentage from smart shot selection and by attempting most of his shots from inside the paint. **Only 18% of Oladipo's offensive production came from the three point shot**, with an overwhelming 62% coming from two-point field goals and 20% from free throws. Although he improved his jump shot a great deal over his college career (to the tune of 44% three point shooting on 2 attempts per game), it is still not one of his better offensive weapons.

Winner: BEN MCLEMORE. Oladipo's shooting has gotten consistently better and will continue to do so to the point that it may no longer be a weakness, but McLemore's picture-perfect form and dead-eye accuracy make him the clear winner in the shooting department.

Finishing

Both prospects, each sporting 42 inch verticals, possess the **high-flying ability to play above**

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the rim and throw down some major dunks in transition (see above). Due to their elite athleticism, neither has trouble finishing at the rim. However, both have their issues getting the rim in the first place - which is something we'll tackle in the very next section.

Winner: TIE

Ball-Handling

This is an area of weakness for both shooting guards. In his lone year at Kansas, Ben McLemore was mostly restricted to spot-up shots and transition points. Meanwhile, in his junior year, Oladipo was also an excellent finisher in transition and earned many points in the paint, but struggled to create space off the dribble.

Although both players were functional dribblers at the college level, **they will need to improve their ball-handling** skills if they hope to maintain a good level of offensive production in the NBA.

Winner: TIE

Passing

Ast/Game	TO/Game	AST%	TO %	AS
Ben McLemore	1.973	2.081	12.5%	17.3
Victor Oladipo	2.056	2.306	15.1%	21.3

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Although both players have a long way to go if they ever want to be labeled as playmakers, neither was a black hole on offense. Both guys are **smart, efficient offensive players** who know their strengths and weaknesses and thus take good shots that don't hurt their teams and find [the](#)

[open](#)

man when they can - they both averaged about 2 assists per game last year. .

However, they also turned the ball over more than they assisted on scoring plays, leading to a **bad assist-to-turnover ratio of 0.9 for both**

. That number needs to be a lot higher in the NBA, meaning they need to make smarter passes and turn the ball over less. Once again, stronger dribbling skills would help both guys out significantly in terms of turnovers - if they learn to take defenders off the dribble, they will have an easier time creating shots for teammates and reducing their turnovers.

Advanced stats show that Oladipo registered a higher assist percentage (an estimate of the percentage of teammate's field goals he assisted on while on the floor). However, he also posted a higher turnover percentage, making this category a wash.

Winner: TIE

Free Throws

[NCAA Basketball](#)

The figure above charts both players' free throw rates - how often each gets to the line on a per possession basis - over the course of their 2012-13 seasons. One can clearly see that Oladipo was much better at drawing fouls than McLemore. **Oladipo's free throw rate for the entire season was 42.7% while McLemore's was 34.5%.**

Although Oladipo was obviously superior in terms of getting to the line, there are two things that must be considered in this analysis:

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1. Oladipo's style of play allowed him to be fouled and get to the line more often than McLemore. While the latter earned most of his points via jumpshots, the former played in the paint significantly more (often scoring off of offensive boards), which explains part of his higher free throw rate.

2. Although Oladipo got to the line more than McLemore, he converted his free throws at a much lower rate. He only shot 75% versus McLemore's 87%. In effect, that twelve percent differential nullifies much of the advantage Oladipo has in terms of getting to the charity stripe.

Winner: TIE. Although Oladipo is clearly better at attacking the rim and drawing fouls, McLemore's far superior touch from the line evens out the advantage.

SCORING WINNER: MCLEMORE

Rebounding

Off. RPG	Def. RPG	Total RPG	Off. Reb %	De
Ben McLemore	1.3	3.9	5.2	5.09
Victor Oladipo	2.6	3.7	6.3	11.8

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Both McLemore and Oladipo are great rebounders for their sizes and position, each using their elite athleticism to secure misses on both ends of the court. While McLemore averaged a solid

5.2 rebounds per game

, Oladipo was even more tremendous on the boards with

6.3 rebounds per game

(in 4 less minutes per game than McLemore).

A closer look at the advanced statistics reveals that although both players posted similar defensive rebound percentages (an estimate of the percentage of available defensive rebounds each player grabbed while he was on the floor), **Oladipo's offensive rebound percentage was far superior to McLemore's** (11.8% vs. 5.0%). Once again, much of this can be attributed to the players' distinctive styles of play. While McLemore typically plays beyond the arc on the offensive end, Oladipo cuts to the basket and plays in the paint much more regularly, allowing him to secure his teammates' misses on the offensive end.

Oladipo has a nose for the ball and is great at fighting on the boards on both sides of the court, which is displayed in his terrific total rebound percentage of 12.9% compared to McLemore's 9.1% (which isn't a bad number itself).

Winner: VICTOR OLADIPO

Defense

Steals/Game	Blocks/Game	Steal %	Block %	De
Ben McLemore	1.0	0.7	1.8%	2.2%
Victor Oladipo	2.2	0.8	4.5%	2.8%

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Victor Oladipo is touted as the best wing defender in the entire 2013 draft class. He earned this reputation with his stellar play on the defensive end of the court in Indiana, using his athleticism, wingspan, exceptionally high motor, and keen defensive awareness to lead his team's defense. He is a phenomenal on-ball defender, and his off-ball defense is great as well (his 2.2 steals per game average is evidence of this). He's also a good shot-blocker for his position (once again due to his wingspan and athleticism), making him the **complete package defensively**. His excellent defensive rating (an estimate of points allowed per 100 possessions) of **86.9 was tops in the Big 10 conference**.

Although Ben McLemore's defensive skills don't quite match up to Oladipo's he proved to be an **effective defender**

during his freshman year at Kansas. Like Oladipo, he is also a good shot-blocker for the shooting guard position and is a good on-ball defender (though not quite as great as Victor).

However, he was

not nearly as consistent

on the defensive end as Oladipo was and had a tendency to get lost during possessions where he was defending off the ball. Even with his occasional lapses, McLemore posted a

great defensive rating of 93.3

and with some more consistency and a higher motor on that end of the floor, he

projects to be a good NBA defender

due to his size, length, and athleticism.

Winner: VICTOR OLADIPO

Who do the Suns Want?

Ben McLemore's media interview after Suns workout:

Victor Oladipo's media interview after Suns workout:

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Now comes the most important question: **which of these two players would be better for this Suns team?**

Although they are entirely different prospects, Ben McLemore and Victor Oladipo are both considered to be two of the top prizes to be won in this year's draft. Pretending that we have the luxury of choice at the moment, let's examine this hotly discussed topic.

The Phoenix Suns need talent. Lots of talent. Although they could use an influx of youth and skill at nearly every position, shooting guard the most glaring need. Fortunately, Ben McLemore and Victor Oladipo happen to be shooting guards. Even more fortunately, they both seem to possess great talent.

With McLemore, the Suns would get some **much needed perimeter shooting and athleticism** to pair in the back court with the current best player on the roster, Dragic. With Oladipo, the team would have an **elite wing defender with an extremely high motor and strong work ethic** who has been improving and expanding his offensive game for several seasons.

If he reaches his potential, McLemore's best case NBA comparisons would be a more athletic [Klay Thompson](#) or even a [Ray Allen](#) during his Seattle days. His worst case would be former Suns fan favorites [Mickael Pietrus](#) or Wes Johnson with a worse smile.

On the other hand, Oladipo's best case NBA comparisons would be [Tony Allen](#) with a far superior offensive game or

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[Andre Iguodala](#)

with a more consistent long range touch. His worse case scenario would have him be

[Avery Bradley](#)

or

[Iman Shumpert](#)

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Although McLemore spent just one year in college as opposed to Oladipo's three, he is only nine months younger, so age will not be a factor in the Suns' decision. Both players seem to be likeable, hard working individuals: McLemore comes from a humble background (overcoming poverty) while Oladipo has continually developed his game to the point that he went from not even being on draft boards after his sophomore season to being a lock for a top 5 pick after his junior campaign.

And for what it's worth, both prospects seem to have some off-court skills as well:

Better pick for the Suns: EITHER

Anticlimactic? Sorry. I decided to leave my personal pick out of this analysis (Oladipo has been my pick for months now). The truth of the matter is, **the Suns would be lucky to land either of these two guys**. Although they're both very different players, they are both talented in their own ways and would ideally become the best player on the roster in due time (except for whoever we pick in 2014).

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Let's just hope that one of them will be available when the Suns are on the clock on in twenty days...

Poll **Who would you rather see in a Suns uniform?**

- Ben McLemore
- Victor Oladipo
- NOT SHANNON BROWN

500 votes | [Results](#)