

Written by

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Many people believe the [Phoenix Suns](#) have the worst collection of talent in the NBA. And with only [Kendall Marshall](#) and (now) #5 overall pick Victor Oladipo under 24 years old when next season starts, the potential development of the team to elite status as currently constructed is next to nil.

The league's second-oldest lottery team (Dallas was older) returns as many as 11 guaranteed contracts from last season's worst-in-the-West squad (if you count [Shannon Brown](#) and [P.J. Tucker](#)

). After Marshall and Oladipo, only [Michael Beasley](#)

, [Markieff Morris](#)

and

[Marcus Morris](#)

are as young as 24. The rest of the squad is older than that.

The Plan

That's why, as the mock-Suns acting General Manager, I decided to shake up the roster as much as possible in the 2013 NBA Draft. Frankly, while the Draft is considered "weak", the top 10-15 players are still more talented and possess brighter futures than most anyone on the Suns' current roster.

Once the mock draft rules were in place and the doors opened for business, I worked feverishly to acquire up to two more lottery picks to send out there with Victor Oladipo.

I wanted a pivot man AND another shooter/scorer before the 13th pick was announced. And I wanted to use two of the Suns best players, [Jared Dudley](#) (28 next season) and [Marcin Gortat](#) (29 next season), as the bait.

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My thinking was that Dudley and Gortat couldn't help the team win more than 25 games, so how much worse could it get if they were each replaced with one or more younger players? Plus, getting younger would help the Suns acquire a good player or two in the much stronger 2014 draft as well.

There is no quick fix in the NBA, so it's completely unrealistic to imagine the Suns being completely made over in one summer AND still have Gortat and Dudley in the rotation. With Gortat expiring in a year, potentially leaving with no compensation whatsoever, and Dudley at the peak of his trade value, it was time to strike.

Marcin Gortat

As soon as the bell sounded, the Portland mock-GM emailed me the offer everyone's been talking about on the interwebs. It's an offer I would not be surprised to see in real life too: Marcin Gortat for the #10 and [Joel Freeland](#) .

I wanted to use this #10 pick on the next best available pure center on the board - the one with the highest upside regardless of the time it would take to develop him.

For a while, I tried to replace Freeland with Myers Leonard, but even I was lukewarm on that given that the center the Suns would draft at 10 would likely be better than Leonard, while Leonard might stunt our rookie's growth. It's not really a good idea to have two guys who need the same amount of development playing the same exact position. Plus, the Suns would need a veteran stop-gap center to play minutes too, leaving either Leonard or the rookie on the end of the bench. Other than Leonard, Portland didn't have much to offer in place of Freeland, since half their roster would be free agents in a matter of days.

We spit-shook on the trade, giving each other an out: as long as Portland didn't use the #10 in a trade to move up, and as long as the Suns hadn't found a better trade for Gortat and as long as the Suns saw someone on the draft board they liked.

Before the Suns took Oladipo at 5, I engaged OKC on Gortat for #12. They needed an upgrade on [Kendrick Perkins](#) , and the Suns had a big hole at shooting guard. We were both willing to discuss Gortat for Perkins and the #12, straight up. The Suns would be eating about \$12 million in salary over two years, so I had to decide if the #12 was worth that much sunk cost.

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But then I got the Portland offer - a better pick and lesser salary in return for Gortat. In order to add [Jeremy Lamb](#) to the pot, we briefly discussed adding Lamb and Dudley to the trade.

That would have returned Jeremy Lamb, #12 pick and a \$10 million salary hit for two seasons in exchange for Gortat and Dudley.

Tick tock. Teams on the clock. Portland offer (#10 and Joel Freeland) in the pocket. With the #10 or #12, I would want to get the best remaining center on the board.

Jared Dudley

Let's see what I can get for Dudley on his own. If I could trade Dudley for something equivalent to, or better than, Jeremy Lamb then I could tell OKC to take a hike. I really didn't want to eat Perkins 2-yr, \$20 million contract.

I tried to engage Sacramento at #7 for Dudley, but got a quick "no thanks". I was surprised, considering Sacramento really needed a solid veteran like Dudley to supplement an already-young core, but wasn't going to squeeze too hard trying to get blood from a stone. Moving on.

Two hot options for Dudley were #8 (Detroit) and #9 (Minnesota). At 8 or 9, we could grab C.J. McCollum to play combo guard between Oladipo and Dragic. Hornacek loved his three-guard lineup in the late 80s with the Suns, and McCollum's presence would provide the Suns the secondary scorer they so badly need while allowing Oladipo to play the Tucker/Sefolosa role as defender and spot-up shooter for kick-outs.

Detroit needed a steady presence for their young squad, so Dudley was a draw for them. They also were struggling with too many combo guards and not enough pure playmaking to take advantage of their big men, so Kendall Marshall was an interesting option for them too.

As it stood going into their pick, Detroit was holding firm wanting too much back for the #9 and a combo guard, who would have just duplicated McCollum and potentially stunted his growth. The other shooting guards in the draft (KCP, Shabazz) besides McCollum would have stunted

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Oladipo's growth, in my opinion. We needed a playmaking combo guard who could spell Dragic and provide scoring in the second unit while playing *alongside* Oladipo.

Minnesota was another option for the Suns with the #9 pick in exchange for Dudley. But Minnesota played hard ball, wanting a lopsided trade in their favor that made it unpalatable. They wanted the Suns to take back a long-term contract, plus too many draft considerations, really diluting the value of the #9 pick. Plus, I wanted McCollum at that pick.

Would either Minnesota or Detroit cave, in time for the Suns to end up with McCollum for Dudley?

Would the Suns take Portland's offer of #10 and Freeland for Gortat? Or would we find a better deal?

Tick. Tock. #7 on the clock. #8 through #12 coming up soon.