

A Look at the 2013-14 NBA Salary Cap Figures from the Suns' Perspective

Written by
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Today, July 10th, marks the official end of the 2012-13 NBA season. This means that from this point onward, the league will operate under stipulations and guidelines enforced for the 2013-14 NBA year. The NBA released the official salary cap number for the season, as well as several other important figures to keep in mind. Let's take a look at these numbers and how they affect the Phoenix Suns (all of the figures described below are explained in detail in [Larry Coon's CBA FAQ](#)).

2013-13 Salary Cap Numbers

The salary cap for this league year has been established at **\$58.679 million**, up from last year's figure of \$58.044 million. The luxury tax threshold is \$71.748 million, meaning that teams with payrolls above that level incur severe financial penalties under the new CBA (such as last year's LA Lakers and the upcoming season's Brooklyn Nets). This figure is unlikely to affect the Suns anytime in the near future.

What is more relevant to this Suns team though, is the salary floor. The 2013-14 salary floor is 90% of the cap, meaning all teams have to have a **minimum payroll of \$52.811M** before the season begins.

As a result of the increased salary cap, the maximum player salaries have also increased. The following figures are the various max salaries a team can pay free agents:

Years in NBA	Max Salary as % of Cap	Maximum Salary
0-6	25% of cap	\$13,701,250
7-9	30% of cap	\$16,441,500
10+	35% of cap	\$19,181,750

The average NBA salary for the 2012-13 season was \$5.325 million. The estimated average salary for the upcoming season, which is also the "Early Bird" exception amount, is \$5.565 million.

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The Non-Taxpayer Mid-Level Exception (for teams above the cap but below the tax threshold) for 2013-14 will be \$5.150 million. The Taxpayer MLE (for teams above the tax apron) will be \$3.183 million. The Room MLE (for teams below the cap) will be \$2.652 million and the Bi-Annual Exception (a separate exception for teams below the tax apron). All of these exceptions are higher than they were in 2012-13.

2013-14 Phoenix Suns Cap Numbers

So how do the new salary cap figures affect this Suns team? After the Eric Bledsoe trade, the team is currently looking at a 2013-14 payroll of **\$54,315,564** (not including Diante Garrett) BEFORE draft picks Alex Len, Archie Goodwin, and Alex Oriakhi (who may or may not make the final roster) are signed.

According to the [2013-14 NBA Rookie Salary Scale](#) , Alex Len (#5 overall pick) will have a first year salary of \$2,910,600 and Archie Goodwin (#29) will make \$887,00. If Alex Oriakhi (#57) makes the team, he will likely earn a minimum salary of \$490,180.

With all three rookies' projected pay scales included, the Suns will have a payroll of **\$58,603,344** , which leaves them right at the salary cap line (with only about \$75K in cap room).

Pending any trades, the Suns do not have the cap room to pursue any major free agents (nor should they). However, they can use the the Room Exception to sign an additional player. Including Len and Goodwin but not Garrett and Oriakhi, they already have 15 players on the roster so I don't expect them to go above the cap to add another player unless they make a move to send a player or two out first.

Suns' Cap Situation in the Future

Although there is A LOT of time between now and the 2014 offseason, it is important to keep in mind that future financial flexibility (as opposed to right now) is important for the Suns going forward. With the team already at the salary cap line for this season, let's take a look at what cap situation projects to look like next year.

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The Suns currently have three expiring contracts on the team: Caron Butler, Marcin Gortat, and Shannon Brown. Markieff and Marcus Morris have team options for the 2014-15 seasons that may or may not be picked up, as does Kendall Marshall. Channing Frye has a 2014-15 player option for for \$6.8 million that he will most likely pick up. Michael Beasley's salary of \$6.25 million will be non-guaranteed (I think only \$3 million is guaranteed).

Another important aspect to consider is **Eric Bledsoe's contract**. He will be heading into the season on the final year of his rookie deal and will most likely receive an extension from the Suns front office this summer. If he and the Suns can't agree on a deal, he will become a Restricted Free Agent at the end of this season, given that the team extends his Qualifying Offer to him. If I had to guess, I'd say that Bledsoe will enter the season with a contract extension already in hand, one that may be somewhere in the vicinity of the deal Goran Dragic received last summer (\$30 million over 4 years).

If the Suns go through the season with the current roster completely untouched, they will only have a **guaranteed 2014-15 payroll of \$22,168,499** - if they renounce their rights to the Morris brothers, Marshall, and Bledsoe, they will only have Dragic, Scola, and Frye (assuming he picks up his Player Option) on the books, along with the \$3 million they will owe Beasley.

However, the likelier scenario involves the Suns moving any combination of Scola, Gortat, and Butler at some point this season, giving Bledsoe a new contract either this summer or next, and perhaps picking up the team options on at least one of the Morris brothers or Marshall. In this case, the Suns will most likely be looking at a **2014-15 payroll of around \$30-40 million** before signing any draft picks, which would leave them with enough room to be a major player in 2014 free agency (they would have about \$20-30 million in cap room).

[Larry Coon revealed](#)

that next year's salary cap is estimated to be a good bit higher at \$62.5 million.

Obviously, this is all speculative since these projections are rather premature. As mentioned, anything could happen between now and 2014 - we could shed long-term salary such as Scola or Frye, we could add long-term salary, etc. Nevertheless, the Suns will seemingly have a good deal of cap flexibility in the future, even after they extend Eric Bledsoe. The only major long-term contracts are Dragic (on a very fair contract), Scola (strong candidate to be moved), Frye (his salary may be a bit high but there is always a market for a guy like him - just look at the return Toronto got for Andrea Bargnani), and most likely Bledsoe (remains to be seen).

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As it stands, I think the Suns will be well equipped heading into the 2014 offseason with a high draft pick and significant financial flexibility to make strong moves to accelerate the rebuild either next year or the following. Although immediate expectations should be tempered, it's understandably easier for Suns fans to be excited about the future now than it has been in the past couple years.

However, with great cap flexibility comes great responsibility. In the wrong hands, cap room isn't necessarily an asset - we all remember how the team's precious cap space in 2010 was squandered on the likes of Hedo Turkoglu, Josh Childress, and Hakim Warrick. Having said that, the direction of this franchise's future is now in the hands of Ryan McDonough and Lon Babby. Let us see how they handle the Suns' cap situation going forward.

Poll What kind of contract extension do you expect the Suns to give to Eric Bledsoe?

- Less than \$5 million a year
- \$5-7.5 million a year
- \$7.5 million a year
- \$7.5-10 million a year
- More than \$10 million a year

260 votes | [Results](#)