

Written by
Thursday, 11 July 2013 11:00 -



The Familiar Faces

[Diante Garrett](#)

[Diante Garrett](#) was on this team a year ago and used that opportunity to earn a contract with the [Suns](#). He managed to keep his roster spot all season and is back again to convince the Suns to guarantee his salary for another year.

Garrett is a 6-foot-5 do-it-all style point guard. He has good size and court vision, can get in the lane on offense and rebound the ball, has potential defensively but still needs to work on his jump shot.

Although Garrett was on the roster last year, he was stuck behind a bunch of other point guards and never really got the chance to play or prove himself. Unfortunately, that will likely be the case again this season and I'd be surprised if the Suns didn't cut him before the season starts.

[Archie Goodwin](#)

The 29th overall pick in this year's draft is probably the main attraction on this year's team for most Suns fans with [Alex Len](#) still recovering from ankle surgery. This will be the first time Goodwin steps on the court in a Suns jersey and the first time for him to show Planet Orange what he can do.

Goodwin is an athletic 6-foot-5 guard who's game is all about getting to the rim. His jumper needs a lot of work but his ability to blow by defenders and play tough defense on the other end still allows him to be effective.

Kendall Marshal

[Kendall Marshall](#) missed the first couple of Summer League games last season as a rookie and struggled once he did get on the court. However, Marshall did finish strong with a double-double in his final game. I wrote during the Summer League last year that Marshall had a [long way to go](#), and that proved to be true as he struggled throughout his

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rookie season. Vegas will give us, and Hornacek, an opportunity to see how much Marshall has improved from a year ago.

The thing to keep your eye out for with Marshall is his aggressiveness and comfort level when attacking off the dribble. In order to be an effective distributor, Marshall has to be a threat to get in the lane and score. This is a big summer for Kendall.

[Marcus Morris](#)

This will be Mook's first Summer League with the Suns after arriving via a midseason trade last season. Marcus was mostly a 3-point shooter for Houston and had a solid stretch once he arrived in Phoenix before getting benched by [Lindsey Hunter](#).

Morris needs to show that reliable 3-point stroke, an ability to defend on the perimeter and improved finishing as a slasher. He'll probably play mostly on the wing, although we might see him at the four as well.

[Markieff Morris](#)

Keef was a force in Vegas last year, ending up as one of the top scorers and rebounders in the entire event. However, even as he was dominating games he struggled to finish plays and hit shots. Offensively, Markieff needs to show one thing this summer: efficiency.

[Alex Oriakhi](#)

- Rookie PF/C out of Missouri/UCONN
- 6-foot-9.5, 258 pounds, 7-foot-3.75 wingspan, 9-foot standing reach
- 11.2 points, 8.4 rebounds, 63.9 field goal percentage, 25.8 minutes per game as a senior

Oriakhi is the third of the Suns three rookies and was taken with the 57th overall pick. He's a big body whose interior defense and rebounding helped lead the UCONN Huskies to a national championship in 2011. Oriakhi is a decent athlete with good mobility and strength who can hold his own defensively and on the glass and can finish around the rim.

As a second round pick, Oriakhi has to earn a contract. To make the team, he'll need to show a lot of the same qualities [P.J. Tucker](#) did last year. And speaking of Tucker...

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P.J. Tucker

P.J. Tucker is the biggest success story from last year's Summer League team (and that includes lottery picks Morris and Marshall). His hustle and defense caught the eye of the coaching staff and earned him a contract, and now he's heading into the second year of that contract. Tucker may not play a ton as he doesn't have a whole lot to prove, but he has agreed to participate.

The NBA Hopefuls

Thomas Abercrombie

- 26-year-old wing from New Zealand
- 6-foot-6, 210 pounds

I don't really know anything at all about Abercrombie. He's a scoring wing who has played in the Australian NBL and has represented New Zealand in international competition. He's apparently a pretty good shooter.

Chris Babb

-

Rookie guard out of Iowa State

- 6-foot-5, 225 pounds
- 9.1 points, 3.2 rebounds, 38.2 3-point field goal percentage as a senior

Babb is a 3-and-D type player. He's a respectable 3-point shooter that took five threes per game as a senior (the Cyclones led the NCAA in 3-pointers if I'm not mistaken) at a 38 percent clip. However, Babb's real value is as a lock-down perimeter defender.

Dionte Christmas

- 5th year guard out of Temple
- 6-foot-5.5, 211 pounds, 6-foot-9 wingspan
- 9.3 PPG, 42.9 FG%, 40 3FG%, 100 FT%, 4.3 RPG, 2.3 APG, 2.7 TPG, 1 SPG, +11 in his first three games with the [Utah Jazz](#) in the Orlando Summer League

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Christmas is a Summer League veteran. This will be his third year competing in the NBA Summer League, and the Suns will be the fifth team he suits up for between the Orlando and Las Vegas summer leagues since going undrafted in 2009. Last season he played for the [Boston Celtics](#) in Orlando and Las Vegas, and he made the Celtics training camp roster before being one of the team's final cuts before the season started. He also made a couple other NBA rosters but has yet to play in an NBA game.

Christmas is a scoring guard with a strong body and plenty of confidence, and it seems like GM Ryan McDonough likes the guy (based on the Boston connection).

[Jake Cohen](#)

- Rookie power forward out of Davidson
- 6-foot-10, 235 pounds
- 14.9 points, 5.3 rebounds, 1.6 blocks, 49.7 field goal percentage, 38.8 3-point field goal percentage, 25.6 minutes per game as a senior

Cohen is a decorated player from Davidson having been named Southern Conference Player of the Year the last two years and Southern Conference Freshman of the Year in his first season. He's a big guy who can knock down a jump shot and has range out to the 3-point line.

[Arinze Onuaku](#)

- 4th year big man out of Syracuse
- 6-foot-9, 275 pounds
- 12.6 points, 9.5 rebounds, 56.4 field goal percentage in 23.7 minutes per game with the Canton Charge of the NBA D-League last season

Onuaku is a big body and a rebounding specialist. He inhales rebounds on both ends of the court. He has a wide body, is very strong and just has a nose for the ball. However, he doesn't bring much more than that.

Final Tally

This year's roster has two point guards (Marshall, Garrett), three shooting guards (Goodwin, Christmas, Babb), three small forwards (Mook, Tucker, Abercrombie) and four big men (Keef, Oriakhi, Onuaku, Cohen). Overall, it's much better than last year's roster with a ton of point

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guards and forwards. With the talent and veteran experience on the Summer Suns roster, Phoenix has an excellent chance to win the inaugural Las Vegas Summer League Championship.

The Schedule

Pool Play

Game 1: Saturday, July 13 at 5:30 p.m. PST vs. Portland ([Damian Lillard](#) , [Meyers Leonard](#) , [Thomas Robinson](#)

,
[Will Barton](#)

,
[C.J. McCollum](#)

,
[Allen Crabbe](#)

)

Game 2: Monday, July 15 at 3:30 p.m. PST vs. Minnesota (Shabazz Muhammed, [Gorgui Dieng](#)

,
[Lorenzo Brown](#)
)

Game 3: Tuesday, July 16 at 5:30 p.m. PST vs. Memphis ([Tony Wroten](#) , [Jamaal Franklin](#) , Jannis Timma, Donte Green,

[Vander Blue](#)
)

Bracket play begins on Wednesday, July 17.