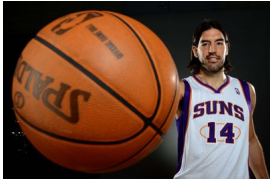


Written by  
Tuesday, 30 July 2013 14:00 -

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When the [Phoenix Suns](#) added Luis Scola to the roster last year it was in a last ditch effort to compete despite losing leaders [Steve Nash](#) and [Grant Hill](#) . All season the coaches struggled with how to use Scola and the team did not compete.

Now Scola is Indiana bound and the Bright Siders have takes. They have lots of takes...

Tenth Topic: Five Questions on the Remainder of the Off-Season

**1. Breaking the Ice:** What are your thoughts on the acquisition of Miles Plumlee, [Gerald Green](#) and a 2014 first round pick for Luis Scola?  
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Jim Coughenour: When the Suns acquired Scola last season it didn't make sense to me. Adding a veteran presence who is a starter isn't the norm for rebuilding teams. Maybe Scola helped the Suns to a couple wins that moved them down in the draft order... But, IF Len was their first choice it doesn't hurt there. Now the team has flipped Luis for a first round pick in a stacked draft class. I still don't agree with the philosophy... Still, all's well that ends well.

Dave King: This trade was all about the future. The Suns needed to get Scola to a playoff team. He's a guy so used to winning he has no interest in riding out a three-year rebuild. He just doesn't belong in Phoenix. To turn him into a coveted 2014 first round pick is a bonus, given that he's a 33 year old backup at this point. Getting two other players in the deal was the cost of doing business, though Plumlee at least might be a serviceable backup.

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Kris Habbas: If it were 2007 this would be a HUGE trade for the Suns, but with hindsight that might have been a disappointment even then. Green is a great athlete that progressed as a basketball player under the Indiana Pacers staff last year and add a first round pick (likely between 25-30) then this ends up as a good, slightly above average trade for the Suns.

Richard Parker: This is a very good trade for both teams. A deal like this is all about the relative value of assets. Scola is worth much less to this Suns team than he is to a Pacers team that wants to legitimately compete for a championship next year. Getting a 1st round pick for him is tremendous value, in my opinion. Having to take on Green's contract for two years is a slight annoyance, but a 1st rounder is worth adding \$2.5M to 2014-15 payroll. Win-win-win deal (for Phoenix, Indiana, and definitely for Scola).

Sean Sullivan: Assets, assets, and more assets! It made a lot of sense for Indiana and it certainly made a lot of sense for Phoenix as well. The additional 2014 pick was definitely the showcase of the trade for the Suns. However, Miles Plumlee was also the 26th pick in the draft just last year, and could be another young asset this team specifically targeted in the deal. As for Green, he was the cost of making the deal happen...nothing more.

**2. Scola** brought back two contracts that add up to his money, but at different positions. How does this affect wins and losses this season?

DK: No impact. The Suns were projected, with Scola, to win the fewest games in the West by most people. That will still be the case without him.

KH: Well, in 262 games Green has a total win share of 4.1 meaning that he does not move the needle in wins and losses. I like the idea of Green as the back-up two/three to come in and provide athleticism, but he is not a shooter, play-maker, or individual scorer; all of which are glaring holes. On the positive side he is a quality defender and elite athlete. LOB CITY!

RP: It definitely makes the team worse. Scola's a vet that only would have taken minutes from younger guys on this rebuilding squad and add a few wins. No one wants that. Now, we have two guys that will probably be entertaining (and frustrating) to watch but will really not contribute much to the team's overall success.

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SS: I don't think it helps, nor hurts the teams' chances of tanking winning. This was all about clearing the contract of a veteran player who could be much more useful on another team, and getting some value for him in return that can help the Suns continue their rebuild.

JC: Positively... or do I mean negatively? I think that this makes the team worse, which is good because a high lottery pick next year is imperative. Stockpiling meaningless wins to move from 3 to 7 is lunacy. At the very best, or worst?, the team is no better than last season's incarnation... pending Frye's contribution.

**3. Overall the team seems to be looking to get more athletic no matter the cost in terms of shooting, skill, or other sacrifices... Is this a wise strategy?**

DK: Got to start somewhere. That's where Houston started - stockpiling assets regardless of position - and it eventually worked out for them. However, other teams haven't had as much luck doubling up positions. We'll see, but I think McD will put together a solid team within 12 months.

KH: Long-term that is a wise strategy, but in the short term it is going to lead to some tough basketball for the eyes. If Channing Frye returns and plays to form then he is the only shooter on the roster higher than 35.2% career. Having solid interior scorers and attacking point guards is borderline useless with no shooters to space the floor.

RP: While the team has definitely gotten more athletic and and worse at shooting, I think that's just a byproduct of the asset game that McDonough is playing. The lack of shooting honestly won't matter during this season since we seem to be headed towards a high 2014 draft pick. Shooting is easier to develop, especially with an expert shooting coach leading the way, than athleticism or pure talent. It's also easier to find in free agency.

SS: This team has desperately needed some youth and athleticism for many years now. I think it's a great strategy for the time being, as many of these younger players can still develop their skills in other areas. Not to mention, the Suns can always address other skill sets that they still find themselves lacking in with the multitude of draft picks that they have lined up for the future.

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JC: I think the moves have been more focused on moving pieces that don't make much sense at the Suns' current station and acquiring youth and draft picks. I'm not sure if these moves are dictated by athleticism or whether that's just based on the best available packages. The Suns have stated they want to run, so these moves should help implement that philosophy. I think the wisdom involved is dictated by the results. The Rockets have seemed to garner success with a strategy that might be similar to McDonough's endgame.

**4.** This has been a spectacularly active off-season so far with time for more moves and changes... What are your thoughts to date?

KH: The team has accomplished a lot of really good things and have more assets in a three month window than they were able to do in a three year window. Despite having better assets three years ago, Ryan McDonough (McMiracle) has put his reputation to work and churned out a young, athletic, roster that now has potential going forward.

RP: I am very pleased with the way the Suns' summer has turned out. The team has gotten significantly younger for the future and has continued to stockpile assets. I really do believe that they have the assets required to be part of the next big deal when a disgruntled superstar wants out of his current team. Meanwhile, the Suns can continue to develop our the guys, aim for a high 2014 pick in a stellar class, AND have great cap flexibility in the future. I like this team's future.

SS: I couldn't be happier. It's hard to believe how much has already changed in the one month that McDonough has taken the reigns. It will still be a while before we can accurately measure just how effective these trades were in making the Suns better...but you can at least see they have already made the team younger and given the team the opportunity to acquire assets which can be used to further improve the team going forward; as long as they draft or trade for the right players.

JC: Very optimistic. McDonough's moves have have been somewhat tempestuous, but I haven't had a problem with any of them. Glad to see some legitimate change after the stasis over the dark age overseen by Lance Blanks. Although... credit from last summer may seem appropriate since the Goodwin pick was acquired before McMiracle appeared on the scene. Ryan still had to nail the pick, and there's at least potential that he may have. Once Gortat is off the roster I think this will easily be the best summer in several years.

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DK: So far, this offseason earns an A in my book. Every move is made with a purpose and has brought back needed future assets. The Suns had the flexibility to eat the contracts Butler, Lee, Green and Plumlee to net Eric Bledsoe for Dudley and a 2014 first rounder for Scola. Nice haul, with credit to both Babby/Sarver and McDonough.

**5. Should the team look to make more moves? Are there any more moves to be made?**

RP: Definitely. A team like this should ALWAYS look to make more moves. While a big deal to land a star might not present itself for a while, the team should focus on smoothing out the roster a bit by getting rid of some of the clutter. A 2-for-1 or 1-for-none type deal to get rid of a player or two the team doesn't need would really help. Obviously, more trades to add to the asset pile should also be pursued.

SS: There are plenty of moves left to be made...the Suns are far from a finished product at this point. I believe the roster is still in flux and there are some necessary moves that will need to be made to ensure that the team maximizes their current assets. When those moves will come? Who knows...but I think they will.

JC: Gortat.

DK: Definitely more moves have to be made. There are 16 guys under guaranteed contract, with 7 of them 25 or older on a rebuilding team. On top of that, only two young players (under 25) have previously earned regular minutes in the NBA (Bledsoe and Kieff).

KH: If teams field offers for Marcin Gortat when he is medically cleared, yes. Other than Gortat the teams assets are more in the players that they recently acquired.

**6. BONUS:** With the team moving on from veterans like [Jared Dudley](#), Luis Scola, and Jermaine O'Neal how do they replace the leadership on the roster? Also, final thoughts on The Luis Scola Era in Phoenix?

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SS: I think you let the leadership position occur organically with a younger team like Phoenix. We are not in the position to where we need that leader in order to compete for a championship right now...so why not let the players figure it out on their own? Certainly nobody saw Jared Dudley as the future locker room leader when he was acquired from Charlotte...we may have another guy ready to step up and take on that role. As for Scola, I thought he was the consummate professional here in Phoenix. You could tell the losing bothered him, and I'm happy to see him go to a team like Indiana where he can help them compete.

JC: Hornacek will play a big role in this. It would be great if Dragic can take on more of a role in this facet. Frye can be a sage mentor as well. Scola was a mistake that ended up working out well. I wasn't a fan of his game in Houston, but grew to appreciate him here. He tries to play the game the right way (except for egregious flopping).

DK: All three are in a better place now on deep playoff contenders, and the Suns got assets for two of them. Good for them, and good on the Suns. Scola was a great guy and a model for the kids to follow, but he just didn't connect with any of the kids professionally last season. Coaches loved Scola, though, and his effort will be missed.

KH: I felt bad for those three in particular this past season. All three have been around, won games, and should have been on a contender, but that didn't happen. Now all three have a realistic chance to make an appearance in the NBA Finals in 2014 so good for them. I will be rooting for them.

RP: Although the current roster doesn't seem to have a true leader, some of the leadership lost during this youth transformation can definitely be replaced. Caron Butler mentioned his role as a leader and mentor and seems to embrace it. PJ Tucker can even be a vocal leader on the court. I also look for Dragic to make strides in that department this season. As a rebuilding team gets younger, it definitely loses some of the poise and savvy that vets like Dudley and Scola provide, but the point is for the young stars to eventually develop those exact characteristics to go with their immense talent. Scola was very professional during his tenure in Phoenix and will be missed. I wasn't a fan of his before he arrived here but definitely am now. Mostly, I'm glad that he will be able to contribute on a contender next year, just like Dudley on the Clippers and O'Neal in Golden State.

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