When you are the Miami Heat , Oklahoma City Thunder , or even the Cleveland Cavaliers you know exactly how things are going to go.
LeBron James
,
Kevin Durant
, and
Kyrie Irving
eat first with the rest of the team falling in line to create an established "pecking order" throughout the roster. That can be said for about two thirds of the NBA next season as well.

That cannot necessarily be said about the Phoenix Suns who are coming off the franchises second worst season ever (worst if you do not count the inaugural season) and are still building towards establishing a competitive team.

Coming into this season the brain trust of Lon Babby, Ryan McDonough, and Jeff Hornacek have put together the staff and roster that will lead this team going forward.

The parts are different, but the message seems to be subtly the same as they were last year.

"At the end of the year one of the ways I will measure how we did -- not necessarily in terms of wins and losses, but did our guys play hard, did they play the right way, were they unselfish, and did they get better as the year went on. As long as the effort is there..." General Manager McDonough on team goals.

On the surface that is a simple statement that every team makes to start the season, but it is eerily similar to the message that was delivered last season.

"For us what we are going to do is play hard every single night, compete like crazy, and play unselfish basketball. If we do those things *we will take the results for what it is*. We are not trying to chase the Lakers right now, we are trying to reestablish what we are going to be and the culture of our team for years to come," former Head Coach Alvin Gentry at Media Day on October 1st last year.

The roster as presented is going to open up some opportunity for players to step up and be contributors, starters, and leaders for the team. Last season the team had to integrate nine new players with no leaders established coming into the season. Goran Dragic , Jared Dudley , and Jermaine O'Neal took over the leadership roles for the team due to seniority and role on the team last year, but there was room for others to step up and be in that group all year.

WHAT JEFF AND I SAID ABOUT THE PECKING ORDER OR WHO IS GOING TO PLAY THE MINUTES IS THAT IS REALLY UP TO THE PLAYERS. WE ARE NOT GOING TO FORCE THAT ON ANYBODY -McDonough on establishing leaders

This year the team could welcome as many as eight new players (nine if you count Channing Frye who missed all of last season) to the fold.

One of the new faces last year, P.J. Tucker , went from Developmental League and European League player to NBA starter for 45 games after being on a five year hiatus from NBA basketball. The way Tucker plays the game makes it easy for a coach to want him on the court as he goes after it on every possession defending, rebounding, and most important of all hustling. Tucker is nonstop hustle and energy.

When Tucker was signed it was predominantly seen as a "thank you for the effort in Summer League, here is a roster spot" type move. He wasn't going to play.

Tucker then parlayed that into those 45 starts, fifth on the team, and third most for a returning Sun this year.

"I was really impressed with P.J. Tucker in Summer League with his leadership and you know P.J. and how hard he plays, he is all out all the time, and could set an example for some of our younger guys," McDonough said in reference to Tucker being a team leader.

Looking at not only his journey and play last season, but also now his seniority, leadership ability on the defensive end, and now tenure with the team Tucker is almost a leader by default. He is the fourth oldest player on the roster and has the sixth longest tenure with the team... 79 games.

This summer the team acquired another potential leader in Caron Butler and with Dragic returning, they have a built in leader that can hopefully continue off of his strides last season. McDonough likes those there as potential leaders.

"Guys like him and Goran Dragic, those two in particular. Caron Butler is another veteran guy that has been around a long time who is very professional. There are guys there, not just those three, it could be anyone who steps up and is either a verbal leader or leads by example. Hopefully we have a few good leaders and the rest of the guys fall in line behind them."

McDonough continued, "None of this is predetermined."

"Jeff and I told our team that we really don't care where you were drafted, or what your role was here before, or how much money your making you should be in shape when you come into training camp. We will let them battle it out and see who the best guys are, those guys will play and the guys that aren't good enough probably won't."

Money does not buy you power and tenure does not necessarily buy you respect.

That is what effort is for. Between McDonough and Hornacek the team is looking to the players to step up and take control of this team.