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Since the end of last season, the [Phoenix Suns](#) have subtracted six players from their April playing rotation ([Wesley Johnson](#) , Jermaine [Luis](#) [Scola](#) , [Jared Dudley](#) , [Hamed Haddadi](#) and [Diante Garrett](#)) while adding seven, and now have a total of 16 guaranteed contracts on the books.

16 big ones

That's one more than the Suns are allowed to carry once the season starts. The regular season roster can max at 15 guaranteed contracts, though teams can carry up to 20 during the offseason.

Those 16 players does not include last year's third point guard, Garrett, or any of the other guys who showed well in Summer League, including Summer Suns Orinze Onuaku, Chris Babb and [Dionte Christmas](#)

"We may bring some non-roster players to training camp," McDonough said via email from Boston, where is selling his place this week. "But we don't have anyone committed yet. We have 16 guaranteed contracts right now so I think most agents realize that it would be a long shot for a camp invitee to make our roster unless we make another trade between now and training camp."

Minus 2?

All indications lead one to believe that two of those 16 players will be gone by camp, which starts in early October. Backup shooting guard [Malcolm Lee](#) has not been mentioned or

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introduced since being acquired in the draft-day trade for

[Archie Goodwin](#)

and the team has declined comment on

[Michael Beasley](#)

, saying they will "address the situation as soon as we've gathered all the facts."

If released, those two players count for almost \$7 million in "dead" salary for a team already paying [Josh Childress](#) \$7.18 million not to play for the team this season. That's a LOT of chedda for Robert Sarver to swallow, but it seems like Beasley, at least, is a done deal (

[according to Gambo](#)

, whose Suns sources have always been quite good).

No room at the inn

But even with a roster down to 14, there's still no playing time for second round pick [Alex Oriakhi](#)

As reported here last week, 22-year old Oriakhi

[will play for Limoges CSP this coming season in the French League](#)

Despite Oriakhi playing sparingly in summer league, this was not a case of the Suns setting Oriakhi free. It was more a case of Oriakhi preferring to play in Europe this season rather than the NBA's D-League.

"We are supportive of Alex's decision to play for Limoges next season," McDonough said. "As you know, we have made two 'one-for-two' player trades since the Draft so we are in a bit of a roster crunch."

Whenever you hear of a player heading to Europe, it usually means that his NBA prospects are all dried up. But times are changing. Teams are more and more sending their American-born second round picks to Europe for seasoning, which also allows the player to make more money and see the world while the team retains his rights in the NBA.

The Suns remain very interested in the young big man.

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"We thought it would be best for Alex to keep developing overseas," McDonough said. "We will closely monitor his progress - we will send members of our scouting staff to Europe to see him play."

Who knows what the Suns roster will look like 12 months from now, after another bevy of draft picks are taken and nine young players set to return from this year's squad with guaranteed contracts next season. But for now, Oriakhi is in that team picture.

"The plan is for Alex to come to training camp with us next season," McDonough said. "We will maintain his NBA rights."

Bring on the pickup games!

While August is a dead month for NBA teams, September usually marks the start of pickup games amongst players as they gradually get in shape for training camp and a long season. In the Nash years, those organic team building scrums began in August as guys just liked to be around each other.

I remember watching Coro's articles in August of prior years for random mentions of "X players hit the court today for pickup games" and "_____ should be here by next week" and will continue to do so this year.

Last year, the Suns best players were all out of the country until just before training camp playing for their home teams. This year, [Marcin Gortat](#) and [Goran Dragic](#) are again committed to their national teams until late September while they compete in Eurobasket 2013 in Slovenia.

But that won't stop the American-born kids from flocking to the valley to practice their run and gun style in the near future. The Morris brothers, Marshall, Tucker and the rookies, plus the summer league guys, were all here most of the summer working with the new coaching staff.

Having some of their best players on the floor with them can only raise their games to another level. How soon will budding star [Eric Bledsoe](#) hit the practice court with his kiddie corps?

McDonough on Phoenix Suns "roster crunch", Alex Oriakhi's future, free agent camp invites

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"We asked all of our players to come back to Phoenix by September 1," McDonough said. "So I imagine Eric will be back in town around then, if not sooner."

Let's get it!