

## The ugliest of the ugly: The Phoenix Suns 3-point shooting and defending

Written by

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While the Suns talk, again, about improving their defensive effort and about increasing their athleticism, the real indicator of a fun season will be their ability to make open three-point shots.

### Last season

Last season, the [Phoenix Suns](#) were a mess on offense. They attempted only the 23rd most three pointers in the league at 17.7 attempts per game. Much of that may have been because they were terrible at making those attempts, so why even try? Gentry and Hunter both regularly said they would have the players take whatever shot had the highest conversion percentage.

[The Suns were 28th in the league in 3P %](#)

at 33% (ahead of only Orlando and Minnesota). League average last season was 35.9% on 3-pointers.

Making matters worse, the Suns were the WORST TEAM IN THE NBA on defending 3-point shots. Seriously. The worst. After starting the season with a potentially record-setting pace of 41% given up through Christmas, the Suns settled in to allow 38.8% makes on the season. Unbelievable.

So, almost worst on offense and bottom-of-the-barrel on defense.

No where to go but up, right?

### This season

Think 28th was bad? It could get worse.

Since the end of last season, the Suns have jettisoned their best 3-point shooter in Jared Dudley. In fact, Dudley is the franchise's [third-best 3-point shooter in history](#), making 41.2% of his attempts throughout his Suns career. Only Steve Nash (43.5%) and

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### [Raja Bell](#)

(42.2%) were better as Suns (based on volume).

In addition to Dudley, the Suns also lost [Sebastian Telfair](#) (38% last season).

New Suns coach Jeff Hornacek made 39% of his 3-point attempts over 468 games as a Sun. Expect him to be frustrated by the number of missed opportunities this season as the ball clanks off the rim.

The Suns best three-point shooters for the 2013-14 season are new to the franchise, though both are below league average.

- [Gerald Green](#) makes 35.1% for his career (but only 31.4% last season)
- [Caron Butler](#) makes 33.9% for his career (but made 35.8% and 38.8% the last two seasons)
- [Eric Bledsoe](#) has never been a 3-pt shooter (39% last season on 78 attempts, 20% and 27.6% first two seasons)
- [Archie Goodwin](#) made 47% of his 3s in SL, but only 27% at Kentucky last season

None of the returning Suns\* are better than league average.

- [Marcus Morris](#) makes 35.2% for his career (with a 38.1% rate in Houston vs. 30.8% in Phoenix)
- [Goran Dragic](#) makes 35% for his career (only 31.9% last year)
- [Markieff Morris](#) converts 34.1% for his career (only 33.6% last year)
- [Shannon Brown](#) is a career 33% shooter from deep (just 27% last year)

Aaaaanndd, there you have it. A veritable s#%t sandwich of 3-point shooters.

\* [Channing Frye](#) is a career 39% 3-pt shooter who MAY return this season if cleared by doctors to play (heart condition). He would be the best shooter, by far, on the team if that happens.

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Looking at that lineup leads you to believe the Suns might convert somewhere between 33-35% of their 3-pointers next season, which still leaves them at the bottom half of the league. If Hornacek wants to see the Suns score a lot of points this season, that conversion rate is going to have to rise.

Defensively, the Suns have to come up with SOMETHING to stop the opponent from making so many of their attempts. They were pretty good at running the other off the line last year (opponents only took the 23rd most attempts), but enough passes would open up a guy for an easy shot. Usually from the corner.

### Conclusion

No matter what else changes this season for the Suns, we can only hope that the 3-point differential improves. There's *almost* nowhere to go but up.

Luckily, the Suns have a new head coach whose game was predicated on making shots. He's been credited with helping shooters improve for years in Utah, and has an excellent plan for improving the Suns shooters this coming season.

In fact, Hornacek has already been hard at work all summer with the kids. Hornacek's philosophy is to have the guys practice game-speed shooting. He says there's no value in "getting up" 500 shots in a gym if you're not practicing those shots coming off a screen, off a curl or attempting a catch-and-shoot or off-the-dribble at game speed. He's got them running drills to make sure they are in rhythm.

Initial returns were at least promising. The Suns led the Vegas Summer League in scoring, and [they made 40.3% of the 3-pt attempts](#). Marcus Morris sunk 47.8% of his attempts alone.

Maybe there is some light at the end of the tunnel.