

NBA Top 100 in 2017: Alex Len and Eric Bledsoe chosen represent the Phoenix Suns

Written by

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The [Phoenix Suns](#) likely won't have any preseason Top 100 players in the upcoming season, 2013-14. Last year, ESPN put only three Suns - [Marcin Gortat](#) , [Goran](#)

[Dragic](#)

and

[Luis Scola](#)

- in the preseason Top 100 on their #ESPNNRank and that turned out to be too optimistic for at least two of them.

This year, it's possible Gortat lands there again, but only if he has a good Eurobasket run with a healthy foot. He played for the first time yesterday and scored 20 points with six of those coming on dunks. Scola is now a backup for the [Pacers](#) , so he won't see Top 100 again. Plus, he no longer a Sun.

Goran Dragic might make it again this year. He jumped from 201 in 2011, to 83 in 2012. He was one of only a handful of NBA players who scored 14 points, dished 7 assists and stole 1.5 passes per game. But the Suns are not projected to win more than 25 games next season, so Dragic might be in trouble here.

Other than that this season? It would be a major stretch to put [Eric Bledsoe](#) , the Suns most talented player, up there before he even starts a game.

Fast Forward to 2017 - Bledsoe and Len

The suits boys at the main SB Nation office [have decided that four years from now, in 2017, just two of our Phoenix Suns will definitely be among the league's Top 100 players](#)

By that time, Dragic and Gortat will be in decline while Bledsoe will be at his peak and [Alex Len](#) -

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still just 24 years old in 2017 - will have had four seasons to establish himself as a top NBA player.

The Bledsoe pick seems clear, since each team likely got someone onto the list.

But Alex Len? Really?

Here's my comment for the article:

"Marcin Gortat ranked in ESPN's top 75 after just one year of starting at center for the Suns, so I can see Len making this list if he matures into exactly the player the GM thinks he will: great touch on offense, solid with rebounding and defense, and healthy enough to prove it."

Suns fans are probably scoffing at that pick, at least here on BSotS. Since Len has been in walking boots for much of the time since being drafted, fans have quickly forgotten why he was picked #5 overall in the 2013 Draft. In fact, Len was projected as the #1 overall pick by many.

I would throw in Len's [NBADraftInsider.com link](#) , or his [Draftexpress.com](#) link for a good scouting report from way back then (two months ago), but I know very few of you like to click through. I could also link to [this article stating that Alex Len is a better prospect than Nerlens Noel](#) , or this [SB Nation preview article](#) as well.

So let's leave it up to his new coach to explain, from draft night.

"Any time you can get a 7-1 guy with a long wingspan and he's athletic, he's got skills, he's 20 years old, it's a bright piece for the future," Jeff Hornacek said after Len was drafted. "It's not

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very often you can get those types of players."

On why they picked Len over [Nerlens Noel](#) :

"I think all around skill. Is he as good of a shot-blocker as Noel? Maybe not, but he is still long and he can block shots. Then he had the offensive game. When you can get a guy - again, I'll keep going back to this - you get a guy that's 7-1 that can do things defensively and block shots, take up space, with the wingspan and he's got a good offensive game; you can use him to pass, you can use him to score; that's something you don't see very often at both sides of the game. That's what we felt was really exciting about the guy: he's not just one-dimensional."

On Len being a gymnast before playing basketball:

"I always feel that the best all-around players were guys that played multiple sports. You get trained different ways. And to be a gymnast, obviously you're looking at a kid that's 7-foot-1, how could he be a gymnast? That just goes to show his agility. We saw several highlights where he catches it on one side and he can spin on a guy and get to the other side of the basket. Again, big guys are not usually that mobile. He's a very mobile guy and especially in our system, we want to get out running and he can fill the lane. Several times you saw him go down the middle of the lane, get a pass just inside that free-throw line, take one long stride and he's dunking it. I think being a gymnast is going to bode well for footwork and everything else."

On when it became clear that Len was the way to go, versus trading down:

"Well, I think it was the first pick. Most of us thought that maybe [Len] would go number one. When [Cleveland drafting [Anthony Bennett](#)] happened... Ryan and his guys do a great job of talking around the league. They have relationships with all these other GMs and I think they had a pretty good idea of what was going to happen. I think that was a surprise to everybody and once that happened he was pretty confident that it was going to work out fine."

Ryan McDonough said a lot about Len, but this quote sums it all up: "When Alex was there the decision was clear."

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Anyone else in 2017?

Clearly, this list completely ignores the three top-100 2017 players the Suns will draft in June 2014. Psssh.

As Toon Army Sun points out below, the list does include the FOUR of the projected 2014 picks into the NBA's Top 30 in 2017. That's not bad. The Suns will hopefully get one of those guys.

Until then, I can see how Len and Bledsoe are the Suns youngest, brightest hopes to be in their primes in 4 seasons. The only quibble, and it's a homerish quibble, is that [Archie Goodwin](#) has just as much chance to be top-100 NBA in 4 years (at age 23) as Alex Len does. But that's just me. Maybe both of them will make it. But for some reason, SBNation didn't project this year's #29 pick into the NBA Overall Top 100 before he ever plays a game. Go figure.