

Phoenix Suns and Channing Frye to make decision on 2013-14 any day now

Written by

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The [Phoenix Suns](#) announced Frye's enlarged heart on September 20, 2012, discovered during a routine preseason physical by the Suns team cardiologist. Frye was immediately told to stop any form of exercise that would raise his heart rate, and that he would be evaluated again in December but that his season was over.

"Nothing is more important to us than the health and well-being of our players," said Suns President of Basketball Operations Lon Babby. "Channing and his family have the full support of our organization. His health is our primary concern and we are committed to helping him in any way he needs."

"The good news is it is a virus so it does have a good chance of going away," Frye said in a Coro article on azcentral.com. "My heart can be normal again."

Frye will not participate in any basketball activities and his progress will be re-evaluated in December. He said he would rest for six months, confining his activities to golf and yoga.

Jim covered the press conference in which the [Suns discussed Frye's condition and his prognosis for recovery](#)

"There is a lot of pressure in this job and in this business," Lon Babby said at the time. "There is no pressure in these circumstances."

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"Any time an athlete hears something about your heart," Frye said about being cautious. "Like I said yesterday, it's not a knee, it's not a shoulder, you know, it's not your foot. It's not something that they can say well, this is gonna get better if you do A, B, C and D. This is something that's internal and we just have to wait and see."

Enlarged heart

[Dilated cardiomyopathy is a disease of the heart muscle](#) , primarily affecting your heart's main pumping chamber (left ventricle). The left ventricle becomes enlarged (dilated) and can't pump blood to your body with as much force as a healthy heart can.

Dilated cardiomyopathy doesn't necessarily cause symptoms, but for some people the disease is life-threatening. Dilated cardiomyopathy is a common cause of heart failure, the inability of the heart to supply the body's tissue and organs with enough blood. Dilated cardiomyopathy may also cause irregular heartbeats (arrhythmia), blood clots or sudden death.

The waiting game

Frye hung around the locker room and video room all season, even helping on Suns pregame and postgame shows on occasion.

In February, when the Suns visited Portland for a road game, Jason Quick of the Oregonian caught up with Channing and wrote that he [wasn't ready to give up on basketball](#) .

Five days ago, during a checkup, doctors felt the need to prescribe beta blockers to help restrict his heart rate. Frye is careful not to call it a setback, but the development weighs on him. He is a strict believer in practicing naturopathic treatment, and the directive for traditional medicine ends the chance of him beating this obstacle on his terms.

The medicine makes him drowsy or, as he puts it, acts like a "veil" draped over his head. Perhaps it's why he reacted so strongly Sunday while watching the All-Star Game on television. The usual motivation that came with watching the most excellent of his peers was replaced this year by a decided feeling of sadness. He could not hit the court and hone his craft. He could not hit the gym and improve his body. He still wants to play. And when he does play, it will be with

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new perspective.

"What I've learned is that you forget that it's not only a blessing to play this game, but it's an opportunity," Frye said. "I am not afraid of retiring, but am I ready? Hell no."

Channing participated in a [Bright Side podcast](#) this spring, where he talked about the tough circumstances of [Alvin Gentry](#) leaving and the Suns' struggles.

Two months ago, Paul Coro wrote that Frye [had seen the best cardiologists and was awaiting final results](#)

"We're both trying to be safe," Frye said from his Portland, Ore., home. "I've seen the best and it's up to us to decide the best for my future. I'm extremely hopeful and optimistic that everything gets worked out and I get to play next year for the Suns."

Last month, [the Suns were optimistic of his return this coming season](#) , but no word since then while they awaited more medical results.

"We're optimistic that he'll be with us and playing," [Suns GM Ryan McDonough] said of Frye in July. "Channing wants to play and the results he has gotten have been good. Obviously, we just want a consensus."

It's time...soon

Apparently, those final results are soon to be shared with Channing and the Suns.

Here is Frye at about 7:30pm on Thursday, August 22.

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And here is Frye at about 6:30pm on Friday, August 23.

Life > basketball

Makes sense that the Suns and Frye will be cautious here. Channing doesn't need the money - he will still make the full \$34 million from his current contract that goes through 2015. If Frye can't start the season, that doesn't mean his career is permanently done. He could still try to come back in the future. Or, he could retire and start coaching. The point is that Frye doesn't need to force the issue.

The Suns certainly want one of their best players back, but not at the risk of heart problems while playing. The Suns dodged a bullet last season by finding the enlarged heart during a preseason checkup. If the condition had not been found, Frye could have had a devastating reaction right in the middle of a game. The impact of such a situation on Frye's family, Suns fans and the franchise as a whole would be long-lasting.

So they wait for 100% clearance on the medical side. But time is running out on prep for the full 2013-14 season.

Logic says that if Frye is going to play this season, he would have had to start upping his training regimen already. He has not done any cardiovascular training in almost a year, and the NBA is the toughest league to play after taking time off. Though there was that Michael Jordan guy who took a year and a half off to play baseball.

Still, it would have been ideal for Channing to be exercising for months now. That they are still waiting for final results says that nothing has been conclusive yet.

I need to make something clear.

First and foremost, I want Channing to be healthy enough to live a full and happy life with his family and friends. I want him to be healthy enough to exercise any way he wants to exercise. I want him to be able to make his own decisions, not one thrust upon him.

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Second, and a distant second at that, I want him to play basketball in the NBA next season. I want to know for his sake that he is fully recovered. But only if he is fully recovered. I can't stand the possibility of Frye being a ticking time bomb if the medicals are inconclusive.

The Suns are politely declining comment at this time while they await the results along with Channing.



Frye's hopefully-not-parting-words in Coro's June column:

"It's been a trying time but I have that much more appreciation for the city of Phoenix. The fans have been so supportive. It just makes me want to come back and play in the city that much more and make us a winning franchise again."

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