

## Phoenix Suns trade for Ish Smith adding point guard depth to the roster replacing the departed Diante Garrett

Written by

Thursday, 29 August 2013 13:55 -

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All summer the [Phoenix Suns](#) have been making moves with urgency in the form of splashy, big trades and at the same time mixing in the smaller roster shake-ups that have significance as well as substance. They are doing a good job balancing the concept of fielding a roster for next season while keeping a watchful eye (or two) on the future.

They have stripped the roster down and added what may amount to as many as nine new players at the start of training camp that is only a few weeks away.

Last night word leaked out that the Suns have been in talks with the [Milwaukee Bucks](#) to move recently acquired Caron Butler to the fringe Eastern Conference playoff contender for [Ish Smith](#) and Slava Kravtsov. Both of these new faces have low odds to be a part of the future of the team, let alone make the opening day roster. Right now the roster is at 17 contracted players.

The team did not re-sign [Diante Garrett](#) as he has left for an opportunity with the Oklahoma City Thunder.

That role of the third point guard on the roster might be filled in house with the team already having [Goran Dragic](#) , [Eric Bledsoe](#) , and [Kendall Marshall](#) under contract with [Malcolm Lee](#) and [Archie Goodwin](#) both capable of playing that role in spot duty. Dragic and Bledsoe could start together with Marshall getting the bulk of the minutes at back-up point guard, but the question becomes -- Do they have room for Smith now?

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Ishmael Larry "Ish" Smith spent his first eight years playing in his backyard of North Carolina and since then has bounced around the basketball world from Houston to Memphis to Golden State to Orlando to Milwaukee and now to Phoenix in his most recent move.

Smith grew up in Charlotte, North Carolina which has been a hotbed for elite basketball talent for years.

From Chris Paul to James Worthy, David Thompson to [John Wall](#) , and [Bob McAdoo](#) to [Jerry Stackhouse](#)

the city produces talent. When it came time for high school Smith traveled just 15 miles north-east to Central Cabarrus High School where he became the most decorated basketball player to go through their gym. As his high school career came to an end Smith made the decision to go to Wake Forest even with offers from nearly every school in the state and other high major programs.

Wake Forest was just two years removed from the Chris Paul Era and after his freshman year, glorified on and off the court coach Skip Prosser passed away, leaving the program in a tough situation.

Despite the emotional set-back Smith played four seasons at Wake Forest, just about 55 miles from his home in Charlotte.

Most known for his game-winner against Texas in the [NCAA Tournament](#) in 2010, Smith has displayed the ability to be a serviceable point guard at the NBA level as a starter, back-up, and third string option. In that tournament game he was able to create a shot off the bounce and hit a game-winner with 1.3 seconds remaining in the game.

[P.J. Tucker](#)

was not on that Texas team, but likely remembers that shot.

After that shot Wake Forest went on to get throttled by Elite Eight bound Kentucky ending his

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college career, and in-turn, his time in North Carolina playing basketball.

Cocooned at home in North Carolina Smith was able to put together a reputable career at the amateur level, but was left out of the conversation at the 2010 [NBA Draft](#) that saw six other point guards selected. That did not deter Smith as he took the unconventional route in the NBA as a journeyman traveling a total of 8,191 miles collectively since entering the NBA three years ago. For a kid who played eight years within 55 miles of his family, home, and comfortable surroundings, Smith has moved around a lot in three short years in the NBA trying to find a home.

Miles and numbers aside, Smith is landing in a situation where he can carve out a role on this team, but it will not be an easy task. The new regime is looking to be as athletic as possible, something Smith does not struggle with, and to a young team that is looking for someone (anyone) to step up there could be a spot on the roster here.

Last year the Suns seemed to want to bring along Garrett, but never dived fully into the rookie point guard as an investment. They already had two freshly signed and committed point guards in Dragic and Marshall so Garrett was the odd man out at times. He played in only 19 games, but was always jovial in the locker room willing to talk about Iowa State basketball, coach Fred Hoiberg, and his development as an NBA player.

To be frank, in his full year with the Suns Garrett was used more in 2013 NBA Pre-Draft workouts than on the court. He was willing to do whatever it took to make it at the NBA level. That all paid off with a year in Phoenix and now an opportunity with the Thunder. That leaves the minutes (or DNP's) open for another player to take advantage of.

Smith is not in an amiable situation with an opportunity, but one saddled with an up-hill battle to be a third or even fourth point guard and tough practice player.

Cutting Smith is a 900K initial burden today and if they keep him on the roster this year his contract is only partially guaranteed. Is it worth having a fourth point guard on the roster? As [Dave King reviewed here](#) the team has options on players to cut, cap flexibility, and could do a number of things with all the moving parts.

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All things considered Bledsoe will play the bulk of his minutes with Dragic in the same back-court making Smith the fourth point guard on the depth chart. The Suns are not trading for Smith to challenge the current rotation for major minutes, but to be another option at the position and someone who could instigate a competitive environment at practice. When given the opportunity to get on the court with other talented players he can be a facilitator and play-maker with the ball in his hands.

While he is not 55 miles from home cooking, Smith is in a position to earn a spot here on the roster and call Phoenix his home. We hardly new Butler before he was literally sent home to Milwaukee, will we get to know either Smith or Kravtsov?

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- [Report: Phoenix Suns trade Caron Butler to Milwaukee](#)
- [Phoenix Suns Podcast 35: "Breaking Bad" Basketball Breakdown](#)
- [Sekou Smith's 2010 NBA Re-Draft: Phoenix Suns Bledsoe was a Top 10 pick](#)

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