

BSOTS Roundtable: How do the Phoenix Suns wings compare to the rest of the league?

Written by

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As much as this is a "point guard league" over the years with all the great, young, athletic point guards running roughshod, the most important position on the court is still the wing. It has been that way since Michael Jordan and has not changed.

In the past 20 years seven MVP's came from the wing where nine came from the front-court and four from the point guard position.

Even further proof of the magnitude of the position: In the same 20 year window 13 championships were won with a wing as either the teams best player, the leagues best player, or a top 3-5 player at their position, sometimes a combination of the three.

How is that relevant to the 2013-2014 [Phoenix Suns](#) ?

Sixteenth Topic: How do the Phoenix Suns wings stack up against the rest of the league

1. Breaking the Ice: How do you like your wings? Saucy (razzle dazzle with some flash), Breaded (all surface, no value), Tough (overcooked, but get the job done), or Plain (a blank canvas)?

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Jim Coughenour: I like my wings parchingly volcanic. Which means, in the words of the immortal Pearl Jam Temple of the Dog, I'm going hungry. There is nothing to satiate my appetite on this roster at this somewhat nebulous position.. at least this year. While the bunker bomber may one day become something special, Goodwin may also may fizzle rather than sizzle. I'm sure a lot of us can remember the relatively high bust rate of the young phenoms back when kids were being drafted straight out of high school.

Jacob Padilla: I'm not a fan of eating wings (although on an unrelated note I was forced to try a Blazing wing from Buffalo Wild Wings a couple weeks ago and it was awful), so I don't even know how to answer this question. I do know that those who enjoy wings might not find this year's menu to their liking. The Suns don't have much sauce, but they do have a couple of breaded wings in Brown and Green, a tough one in P.J. Tucker and one plain wing in rookie Archie Goodwin.

Dave King: I've got a strong taste for spicy, saucy wings that I can dip in a ton of ranch. At my age, that's flirting with death but I do it anyway. The only way this Suns team will satisfy that craving is by moving Dragic or Bledsoe into a wing position, or if Archie Goodwin surprises the entire league by being ready to make a difference as a 19 year old rookie. Other than that, the Suns are breaded - Shannon Brown and Gerald Green offer flash but no substance.

Kris Habbas: Plain. I am a dipper. With my wings I want them to be young athletic canvas' that can be developed into promising contributors for the future. The team has one of those in [Archie Goodwin](#), but it seems they think he is going to play some at the one. Other than Goodwin the cast of [Shannon Brown](#), P.J. Tucker, and [Gerald Green](#) are all seasoned like a Native New Yorker wing, you know what you are going to get. These two spots, the two and the three, are undoubtedly the weak spots on the team this year.

Sean Sullivan: Hot and spicy...extra ranch! Not sure how I can make that analogous to our players, but I suppose I want to see the Suns with young, athletic wings who can run the floor and score in transition. This is probably why I am so excited about watching the development of Goodwin this season. I'm not expecting him to be an All-Star at this point, but I do think it will be fun to watch him play and mature over the length of the season...just knowing the kind of potential he has as a player.

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2. Should the team have made more of an effort to upgrade the wing positions this summer?

JP: They kept Shannon Brown, traded for Gerald Green and signed Dionte Christmas. What more could you ask for? Ryan McDonough couldn't fix the entire roster in one offseason. He decided to address the center and backcourt positions this year. The forward and wing positions will be addressed over the next year or so.

DK: Nope. They made the effort they could make - spent a first-round pick with high upside, and then acquired a combo guard on day two of "swap month". Fans will follow Ben McLemore's career to compare to not only Alex Len but also Archie Goodwin, lamenting every single good game that McLemore has. But shooting guards are easy find, while high-ceiling 7-footers are not.

KH: Yes and no. If they could have upgraded the wing for a young, athletic player like Bledsoe for Jared Dudley then they absolutely could (should) have. In the end they need to add talent no matter the position because nobody on the roster has made a statement on the court to be the face of the franchise. If there were no players out there in the moves for Dudley and [Luis Scola](#), then no, they made the correct decision.

SS: I don't think there was much more they could do. They brought in Bledsoe who has borderline star potential, and also drafted Goodwin who could be one of the future stars of this team...They also flipped Butler's enormous contract which was the cost of acquiring Bledsoe to begin with. I thought they did amazing in addressing the position. I'm glad they didn't bring in any more middle of the road guys that won't help us in the long run.

JC: They could have drafted McLemore... Other than that I think that the strategy of acquiring the best young talent possible irrespective of position is absolutely the correct approach. The Suns roster is far from a finished product, in terms of competing for a championship in future years, and they have time to address this in the future.

3. On a scale of "Lebron James and [Dwyane Wade](#) " (55.6 Combined PER last season) and " [Stevenson](#) [Kyle Korver](#) and [DeShawn Stevenson](#) "

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(22.0) where are the Suns this year?

(The Suns duo of [Jared Dudley](#) and [P.J. Tucker](#) combined for a 26.5 PER)

DK: Well, if you're looking to total up the two starting wing players in PER, then I think Bledsoe/Dragic (17-19 PER) and Marcus Morris/P.J. Tucker (12 PER) will get you something south of 30 in combined PER. League average, for those who don't follow PER, is set at 15 per player (or 30 for 2 players). It's the SF position that will be lacking, in terms of replacement value.

KH: If that scale is 1-10 then the Suns are about a 1.5 or a 2... The Russian Judge might say a three. It is unfair to compare any teams wings to Miami because individually James and Wade have higher PER's than most teams wing units combined. Whether it is Bledsoe-Tucker or Brown-Green or Goodwin-Morris or any other combination with the wings this season the will struggle to shoot, score, and defend elite NBA wings.

SS: Tough one. I think it all depends on the play of Dragic and Bledsoe, and how they mesh with one another. I think they hey have the ability to be a slightly better than average back court. But we don't even know who will start at SF right now, so if we're just talking wings, then the Suns probably won't perform very well on that metric.

JC: The number has to be positive, right? Since none of the players on this roster project to match Dudley's level of production the Suns may have the weakest wing play in the entire league. It could be a little better, but can you really make a definitive argument that this isn't probable?

JP: I wish the Suns had a player as good as Kyle Korver. Phoenix does have a couple DeShawn Stevenson level players though. The wing is definitely the Suns' weakest position unless Archie Goodwin proves to be more than just a rookie.

4. The projected numbers indicate that this team will struggle as a whole to shoot the ball from three, which is a product of the perimeter players primarily. What is the

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strength of the wing unit the Suns have?

KH: They are pretty athletic. I can see more signs in the crowd like "Let Shannon Fly," "Green off the Trampoline," "Go Go Goodwin," and even more fun, creative signs from the Bright Side fans in attendance.

SS: I think speed and athleticism. Bledsoe, Goodwin, Brown can all get out and run. I'm not sure how Tucker or Morris fit into that equation...but I think both of them can find a way to contribute as well. The Suns should push the tempo and run the floor as much as possible...that is probably the best advantage they have.

JC: Define strength... Is it an area of less salient weakness. When P.J. Tucker may be the best player in this group... a team is in big trouble. Tucker is probably a great 8th man, but that's about it. Then take into account that his style of play is nearly the antipode of the rest of the group's athleticism and ability to run... and it becomes a motley crew. It will be interesting to see how the Suns eight guard lineup comes together. They might be able to implement a frenetic pace.

JP: Well, the ones that aren't that good are athletic, and the ones that can be productive aren't that athletic. If we could fuse the four wings into two players, we might have a pretty good pair. Unfortunately, the CBA (and modern technology) will not allow us to go that route. As Jim put it, this is one motley crew.

DK: Strength? Getting to the basket and drawing fouls. Goran Dragic was very good last year, getting fouled 4 times per game. Archie Goodwin led his college conference in free throws, as an 18 year old shooting guard no less. Eric Bledsoe doesn't draw fouls at a high rate, but he dips and weaves pretty well to draw attention. All of that will hopefully produce some open outside shots. And open outside shots are easier to make than guarded outside shots. Cross fingers.

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5. Since this upcoming [NBA Draft](#) is so highly regarded, does the lack of punch on the wing feel calculated as the new front-office is building towards the future?

SS: I don't think so. I think there is a difference between intentionally trying to lose, and not making any foolish moves that will hamper your options in the future. The latter is what I see the Suns doing. I think they are well aware that they are in a full-on rebuild, and they aren't doing anything to jeopardize their salary cap flexibility for the future. I'm all for it.

JC: If by calculated you mean the Suns are intentionally setting themselves up to lose, then yes. I expect more exciting basketball, but similar results. My philosophy is that it's still much more engaging to watch a team growing rather than dying, so this is still a win. If you were an augur and told me right now that the Suns will play themselves into the ninth pick instead of being in the top five it would be a challenge for me to even watch the team play this season.

JP: Calculated or not, it worked out pretty well for the Suns. The 2013 draft was full of good centers and guards and lacking in wing talent. The exact opposite will be true for the 2014 draft and as long as the Suns end up in the top five they have a chance at snagging a stud at either the three or the four. I don't think they intentionally sought to create the worst wing rotation in the league. But as I said above they can only address so many spots in one offseason and to upgrade the position at all costs with no thought to the future would not have been wise.

DK: Absolutely. Ryan McDonough, no doubt, looked at Ben McLemore and said to himself "I can get someone with his skills AND an alpha dog attitude by the end of July 2014." McD has the 2014 draft and a year's worth of trade possibilities around the league. The 2014 is particularly strong on wing talent, while it's weak on 7-footers with high upside.

KH: That is very much a possibility, but the odds are something that Ryan McDonough and Lon Babby are fully aware of so simply being the worst team in the NBA does not secure the top pick. There are some intriguing wings in the class from [Andrew Wiggins](#), to [Dante Exum](#), and [Jabari Parker](#). All three could be high level scorers and franchise changers at the two, three, or the four in the NBA next year.

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BONUS: One man's trash is another man's treasure. Is that the case for the [Miami Heat signing Michael Beasley](#) and the [Golden State Warriors hiring Lindsey Hunter](#) last week?

SS: More power to them. I still wish Beas the best. I'll continue to hope that MB finally turns it around ... but only a fool would bank on it at this point. As for Hunter, I think he could be a solid addition to Jackson's staff. He wasn't head coaching material, at least not from what we saw in Phoenix, but maybe he'll do well in his new position with the Warriors.

JC: The circularity of the Beasley situation is pretty hilarious. Hopefully he can still be reached and become a real NBA player, but I'm not holding my breath and every time his ouster is revisited it takes me away to a special place... I'm feeling fairly musical today. If Lindsey Hunter is the Warriors come up then they are some of the best thrift shop bargain hunters in the league, maybe the world and possibly even the universe. But I jest, best wishes to both, but it almost felt like those two were poisoning the team that I love. Peace out.

JP: I doubt it. Good luck to them and their new teams, though.

DK: Of all the coaches and players in the NBA, no one touted Hunter's future and potential more than the GS coach Mark Jackson. They are friends and have a lot of respect for one another. I figured that Hunter would end up there if he didn't get a HC job somewhere else this summer. Jackson is treading on thin ice this year, having replaced the league's highest paid assistant (Mike Malone) with a couple of coaching rookies. On Beasley, I think Miami just said WTH and couldn't see a downside to having Beasley on their roster. They may decide otherwise by end of training camp. There's no guarantees in that contract.

KH: Or is trash just trash? I am not going to bash Hunter here because he was put in a position to fail, but he did position himself to be where he was. Hopefully he can learn the ropes under another young coach in Mark Jackson and become a better manager of people. With Beasley, I [said enough here](#)

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