

## Phoenix Suns have questions on Frye, Bledsoe, Len and youth vs. experience

Written by  
Thursday, 26 September 2013 09:00 -

---



After a summer in which the Suns turned over most of the roster - getting temporarily worse while attempting to create a more sustainable future - there remain some important questions as training camp looms.

### Will [Channing Frye](#) play?

After being cleared to resume workouts by some of the best heart doctors in the world, Frye still awaits word from the Suns as to whether he will rejoin the team as an active player. If they are going to make an announcement, it appears most logical that announcement would happen this week. Media Day is Monday, with training camp starting the day after. There appears to be no reason to avoid the decision any longer.

Frye has a guaranteed contract for \$6.4 million this season, third-highest on the team behind [Goran Dragic](#) and [Marcin Gortat](#), and a player-option for \$6.8 million next season. Athletically, he is also the third or fourth best player on the roster at this time. While others may have higher upside, Frye brings much-needed shooting, low-post defense and maturity to team in desperate need of those skills.

Yet, Channing himself said the recovery process would be a slow one. In an exclusive interview with Kris Habbas, Frye said he would not take the court until he knew he could provide a positive contribution. Since a shoulder dislocation in April 2012 - his second in two years - and the heart enlargement, Channing started at ground zero just two months ago with his conditioning. He is certainly not at NBA caliber, and may not be the old Channing until spring.

But with the Suns in rebuilding mode, they could use a steadying force in the locker room and on the bench. Frye, 30, would be the oldest player on the team and has a positive, forward-thinking outlook on life that could help when times get rough. Some contributions as a bit player early in the season would still allow the Suns to evaluate youth while getting a bit of shot-making off the bench next to rookie [Alex Len](#).

Written by

Thursday, 26 September 2013 09:00 -

---

### Will [Eric Bledsoe](#) sign a contract extension?

So far, and true to form, the only contract extensions from the 2010 Draft so far have been MAX extensions - [John Wall](#) and now Paul George. Additionally, strong rumor has [DeMarcus Cousins](#) getting a MAX extension of his own, thanks to new owners willing to spend to keep the best talent.

Generally, the only other rookie-deal extensions signed by October 31 (after which, extensions cannot be offered until next summer) are those north of \$10 million per year.

Eric Bledsoe profiles at this point to about \$8-9 million per year, and that's assuming he improves to being a solid NBA starter. [Jeff Teague](#) of the [Hawks](#) just got \$8 million a year this past summer. But Bledsoe might prefer to compare himself to [Ty Lawson](#), who got \$11 million per year after being a three-year starter in Denver.

Will the Suns "overpay" Bledsoe, assuming he was only held back by the presence of [Chris Paul](#) in LA? Or will Bledsoe take a lesser amount for the guaranteed long-term contract and investment in him as a starter?

Most likely, those answers are no. Bledsoe is most likely to wait until next summer to let the free agent market set his value after a year on big minutes in Phoenix.

### Is Alex Len 100% cleared for training camp?

Rookie center Alex Len resumed running on a treadmill in late August, was cleared for basketball activity several weeks ago and recently cleared for "contact". It is unclear, though, whether Len has been playing pickup games with the rest of the team this month. Those games are completely unstructured and full of running, which may not be conducive to his early rehab.

Generally, we don't hear of players' true availability until training camp is underway. At that time, the players are either on the court or they're not. I am very curious whether Len truly is cleared

## Phoenix Suns have questions on Frye, Bledsoe, Len and youth vs. experience

Written by

Thursday, 26 September 2013 09:00 -

---

for full participation in camp.

### What's the Suns mantra this season?

Ideally, the players, coaches and front office will all be signing the same tune - whatever that tune is - next week when the media descend on them in a 2-hour free-for-all on Monday.

In a perfect world, that tune makes logical sense to fans and media as they come out of the players', coaches and GM's mouth.

Last year, that was not the case. While Dudley, Dragic, Gortat and the front office talked of surprising people and fighting for the playoffs, their vision did not ring true to many of those listening.

While last year was an attempt at retooling, this year is truly one of rebuilding. Over the summer, the new GM replaced three skilled players - [Luis Scola](#) , [Jared Dudley](#) and [Michael Beasley](#) - with a collection of youth and potential with little current NBA skill.

[While the "NBARank" process is just as flawed as any subjective projection model](#) , it's a good barometer of this year compared to last year. Historically, this kind of projection is more kind to the "known quantity" of NBA veterans than youth. A year ago, more than 100 writers collectively decided that the Suns had SIX players who would make any team's top-7 rotation (ie. top 200 in a 30-team league). And that team, without a superstar or go-to player - was projected to finish 14th or 15th in the West, something the Suns obliged when all the games were played.

This year? Three of those six players are gone (Dudley, Scola, Beasley) while a 4th dropped way down (Channing Frye). The rankings are only listed for 225-500 so far, yet ALL BUT THREE current Suns players are listed in the bottom 253 in the league. In a 30-team league, that means 13 of your [Phoenix Suns](#) are no better than the 8th-12th man in an average team's playing rotation. Only Marcin Gortat, Goran Dragic and new acquisition Eric Bledsoe are deemed good enough to play in any team's top-eight rotation, coming into the season.

## Phoenix Suns have questions on Frye, Bledsoe, Len and youth vs. experience

Written by

Thursday, 26 September 2013 09:00 -

---

On a lighter side, the Suns seem to have a brighter future than they did a year ago. They have [risen two spots in ESPN's "Future" Rankings](#), with the [highest score in the Draft category](#). Players and management went up a tiny bit as well. Not something to celebrate, per se, but it's a good indication that the national media feel much the same way as the locals - crappy present, promising future.

### 1. Phoenix Suns (13.0 WARP from draft picks)

The Suns have [amassed more first-round picks than any other team in the league](#). In all likelihood they will have three first-round picks next year (Indiana and Minnesota owe them future first-rounders) and two in 2015 (when they get a pick from the [Los Angeles Lakers](#) via the [Steve Nash](#)

trade). Of course, the most valuable of all are Phoenix's own. SCHOENE projects the Suns as the league's worst team in the tougher Western Conference, and estimates they head into the lottery in the No. 1 spot more than 60 percent of the time. While that doesn't guarantee the No. 1 selection (the Suns land that an estimated 22 percent of the time), it would mean getting one of the four top prospects in 2014's deep draft. Phoenix figures to spend one more season near the top of the lottery, and could have two 2015 lottery picks depending on how the Lakers fare in free agency next summer.

Still, what will the players and management say next Monday as camp opens? It's really difficult to say, out loud, "we expect to lose 60 games". In fact, Dragic has already said at Eurobasket that he hopes the team fights for the playoffs. And Channing said to Bright Side that he and the other veterans expect to win every game.

It will be an interesting dance with the media this season, that's for sure.