

Written by

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[Alex Len](#) is a bit of a mystery man to many fans. In a summer replete with lots of action from the Suns, the #5 overall pick FROM THREE MONTHS AGO has almost been lost in the shuffle of all the moves the team has been making. Good thing Bright Side of the Sun is here to remind you all about him.

Alex Len is a 7'1" 20 year old with a lot of raw talent and tremendous potential. He possesses a rare blend of size, mobility, offensive polish and defensive presence and has the capacity to be the franchise center that the Suns are very much hoping he will become. Injuries, lack of consistency and an ill-fitting offensive system limited his production in college, but he he was still a highly regarded prospect entering the draft because of his skill-set and potential. In fact, he was even considered to be a strong candidate for the #1 pick up until the draft began because of performances such as this:

Ultimately, the Suns picked Alex Len 5th overall, with Ryan McDonough and Jeff Hornacek pointing to his potential to be a complete, two-way center. Alex has been recovering from stress fracture surgeries on both of his ankles this summer and two weeks ago, he shared some good news on Twitter:

It's go time! [#GoSuns](#) pic.twitter.com/86aXncuboU

— Alex Len (@alexlen) [September 12, 2013](#)

I recently had the opportunity to speak with Alex and discuss many things about his health,

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goals, interests and more. In this segment of my two-part exclusive interview feature, Alex shares how he's doing before he heads off to Flagstaff for the Suns' training camp:

Q: How are you feeling physically?

A: I'm feeling good. I've started playing. **I've been playing for two days already, playing pick-up games.** My ankles are feeling good and I'm ready for training camp so I'm looking forward to it.

Q: Are you back to 100% and totally cleared to play?

A: **Not 100% yet. When I play pick-up games, I start every game but they pull me off to the side after a couple minutes because they don't want me to overdo it before the season, you know?** I haven't played for about 5 months so I'm out of shape. Training camp is going to be a lot of running just to get in shape, get my wind back.

Q: A lot of people don't know exactly what to expect from you this year. You're a big man with a great skillset and I think you have a very high ceiling. Even your draft stock was tough to get a hold on - a lot of people thought you were going to go #1 overall. The Suns obviously ended up picking you with their #5 overall pick. So what can you tell fans to expect to see from you in your rookie campaign?

A: Rookie year will be a bit different for me because I'm coming off two surgeries on my ankles. It's going to be really tough for me but I'm just going to play as hard as I can and bring a positive energy to do whatever I can for the team. Whatever coach asks me to do, I'll be ready. When my name gets called, I'll be ready.

Q: Fans are really excited about having two talented rookies in Phoenix this year. Both you and [Archie Goodwin](#) were first round picks and will be solid, young building blocks for the team. Any thoughts on what you both have to do in your rookie season?

A: All we can do is just get better, just try to learn everything we can. There are a lot of really good, smart and experienced people around us like Coach Hornacek so we just have to try to learn something new every day.

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Q: You mentioned Coach Hornacek. You obviously have limited experience with him at this point but what are your thoughts on him so far?

A: Coach Hornacek has been watching the scrimmages. I talked to him and he definitely wants us to play a really fast, high-tempo game because like I said, we got a lot of really athletic guys. So far, he just wants us to go up and down when we scrimmage and play high tempo.

Q: How do you think you fit into such a fast-paced offense?

A: I think it fits my game well. I can run, definitely, and I can block shots and make good outlet passes which lead to fast-breaks.

Q: You mentioned you just started scrimmaging with teammates. How has that been?

A: It's been good. Almost everybody's back, I think, except the overseas guys. Dragic is not back yet but I think he gets in on Saturday. Guys are just trying to find a feel for each other. With a new team and a new coach, it's a big learning experience. So far, I really like the team. We're really young. From how I understand it, fans don't really expect us to be really good this year but I think we can make some noise. We're pretty athletic, too. We got a lot of athletic guys and I think it's going to be fun.

Q: Let's step off the court for a moment here. A story that a lot of people seem to like about you is your relationship with your girlfriend, Essence. As someone also currently in a long-distance interracial relationship, I'm also very supportive. Can you talk about how she has helped your transition into the NBA?

A: She's helped me a lot. She helped me more when I just got to college because I didn't speak English that well and she helped me a lot with that. In the tough times in college, too, like when I didn't play well or something, we always went to the gym to just get shots up and things like that. She actually gets into town today.

Q: I'm glad to hear that. Now let's go from love to hate. At Maryland, you were obviously part of a good, old-fashioned rivalry with Duke. As a Phoenix Sun now, how do you feel about LA teams?

A: Oh yeah, I know the [Phoenix Suns](#) and LA have been rivals. They don't like each other since, I don't know, a very long time. Now I'm on the Phoenix Suns so I gotta hate them too!

Q: You just won a lot of points with Suns fans. They're going to love hearing that. You're already a hit, Alex.

A: [laughs] Thanks man.

Exclusive Interview: Phoenix Suns Rookie Alex Len is Ready to Run with Team, Learn from Coaches and I

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In Part 2 of the interview (to be published early next week), Alex Len elaborates on the skills he's focusing on developing and discusses his favorite movies and hobbies.