

Written by

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Technically, today is the first day of the NBA season for the [Phoenix Suns](#) as they arrived in Flagstaff for Training Camp today after meeting with the "media" yesterday. Media goes in quotations' because they let Dave King in...

At camp the team is going to try and establish a style, a rotation, and a general feel for the season.

Bright Side will be at camp for most of the days to get the ins-and-outs of what new head coach Jeff Hornacek and the new look Suns are up to. What are the most intriguing battles heading into camp between positions, minutes, and other factors?

Eighteenth Topic: Roster Battles

1. Breaking the Ice: [Goran Dragic](#) is going to start, but [Eric Bledsoe](#) has to start, so who is the team's starting "point guard?"

Jim Coughenour: Dragic is by far the superior distributor. His average of 7.9 assists per 36 minutes easily surpassed Bledsoe's 5.4. Goran was 8th in the league in assists per game (7.4) and 12th in assist percentage (35.7). It would be folly to limit his ability to play to his strength. The point guard duties don't have to be exclusive to one player, though. Hornacek himself played the role of point two in his career and I wouldn't be surprised to see him implement a system where both have facilitating duties.

Kris Habbas: Goran Bledsoe or Eric Dragic, neither really have a ring to them, but that is the nonanswer to this question. They are both going to run the point evenly in my opinion with pick-and-rolls, attacking the rim, and running the offense. There is no right answer here because this is an open audition for these two for the starting job of the future here in the Valley.

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Richard Parker: They'll both share duties at the one and two spots but on offense, Dragic will most likely be the primary distributor, simply because he's proven to be better at it than Bledsoe. On defense, Bledsoe will handle opposing point guards and Dragic will have to deal with opposing twos on most ights.

Sean Sullivan: Dragic. I think Dragic continues to be the main distributor of the Suns, which will free up Bledsoe to attack more off the ball and run in transition. The versatility will allow this to change however depending on certain match-ups, but I think Dragic is our default distributor.

2. With that said, how do you distribute the minutes between [Shannon Brown](#) , [Archie Goodwin](#)

**, [Dionte Christmas](#)
, and [Malcolm Lee](#)
?**

KH: Depending on what the team does on the wing (more on that below) Brown is either the man out of the rotation or the first guard off the bench while Goodwin works on cutting his teeth in the NBA. Realistically, the inexperience of Goodwin should equal the miscues that Brown provides so they are a wash in terms of on-court impact, but the development of Goodwin has to be the priority. Lee and Christmas have little chance of cracking the rotation in general. At camp the battle between Brown and Goodwin is the third most interesting to me.

RP: Personally, I would much rather give minutes to Goodwin than any of the other three. I would give him the bulk of the backup shooting guard minutes, with Brown or Christmas earning a some minutes every now and then or if Archie takes a D-League vacation at some point throughout the season. As for Malcolm Lee, I fully expect him to be off the team by the first regular season game. If not, just play him 48 minutes a game. At center.

SS: I think Goodwin is the only real priority for minutes beyond Dragic and Bledsoe. They need to develop Goodwin and bring him along (hopefully as a two guard), but none of the other players are in the Suns' long term vision, so I don't see why it's necessary to give them time, unless it's needed to help rest the other players.

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Tuesday, 01 October 2013 11:00 -

JC: 0, depends on performance leading into the season, 0, 0. Actually, can I play Shannon negative minutes?

3. The three spot seems securely P.J. Tucker's starting position, but is there any scenario where he could lose that job? How much should [Marcus Morris](#) and [Gerald Green](#) play at the three?

KH: Here is the biggest question for me, and Dave and I disagree on this one, but Tucker to me has earned the starting job. He is also the type of player that can help erase some of the defensive inefficiencies that will be caused by a two-point guard line-up and the hole at the four. Marcus provides shooting whereas Tucker is the veteran and the best defensive option that can defend up to four different positions.

RP: With this roster, anything can happen. Tucker is a known quantity at this point in his career, so I would not at all be surprised if the team gave Marcus Morris significant run as the starting three. In fact, I expect that to happen at some point in the season.

SS: Anything's possible. If the Suns' are serious about trying to develop Marcus as a starting three, then they could give him additional time. Otherwise, they may just stick with Tucker for the time being. I don't see Green really being a factor at all.

JC: The team would be wise to give their younger players every opportunity to supplant the veterans. Despite the infatuation some people have with Tucker, which includes coaches to a certain extent, he is an 8th man. He struggles to score and is overrated as a defender. Green is entering his 7th NBA season, which would be 9th if not for playing overseas for two years. It is unlikely that he "figures it out" as a 28 year old halfway through the season. This job is Marcus's for the taking, but he needs to earn it.

4. Overall the four position has been suspect post- [Amare Stoudemire](#) and the current candidates to man spot are [Markieff Morris](#) and [Channing Frye](#). Does this team need more than just stretch-fours? (Or as [Lindsey Hunter](#)

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calls them, "What is a stretch-four?"

KH: It is almost Markieff's job by default with Channing working himself into basketball shape and the general lack of viable options at the position. The team can go against the grain and start Marcus here going very small with more shooting and offensive options because the issues are similar no matter the Morris twin. This position continues to be a huge hole on the court for the Suns since the Amare days.

RP: This team needs a long-term answer at the PF spot, one which can't be found in any player currently on the roster. Therefore, it really doesn't matter who they run at the four. A stretch four would definitely help Gortat, Dragic, Bledsoe and the overall spacing of the team but Frye will likely be rusty to start the season. Unless Markieff shows significant improvement, especially in his consistency, the PF spot will probably be somewhat of a revolving door throughout the course of the season.

SS: Yes, yes, yes. Markieff was supposed to be that guy. He was drafted to be that hard-nosed, punishing defender in the paint who could also score down low on offense. However, he's progressed more toward being the next Channing Frye instead by trying to shoot threes. It's also valuable to have a floor-stretcher like Frye, but a guy who can reliably finish at the rim off of a pick and roll the way STAT used to is something the Suns are very much missing.

JC: I wouldn't classify Morris as a stretch four because teams dare him to shoot and he still only hits at a 33% clip. I think of him as more of a borderline wasted draft pick that better show massive improvement this year since he's 24 and that's a year which improvement tends to taper off after... Stretch and traditional bigs can work on a system specific basis. But... unless whichever type of four you have is also one of the top five players in the league it doesn't really matter because that's generally what it takes to win. If I'm cornered I'll take a guy as close to 20/10 as possible (basically a unicorn) which is more of the Randolph (who still has a nice midrange game) mold.

5. [Marcin Gortat](#) is the five of today, but is playing on an expiring contract and could be

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major trade bait if he plays well early on. So let's talk about
[Kravtsov](#)

[Viacheslav](#)
!?

RP: The first rule of Viacheslav Kravtsov is you do not talk about Viacheslav Kravtsov.

SS: Haha. Well...He's tall.

JC: Well... Kravtsov had a .086 WS/48 last season - the exact same as Gortat. In fact, that would have qualified him for fourth on the team. With Len and Frye on the roster Gortat is unnecessary and incongruous. Hopefully he (Marcin) can shake the malcontent label and improve on his fairly abysmal 2012-13 season so the Suns can get something for him. The major trade bait label may be inapt due to the fact that he's not an upgrade for nearly any contending team (this has already been discussed ad nauseam). While we're on the subject of disgusting to a ridiculous degree, that will be my general feeling if Ryan can't wonder weave his way into some kind of return for the Polish Pillow.

KH: In EuroBasket Kravtsov played well in moments showing some potential as a defender and a shot-blocker. He is going to have to fight Miles Plumlee and Alex Len for minutes and at the start of the season might be fourth on the depth chart. Having said that, in basically 19 minutes a night Kravtsov was good for 7.4 points per game, 4.5 rebounds, and 2.0 blocks. Solid numbers in a very competitive atmosphere.

BONUS: What position battle are most excited to see play out? Does anyone have a bold prediction on a starter or rotation player?

SS: Frye vs. Markieff? Bledsoe vs. Dragic? Len vs. Gortat? Goodwin vs. other 6th man? Any of these position battles could be topics of contention once the season starts and we begin to see how the players are adjusting to the new system and the new roster as well. I think Len vs. Gortat will definitely be one to keep an eye on if Len is indeed healthy from the beginning and ready to go. Len will face a steep learning curve early on, but if he picks it up well enough he could make the fans start clamoring for him to start ahead of Marcin, especially if Gortat faces another one of his slumps.

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JC: I'd like to see a three guard lineup of Dragic, Bledsoe and Goodwin get a chance to run teams off the court. It really wouldn't be that big of a size mismatch (against some teams) and it might be fun to watch. I'm all about trying to make getting pummeled as fun as possible. It beats watching a mundane pummeling.

KH: I already mentioned the first (Tucker v. Marcus Morris at the three) and my third (Goodwin v. Brown at back-up two) battles on the roster, but my first is another on the bench, for the last point guard minutes. The team invested a lottery pick in Kendall Marshall, then brought in Dragic, Bledsoe, Lee, and Ish Smith that can all void him from the roster ledger. This front office and coaching staff did not draft Marshall which could lead to him losing a spot in the rotation and, eventually, off the roster.

RP: Positional battle? Malcolm Lee vs. Ish Smith vs. Dionte Christmas vs. James Nunnally for the first guard to be cut by the Suns. Bold prediction? Gerald Green and Miles Plumlee will each start at least one game at some point this season (I'm actually serious about this).

Bright Siders, what do you think?