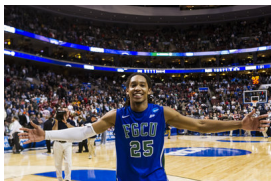


Preview: The Phoenix Suns Welcome In Maccabi Haifa For Pre-Season Opener

Written by

Monday, 07 October 2013 12:00 -



The [Phoenix Suns](#) left Summer League with one loss (in the Championship Game) and left Training Camp in Flagstaff with win (and a loss) as well during a friendly scrimmage. Now the pre-season begins with another friendly affair as the Suns host the reigning Israeli Premier League Champions.

[Maccabi Bazan Haifa](#) does not feature a lot of known characters for the American audience outside of "Dunk City's" Sherwood Brown.

This will be the second time Brown gets on the court at U.S. Ariways Arena here in Phoenix as the Suns worked him out on [June 18th in a group workout](#) close to the end of the [NBA Draft Process](#). Brown is now the star and key player for Maccabi Haifa as they look to replace their former star point guard, Wichita State alum, Gal Meker who is now with the [Dallas Mavericks](#)

This should be an interesting game for the Suns to test out their new head coach, new roster, and rookies.

To kick off the 2013 Pre-Season the [Philadelphia 76ers](#) fought tooth and nail with the Bilbao Basket needing a pair of [Spencer](#)

[Hawes](#) free-throws late to seal the 106-104 win against Davis Bertans whose draft rights are owned by the [San Antonio Spurs](#)

. That team featured three former or future NBA players while Maccabi has maybe one (Brown) that has that type of potential.

Don't expect more of that "Dunk City" style with Maccabi, but maybe some moments of that from both sides with the athletes each team has on display. This years Suns team might be the

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lottery version of "Dunk (or Lob) City."

(Recent) History Lesson

The only connection the Suns have to Israel comes from former Sun Amare Stoudemire and his recent move in faith and applied citizenship.

Head-to-Head (past four seasons including Playoffs)

N/A

Head-to-Head Match-Up (last season)

[Donta Smith](#) : 16.8 PPG 5.3 RPG 5.2 APG 2.0 SPG 59.3 FG% (35 games)

P.J. Tucker: 6.4 PPG 4.4 RPG 1.2 SPG 47.3 FG% (79 games)

These teams have not played head-to-head this year, go figure, but the potential point guard duel between Smith and Bledsoe should be intriguing. While he does not play "point guard," Smith does a little bit of everything from the forward position making the battle between secondary play-makers one to watch. Last year Meker was the star point guard for Maccabi which led to a contract in the NBA with the Mavericks. Now the back-court will have a different look with David Cubillan teaming with Brown, and Smith creating plays from the four, very talented player-makers for both teams.

In fact that should be the most fun tonight. Watching the back-courts of Dragic-Bledsoe-Tucker go head-to-head with the Cubillan-Brown-Smith back-court. If Maccabi can get the edge in that department they could have an opportunity to win this game.

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(Potential) Starting Line-Ups

PG - [Eric Bledsoe](#) v. [David Cubillan](#)

SG - [Goran Dragic](#) v. [Sherwood Brown](#)

SF - [P.J. Tucker](#) v. [Ben Rice](#)

PF - [Markieff Morris](#) v. [Donta Smith](#)

C - [Marcin Gortat](#) v. [Ike Ofoegbu](#)

Potential Suns Inactives: N/A

Potential Maccabi Inactives: N/A

Key Match-Up

Goran Dragic v. Sherwood Brown

Easily the biggest name to draw in the casual fans for Maccabi is Brown while the fan favorite out here in the Valley over the years has been Dragic. Both are talented scorers that will have the opportunity to play off the ball a lot in this match-up to showcase their scoring abilities. They are evenly matched athletes that can do a little bit of everything making this the most fun match-up on paper. Or a screen.

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Brown was the star of "Dunk City's" run in the NCAA Tournament which included knocking off No. 3 Overall pick Otto Porter's Hoyas and second round pick Jamaal Franklin's Aztecs. He is an exciting athlete that is more of a combo guard, but plays more off the ball typically out of team need.

Interesting Stat: 24 Minutes

[Channing Frye](#) was not expected to play, let alone get on the court for 24 minutes playing as well as he did in the teams inter-squad scrimmage to close out training camp. He stepped in and played well with 11 points and five rebounds while Markieff struggled (2-12 from the field) creating the impression that if Frye can play himself into basketball shape in the pre-season he may be able to steal the starting job back from the man who replaced him due to his heart condition.

Meaningless Stat: Everything else to do with the scrimmage

[Gerald Green](#) shot well, [Ish Smith](#) had six assists, and Dragic shot the ball poorly, all of which will mean very little for the team construction heading into pre-season play. These next few weeks are going to allow Coach Hornacek the opportunity to set a rotation and see who belongs on the court and when.

This game should be a fun and interesting way to kick off the 2013-2014 NBA Season for the Suns.