

## The Phoenix Suns set the pace, create havoc behind Eric Bledsoe, Goran Dragic, and P.J. Tucker, and do

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What happened was the closest thing to perfection that the [Phoenix Suns](#) may find during the 2013-2014 season.. That perfection came in the form of a 130-89 route of Israeli Premier League Champion Maccabi Haifa to kick-start the pre-season.

The game as a whole encapsulated all of the potential positives and the handicapping negatives that will be around all season.

Before the game, when the starters were announced, Head Coach Jeff Hornacek referenced wanting a certain type of player on his team. The starters were pretty much what was expected with [Eric Bledsoe](#) , [Goran Dragic](#) , [P.J. Tucker](#) , [Markieff Morris](#) , and [Marcin Gortat](#) getting the nod out of the gates, but the type of prospect that Hornacek seems to want is a pretty spot on description of one of the starters. The coaching staff is looking for a specific type of player this year.

"The guys that might not be the most talented," Coach Hornacek elaborates on what he is looking for. "The guys that do what is asked defensively, offensively and don't over rotate. Guys that get back on defense. Guys that make extra passes. Those are the guys that us as coaches feel give us the best chance to win so that is what we are looking for."

That is about as one the nose for a scouting report for players like Tucker as you are going to find.

Having players like Tucker, Bledsoe, and Dragic on the perimeter allows for a quicker pace. A more high octane approach and when one of those three is on it with their energy, as we saw in this exhibition, the effects ripple throughout the roster giving this team a chip on their shoulder to create turnovers at a high rate. In this game the Suns forced 23 turnovers, netted 16 steals, and scored 43 points on the fast-break. They scored 35 points off of the Maccabi miscues in specific.

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Compare that to last season and all three of those would be season highs as the most steals (14, against Sacramento) and fast-break points (32, against Houston) were topped with this affair.

Then again this was not against an NBA team.

The Suns used their ability to create havoc in the back-court with Bledsoe spearheading the defensive break with Dragic and Tucker picking up the momentum to follow suit. In fact seven players registered at least one steal as the athletic cast of perimeter reserves like [Shannon Brown](#) (2), [Archie Goodwin](#) (1), [Gerald Green](#) (1), and [Marcus Morris](#) (1) all joined in the festivities creating turnovers and opportunities to score in transition.

Effort is one thing that is hard to measure, but when someone like Bledsoe comes into the game with the type of energy and effort he plays with that is contagious. That energy can be shared with teammates.

"That is how it always is," Bledsoe after the game on the contagious nature of energy and effort. "For me, I just try to energize everybody and everybody just fed off of what I did."

Shooting can be contagious, selflessness can be contagious, and this type of defensive effort can be contagious as well. The tone was set early with Bledsoe and Tucker registering two steals a piece and jumping on Maccabi with a +16 advantage after the first quarter.

AGAIN, WE CAN'T LET OUR GUYS FALL ASLEEP. WE PLAY PORTLAND NEXT GAME AND THEY ARE GOING TO BE MUCH DIFFERENT TO PLAY AGAINST. YOU HAVE TO PLAY A LITTLE MORE SOLID, BUT WE WANT TO STILL HAVE ACTIVE HANDS. -Coach Hornacek on competition levels and expectations

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These numbers and this effort is unrealistic to ask for not only against NBA caliber teams, but it is another thing to ask for it consistently against NBA caliber teams.

It is one thing to create turnovers against Brian Randle, Moran Roth, and Maccabi Haifa. It is another thing to expect that nightly against the elite backcourts in the NBA featuring the best athletes for their position in the world. The backcourt trio the Suns started tonight, despite Coach Hornacek speaking to an open competition, will likely be the opening day group on the perimeter. Those three are going to create a lot of turnovers while also giving up a lot as well.

This is an identity that in the short-term will hurt them and probably lose a fair share of games, but in the long-term could elevate this team back to promise.

All throughout the game Coach Hornacek played with different line-ups from two point guards to two centers on the court at the same time. He is still tinkering with things and there is no guarantee that these five will be starters at the next game or to start the season. One thing is for certain; if the Suns retain this type of effort from the trio of Bledsoe, Dragic, and Tucker then they will be a tough team behind that swarming defense.