

Phoenix Suns Kendall Marshall on the outs after two preseason DNPs

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Hailed as the best passer in the past decade of college basketball, 20 year old [Kendall Marshall](#) was drafted by the [Phoenix Suns](#) to effectively replace the best passer of the decade in the NBA, [Steve Nash](#).

But, unfortunately, that was Marshall's high point in the NBA.

Early in the draft season of 2012, Kendall Marshall rivaled [Damian Lillard](#) as the best point guard prospect in the Draft. While Lillard was a better athlete and scorer, he had cut his teeth on four full years at a small college. Translation of his game to the NBA level was expected, but not automatic.

In hindsight, Robert Sarver was a better judge of talent than Lance Blanks.

On the other hand, Kendall Marshall was two years younger and had been second in all of college basketball in assists as a sophomore at North Carolina. Marshall had great floor vision and ran a unit that fast-broke it's way through the regular season and deep into the NCAA tournament until Marshall went down with a wrist injury and UNC failed to advance without him. Marshall was surrounded by NBA talent at UNC, seemingly a harbinger of his ability to lead an NBA team.

Marshall's lack of athleticism or jump shot didn't hurt him at UNC and, thanks to the wrist injury, he didn't hurt himself in predraft workouts because he couldn't compete. Teams had to go on "spec", which was pretty darn good. Still, he was dropped a bit due to concerns about his speed and offensive package beyond passing. On the day of the draft, Marshall had dropped to the 18th best prospect, according to draftexpress.com.

The Phoenix Suns, knowing they were about to cold-shoulder Steve Nash in free agency,

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needed an heir apparent to replace the former MVP and transition the Suns into a new era. So, at the 13th pick, they tabbed Kendall Marshall on his promise of upside and passing.

As it turns out, even the vaunted draftexpress.com had overrated Marshall's chances in the NBA.

Despite the best intentions - drafting a 20-year old "best passer in college in a decade" to lead a rebuild project - the Phoenix Suns' subsequent moves negatively impacted Marshall. Or, depending on your point of view, saved them from even further embarrassment.

A week after he was drafted, the Suns had signed a veteran starter to a big, long-term deal. Rumor has it that former GM Lance Blanks preferred [Raymond Felton](#) on a short-term deal while Marshall developed, but that the team's managing partner, Robert Sarver, hammered out the deal for [Goran Dragic](#) in the parking lot outside the stadium before Blanks could act on Felton.

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Since then, Marshall has failed to impress three different head coaches. He barely earned playing time under [Alvin Gentry](#), who preferred long-time NBA vet [Sebastian Telfair](#) over Marshall. Only after Blanks cleared the decks - firing the head coach, trading Telfair, removing requirements to "win" - did Marshall get his chance to play backup PG.

But even then, the interim HC hand-picked by Blanks - [Lindsey Hunter](#) - chose to play Dragic more minutes than ever, leaving Marshall with only scraps to share with Diante Garrett. Marshall even struggled against the same D-League competition that Garrett dominated.

Now, a new head coach enters and Marshall gets another chance. Jeff Hornacek came in with a clean slate, promising everyone a chance to compete. He spent a great deal of time with all the kids after being hired - now including [Marcus Morris](#), [Alex Len](#) and [Archie Goodwin](#) in addition to Kieff and K-Butter.

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He made it clear that Marshall needed to rework his jump shot to be a threat. That Marshall needed to raise the release higher up in the air to require the defender to play him honestly. Marshall didn't.

In Summer League, with Hornacek as coach, Marshall was the Suns starting point guard but was underwhelming. Not only could he still not score or defend with regularity, Marshall didn't even wow anyone with his playmaking - his lone NBA skill coming out of college - by collecting just 4 assists per game.

And now in preseason, the still-21 Marshall has logged just 52 minutes in 7 preseason games, including DNP-CD's in the last two preseason games. This after being the PG as they went on a 19-4 to cut a big deficit to 1 against the [Clippers](#) in their fourth preseason game.

Marshall's NBA career is on life support, just 16 months after being drafted 13th overall (and being ranked 18th overall).

Marshall has a guaranteed contract for this season already in his back pocket. Rookies get two guaranteed years to start their career. His roster spot is likely safe while the Suns try to entice someone, anyone to take him on potential in a trade.

The Suns have until Monday to decide whether to guarantee his third NBA season - next year's 2014-15 season - at more than \$2 million dollars.

After watching Marshall get the minutes equivalent to a "camp invite" this preseason despite being just 21 years old, I have a hard time believing the Suns will pick up that option. He's played the same minutes as [Ish Smith](#) , and barely more than [Dionte Christmas](#) .

Kendall Marshall is certainly wondering what the hell happened to his NBA career, and is most likely wondering how much the Suns had to do with it - that they haven't given him the chance to shine by playing him so few minutes.

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He certainly believes he's an NBA player, and now wonders when he will get that chance. Maybe he wants the Suns to decline the third year contract so he can start fresh. Definitely, he hopes for a trade to a better situation if he's not going to get playing time in Phoenix.

And with [Eric Bledsoe](#) and Goran Dragic sharing the PG duties, Marshall almost certainly won't get the chance in Phoenix.