

## Bright Side's 2013-14 Phoenix Suns Season Preview Series

Written by

Tuesday, 29 October 2013 10:08 -

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A long series of articles aimed to prep readers for the 2013-14 Phoenix Suns

The off-season is borderline complete and angst that is August is upon basketball fans to where jersey unveilings and schedule releases are MAJOR NEWS. So instead falling in line with that we are looking at a topic that is relevant to a young team -- Breakout Star.

Who will break out? Who will won't? Pins. Needles. WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN???

Eleventh Topic: Five Yearbook Category Awards!!!

***Breaking the Ice: Who is your candidate for Breakout Player of the Year for the 2013-2014 [Phoenix Suns](#) ? Explain.***

Jim Coughenour: Marcus Morris. I don't think many people expect much from him, but I expect him to separate himself from his brother this season. I think he can successfully play the role of a stretch four/wing depending on matchups. A role that Markieff seems to be smitten with, but has shown me no reason to believe he will ever be successful at. The difference? I think Marcus can be a 35%+ volume three point shooter.

Jacob Padilla: This roster is full of players the Suns would certainly like to see break out. [Kendall Marshall](#), the Morri and even Michael Beasley could all bounce back from terrible season and become

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valuable rotation players moving forward. Perhaps Goran Dragic could even break out and take a step forward. But the most likely candidate is of course new Sun

[Eric Bledsoe](#)

. He's stepping out from Chris Paul's shadow and is ready to prove he's more than just a good back-up.

Dave King: The easy answer is Eric Bledsoe. Simply by getting the most minutes per game from an under-25 player since 2007 (anything over 24 minutes would do it), the Suns will finally be playing an on-the-rise star while they are still on-the-rise. Bledsoe has the talent to make him a Phoenix Sun in the world's minds, rather than Chris Paul's backup. His best future position might be microwave-off-the-bench, but in Phoenix with this team he'll be Mr. Everything.

Kris Habbas: Like all accolades and awards this is about opportunity. Which Suns player will get the opportunity to be a breakout player? I expect to see [Marcus Morris](#) take over the role Michael Beasley was supposed to have here as the tweener scorer off the bench. He is confident and willing to go get his anytime, which on a good team is not a positive skill, but here that is just a need with Beasley and Markieff being so passive...

Richard Parker: I have to go with the easy answer here: Eric Bledsoe. He'll finally be getting starting minutes, and on a team that wants to run, no less. I expect him to be a dynamic, yet erratic player for the team. If he doesn't agree to an extension before the start of the season, I absolutely expect him to come out and try to earn as much as he can this year.

Sean Sullivan: I'm going to go with Bledsoe. He'll finally have his chance to come back out from under CP3's shadow and prove what so many have projected him to be. I think playing along side Dragic will be a blessing for him, by allowing him to focus on scoring more than running an offense.

***Secondary to that, who do you feel has to breakout this year for their career, the Suns season, and the overall future of the team? Explain.***

JP: Well, each of the Morris twins and Marshall have to have break-out type years if they hope to have any place on the Suns' roster moving forward. They were drafted by the previous regime and now have to impress the new coaching staff and front office if they want to stick

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around. As far as the Suns and the team's future, Eric Bledsoe is again the obvious answer. He was McDonough's first big acquisition, and whether the Suns extend him early or not, a successful season for him is a great sign that the team really is on the right track.

DK: If you categorize this answer in terms of "for their career", then that applies to nearly every player on the roster. Frankly, if you fail to excel on a 20-win team your career is in trouble. If you fail for two straight years in that situation, your career is over. You may dot some depth charts for a few more years, but your career is done. And if every player that failed last year ends up failing again, the Suns future is dimmer than many hope. One or two of Morris, Morris, Marshall, Beasley and Plumlee needs to step into a true NBA rotation player role.

KH: Speaking of Markieff! He was the 13th overall pick in 2012 taken ahead of [Kawhi Leonard](#) and

[Kenneth Faried](#)

that were viable options that year. He has to step up and prove he is more than just a guy that shoots jumpers (and only at 34.1% career) and can play inside. His development is most pivotal in my opinion.

RP: Eric Bledsoe again. The Suns are betting on a breakout season from Bledsoe and if he doesn't, the Dudley trade will have been for naught. The team needs a young player that they can hope can develop into a star and Bledsoe will need to show flashes of that this year. I'm not expecting too much from the rookies in their first years but I think Bledsoe's emergence this season will be an important factor for the Suns' future.

SS: While it would be easy to go with Marshall here, I think the real answer is Markieff. Remember, Markieff was drafted a year before Marshall, and while he has shown a little more than Kelndall thus far, I don't think he's where the team envisioned him to be after his fast start in his rookie season. This season will show whether or not the Suns can ever expect him to be more than a back up big.

JC: EB. He has the most upside of any player that's not a rookie. Risk/reward moves like this need to pay off to hasten a rebuild. Dudley wasn't a huge asset, but if Bledsoe flames out, or becomes a one year rental, it will have been a squandered resource.

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*On the other side of that who are you not as confident in seeing a spike in performance and play? Explain.*

DK: I am fairly confident that four or five of Morris, Morris, Marshall, Beasley and Plumlee will fail to establish themselves as true NBA rotation players this season. They will get minutes, but like last year it will be obvious that they are only getting those minutes because the team is so bad. Why am I confident? Because I just watched them play 90 games that way (except Plumlee, of course).

KH: Based on the roster I can see Kendall Marshall taking a dramatic shift in minutes played this game if he struggles out of the gates. If that happens then he could be looking up at Dragic, Bledsoe, Brown, and Goodwin on the depth chart.

RP: Michael Beasley (easy answer once again). Although I have hope that any of the players can do better under a new coach and a new system, I'm apprehensive about Beasley. I think he will be on a short leash this season so if he doesn't come out motivated and with great effort (starting in training camp), I don't think he'll do very well. And I'm just not sure about the prospects of Michael Beasley playing with motivation and effort.

SS: I'll say Marshall here, because I don't know if he'll really be given the chance. I still think he can grow into an effective point guard in this league, but I'm not sure it will ever be with the Suns. I don't know if he fits with the identity that this team is trying to establish, and he may even be traded before the start of the season for all we know.

JC: The team as a whole. I won't pick on the Beaz anymore, even though he sucks (see what I did there hehehe), so I'll go with Markieff. Dude played like garbage last year. If they throw him out there to start it will be like tossing a carcass in a den of lions... and a carcass could have probably duplicated his performance last season. What's funny is that his one plus level skill, rebounding, hasn't translated to the NBA. Maybe because he thinks he's a three point shooter. Which is understandable since he has no post game. He's got a lot of work to do to even establish himself as a rotation player on a decent team.

JP: Richard and I are again on the same page on this one. Michael Beasley had the worst season of his career last year, and I doubt he's going to be that bad. However, I think he is what

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he is at this point of his career and while I expect better performances, I don't expect the improvement to be enough to make him a worthwhile player.

*The team is clearly lacking in leadership with the young roster and Ryan McDonough mentioned [P.J. Tucker](#), [Goran Dragic](#), and [Caron Butler](#) as leaders. Who would you like to see as the teams vocal and on the court leaders? Explain.*

KH: To be honest, no. Other than Dragic and Tucker there are not really any players that have the cache to be a leader for this team; maybe [Channing Frye](#). Those three need to control the locker room and set the tone. Always a fan of young players taking their lumps and earning their stripes. That could happen in season with this team.

RP: I definitely want to see Dragic, Butler and Bledsoe be very vocal on the court. As the lead playmakers, Dragic and Bledsoe will need to be floor leaders during games by communicating with their teammates. I'm also counting on Butler to be a great presence in the locker room and use his experience to have a calming effect on the young players during the rough patches that the team will go through in games and throughout the season.

SS: I'd like to see more leadership from Dragic, but I don't know if he'll ever be a true leader on the court. I think Butler could step into this role, but it's anyone's guess who will actually become that guy.

JC: Ideally this would be Dragic, since he might actually have a future with the team, but passivity is ingrained in his DNA - **Dragic Not Assertive**. This will probably be Frye if he's healthy. If not, maybe EB.

JP: I think Dragic and Bledsoe can be fiery, lead-by-example type of players this season. We've seen evidence of this from both of them. However, I don't think either one are overtly vocal and that's not likely to change. Caron Butler and Channing Frye (assuming a return to health) will have to be the vocal guys. We've also seen that P.J. Tucker is not afraid to pull younger players aside and explain things to them when the situation calls for such action.

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DK: The Suns true vocal, on-the-court leader is not on the team yet, unless you count Jeff Hornacek. Secondary to Hornacek, the best leader for this young, ragtag team is having a known system to run. When in doubt, go with what you know. Last year's biggest refrain in the locker room was that the players were always running different plays (or different variations of the play) at the same time. If the coaching staff can get everyone on the same page with a fun, easy-to-remember system that makes them look good, it will be easy to get guys into the right positions.

*Should the team delegate leaders, roles, and more for the team or should that come organically? Explain.*

RP: To a certain extent, some delegation is necessary. Both of the captains from last year's team, Dudley and O'Neal, are no longer here. Therefore, the staff needs to appoint a captain that the entire team can respect. However, the actual leaders and on-court generals should be decided organically. Players will recognize and respect leadership when they see it being displayed, not when they're told to follow a team-appointed leader.

SS: No need to force things with a rebuilding team struggling to find their identity. Let it happen naturally and see who rises to the top as the next Nash, Hill, or Dudley.

JC: Roles need to be assigned, but contrived leadership rarely succeeds. Players will vote on team captains. Players who are venerable will be venerated. I think the team will still be rudderless this year, especially at the beginning, but maybe people will mature and step up as the season progresses. Or the fog of apathy could settle in again once the savage beatings ensue.

JP: I don't think delegation is the right word. It's more recognition of who those guys are on this roster. You can't make a player a leader just by telling him to be one. It's up to Jeff Hornacek to get a good enough feel for his roster and to identify who those guys are that he is going to be able to rely upon as the leaders of his team.

DK: Definitely, every player needs to know his role. Each person may have multiple roles depending on the lineup, but those roles must be clearly defined for each lineup variation. Last year, players did not know their roles and that led to discomfort and quick finger pointing once

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the going got tough. Leaders, on the other hand, can be developed organically.

KH: I am a fan of that happening organically despite last season the team taking 82 games to find one and to this day they are still looking. Goran Dragic the engine, but may not be comfortable as a leader and Eric Bledsoe is a ball of energy, but is he a leader? No Jared Dudley and the veterans are not going to be a part of the future... In this situation the team might benefit from developing select leaders unless one jumps out at/before Training Camp.

**BONUS:** *Jim stated at the beginning of the season if you told him the season numbers on [Mic hael Beasley](#)*

*and*

*[Markieff Morris](#)*

*that he could predict the wins for 2012-2013... Who are the Suns barometers this season?*

SS: Dragic and Bledsoe. I think those are our best players at the moment so I think the Suns will go as they go. Plus, the rest of the roster is so unpredictable at the moment that it's anyone's guess who the other top players on the court will be for the Suns this season, or who else will even be on the roster for that matter.

JC: That turned out to be prophetic, because those two sucked out loud and so did the team. I will deviate slightly here since this team will be lucky to win 30 games. My harbingers of *future success* will be the health of Alex Len and the EB dynamic. Those will be the two players I will focus on this season.

JP: This is a tough one because I still have no idea what the depth chart will look like. We can't really count on the rookies. I don't even know which of of Beasley, Brown, Green and Mook will be in the rotation. If Frye is healthy, that lessens Keef's importance. I suppose Eric Bledsoe is the safest answer for this as well. If Bledsoe can be the guy we're hoping he is, not only does that give the Suns good production from the shooting guard/back-up point guard spot, but it should also only help take some pressure off Dragic and allow him to play even better. [Marcin Gortat](#) in a contract year could also be that guy for the Suns.

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DK: Interesting question. Since the "goal" of many Suns fans is to finish the season with a very exciting and promising 25-57 record, then the true barometers of the Suns record will be Caron Butler and Marcin Gortat. If those guys are putting up 30 and 20 together in December, the Suns will likely be winning more games than they "should" and Hornacek will start playing to win rather than develop kids.

KH: I am going to go with how many games Marcin Gortat plays in a Suns uniform and the minutes per game for Archie Goodwin. If Gortat plays limited games (injury or trade) then the Suns are devoid or even inept in the paint. Then with Goodwin, if he is closer to 20-25 minutes per game that means the team is developing the younger players and trending towards being a bottom five team in the league.

RP: Eric Bledsoe and Markieff Morris. I've already talked about why the emergence of the former is important to this team's future, but the latter also needs to have the best season of his career this year in order to assert himself as part of the team's future. I'm not sure if he can or will, but Markieff will have the opportunity to play a big role and definitely needs to show some serious improvement on the court this year, especially with [Luis Scola](#) gone.