

Phoenix Suns pregame: Denver Nuggets face identity crisis with mismatched roster

Written by

Friday, 08 November 2013 08:37 -



The [Phoenix Suns](#) take on the [Denver Nuggets](#) tonight at US Airways Center in Phoenix. The Nuggets just won their first game of the season last night, a two-point win over Atlanta. In the off season, the Nuggets lost their GM, fired their coach and brought in a more traditional mindset - defense first, offense second.

Let's get to know the Nuggets through [Nate Timmons, editor of SB Nation's Denver Stiffs](#) .

Dave King: can't remember the last time a 57 win team completely changed their style to a more traditional one that neutered half the team's assets. Oh wait, yeah, the Suns did that 3 years ago. Worked out real well in Phoenix. I totally see why Denver followed suit. Do you see the same parallels or are the situations totally different?

Nate: I don't know all the ins-and-outs to the Suns situation from those incredibly fun teams from years back, but it sure has been a roller-coaster ride in Denver. I truly think that the Nuggets, in particular Josh Kroenke, wanted to keep Masai Ujiri and remain on the path that he was on. The fact they had a "handshake" deal with him in place after the [Philadelphia 76ers](#) came calling before the 2012-13 campaign and never put pen-to-paper after the fact left many in Nuggets Nation scratching their collective heads. The dismissal of

[George Karl](#)

may seem like a disaster to the outsiders, but many Nuggets fans were ready to see a new coach at the helm.

Now that the Nuggets are 1-3, people are asking a lot of questions. The roster doesn't totally seem to fit the style yet, but [Brian Shaw](#) also isn't liking what he has seen. People think he doesn't want to run, but I spoke with him, at length, about how he does want to run and use the altitude to his team's advantage, but how he also wants a good half-court and defensive team. The word around Denver is "patience", but I'm not sure people are wanting to see the franchise continue on with the parallels to the Suns (who have spent years re-tooling and re-building).

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DK: is [Kenneth Faried](#) suddenly just "a guy" who will eventually join McGee on the bench/trade block?

Nate: I believe that in Shaw's system and with [J.J. Hickson](#) on the roster that Faried is best served being a bench big man. That's not to say he is just "a guy" in that role. He can continue to be very effective and a big asset off the bench, but he also has to show some improvement to his overall game. People love to see his high-flying alley-oop dunks and rebounds, but those plays often blind people to the fact that he also gave up a plethora of points to his man on the defensive end, or is constantly missing his assignment in the pick-and-roll defense. We all know he has to improve his shooting range, but he's still young enough to get there. We all want to know if he'll be traded as nobody on this roster is safe from that talk.

DK: Who is Denver's player of the future? Still Ty Lawson and Javale McGee (highest paid new contracts)? Or is it [Evan Fournier](#) ?

Nate: I don't know if that guy is on the roster. The Nuggets appear to be in wait-and-see mode with this team. Many in the media suspect that we could see a very different team after the trade deadline - that might be when the front office feels it has ample time to make some decisions on this current roster. The McGee honeymoon is over; people want to see him play better, but many fear that with his asthma and his lack of attention to detail that he may be a high-priced bench player who is currently being outplayed by [Timofey Mozgov](#) (who looks pretty good thus far, in his own right). Fournier has struggled mightily, but he's still a youngster without much experience, as is

[Quincy Miller](#)

(who has yet to play a role with the team). Lawson is still the team's best player and he's also the team's best asset for a potential trade.

DK: How will [Danilo Gallinari](#) and [Wilson Chandler](#) co-exist on this team, given what appears to be Shaw's desire for traditional positions?

Nate: That's a great question. Shaw has paid lip-service to wanting traditional positions, but he also has been using J.J. Hickson at center, [Nate Robinson](#) at shooting guard, and [Andre Miller](#) at small forward. Yes, Andre Miller at small forward. Shaw also has discussed playing Chandler at shooting guard, with Gallo at small forward or

[Darrell Arthur](#)

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in his stead, as he plays very well with Gallo. Right now, Nuggets fans would take either guy to just be healthy and worry about all the other stuff later. Chandler has yet to appear in a preseason or regular season game and Gallo may not be back until late November, sometime in December, or really anyone's guess. Most national people say January or February with Gallo, but I think they failed to get the update that he suffered a partially torn ACL that did not require surgery.

There you have it folks. Straight from the horse's mouth up in Denver. For more game coverage, troll around BSotS for a preview, practice report, gamethread and recap throughout the day as the Suns try to go 4-2 on the season. We will also post a link of my own Q&A on the Suns for the Denver Stiffs website.

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