

Assist to turnover ratio: Are the Phoenix Suns sloppy and selfish?

Written by
Friday, 03 January 2014 13:06 -



Most people familiar with the Suns would use the words cohesion and camaraderie to describe the team rather than the scathing adjectives in the title... but then why is the team dead last in the NBA in assist to turnover ratio?

The Suns' struggles to rebound the ball and end defensive possessions have already been detailed recently. Phoenix "boasts" the league's 28th ranked defensive rebounding % (72.1%) and is fourth worst in offensive rebounds allowed per game (12.4). This deficiency has led to a weakening of a still respectable 14th ranked defense (DRtg - 104.8).

There are other areas that plague this team as well.

The Suns lack a playmaker outside of Goran Dragic and Eric Bledsoe. Though not prolific distributors, Jared Dudley and Luis Scola at least helped the ball move in halfcourt sets last season. There has been a heinous amount of ball-stopping on the team this year. Besides Dragic and Bledsoe nobody on this team averages more assists (1.8) than Shannon Brown did last season. Yes, the Cannon would be third on this team in assists. The lack of facilitating outside of the two combo guards can be punctuated by the unsettling statistic that Gerald Green, whose career average is less than one assist per game, is fourth on the team in assist %.

The Suns are the only team in the NBA with only two players averaging over 1.8 assists per game.

Phoenix is 29th in the league in assists per game (19.0) and last in the league in assists per field goal made at .497. Less than half of the Suns' field goals are assisted. The only team under .500 out of the last three seasons was Oklahoma City in 2011-12 (.494).

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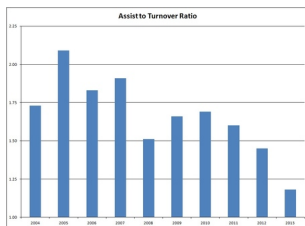
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Turnovers are a familiar malediction as Phoenix finished 29th in the league with 15.6 turnovers per game last season, but they have actually given the ball away more this season. Phoenix is 25th in the league in turnovers per game (16.0) and 22nd in turnovers per possession (16.1%).

This surge in turnovers has occurred despite the attrition of deplorable discernment and decision making by the likes of Brown and Michael Beasley.

Combine those two sets of statistics and it should be little surprise that the team is 29th (1.19) in assist to turnover ratio. This is by far the team's worst ratio in the past 10 years.



The Suns have returned to a more exciting brand of basketball, with a comfortable lead in fast break points per game (19.4 compared to second place OKC at 17.3), much like the 7SOL days where the Suns finished in the top four in fastbreak points for five consecutive seasons.

The Suns are also back to bombing from three, currently second in the league with 9.6 makes per game. The Suns were first in the league in makes from 2004-2006 with totals of 9.5, 10.0 and 9.2.

These characteristics make the Suns a threat in any game, no matter the deficit, as they can pull off a huge run at any given moment. Just look at last night's 18-0 run against the Memphis Grizzlies.

But there is a way this team is going about scoring (and playing) that is a departure from the past decade - mostly orchestrated by disseminating virtuoso Steve Nash. The Suns assist to turnover ratio is just terrible. They are almost doing a better job of sharing the ball with the other team than they are with themselves.

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	Eric Bledsoe	Goran Dragic
Assists/Game	5.8	5.9
League Rank	22	21
Assist %	28.8%	28.1%
League Rank	26	27
Turnovers/Game	3.3	2.7
League Rank	10	25

**Among players with at least 600 minutes played*

Team	PPG	APG	APG Rank
Portland Trail Blazers	109.0	24.4	3
Minnesota Timberwolves	106.7	23.5	6
Houston Rockets	105.7	20.2	24
Oklahoma City Thunder	105.3	21.9	12
Miami Heat	104.8	23.9	4
Los Angeles Clippers	104.7	23.7	5
San Antonio Spurs	104.0	24.9	2
Golden St. Warriors	103.4	23.1	9
Philadelphia 76ers	103.3	23.1	10
Phoenix Suns	103.3	19.0	29
Atlanta Hawks	103.3	25.7	1
New Orleans Pelicans	103.3	22.9	11