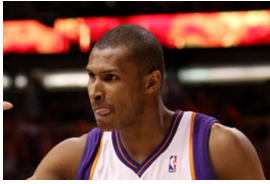


## Phoenix Suns Archie Goodwin is a keeper, but Leandro Barbosa is the here and now

Written by

Thursday, 09 January 2014 08:47 -

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The Suns have been playing 19 year old Archie Goodwin as the fourth guard all season, but Leandro Barbosa's arrival just might push Goodwin to the bench.

For the time being, new (and old) [Phoenix Suns](#) guard [Leandro Barbosa](#) will fill some of the gaping hole at scorer/playmaker left behind by the injured [Eric Bledsoe](#).

In one game, last night's win improbable win over Minnesota, Barbosa showed the Suns he is easily the fourth best guard on the roster and can provide a key contribution for the rest of the season. In 13 minutes, "The Brazillion Blur" showed the speed for which he was famous by blowing past Minnesota defenders time and again.

Barbosa made only one of six shots but every shot was a good one, and between those shots he racked up 3 rebounds, 3 assists and blocked a shot while showing he can reprise what Bledsoe and Dragic do for the Suns: create his own shot from the key of the key when a play breaks down.

### **Goodwin the future, but LB the present**

It's clear that Barbosa can be a scorer/playmaker off the bench in a four-guard rotation. For now, he's surrounded by Dragic, [Gerald Green](#) and [Ish Smith](#), already better this season than [Archie Goodwin](#).

The 19 year old Goodwin will still get spot time, but much like Ish Smith - who logged only 35 minutes in all of December - that time will likely only come as a sparkplug rather than a rotation regular. Offensively, Barbosa provides more than Goodwin, though he won't play defense as well. Lately, the Suns have been more starved for secondary offense than defense though, giving the nod to Barbosa.

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Once Eric Bledsoe comes back from his knee sprain - be it Monday or weeks later, depending on the healing process - the Suns can close out their playoff run with a veteran rotation guard around young Eric Bledsoe in Dragic (28), Green (28) and Barbosa (31).

If the Suns were floundering toward a high lotto pick, then playing Goodwin over Barbosa would be a no-brainer. Barbosa never would have been signed, even in the wake of Bledsoe injury.

But a playoff run is in sight, and playoffs runs need consistent play up and down the roster.

### Playoff run needs vets

Coming into the season, the Phoenix Suns had the league's second most inexperienced roster.

The Suns 13-man active roster had produced only TWO individual seasons of 30+ minutes per game. Channing Frye averaged 30+ minutes in one of eight NBA seasons (2010-11) and [Goran Dragic](#) had played 30+ minutes just once in five NBA seasons (2012-13).

That's it. Two.

Leandro Barbosa makes it three. Barbosa, like the rest of the team, has spent his entire career as a backup player but he did average 32 minutes per game in 2006-07.

You take what you can get.

Sure this team was built to spotlight under-25 youth like Eric Bledsoe, [Markieff Morris](#) , [Marcus Morris](#) ,

Archie Goodwin and

[Alex Len](#)

while waiting to add a few more youths in the talent-rich 2014 Draft. All but Len have been mainstays in the rotation, with Len's only issue being injury.

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But Coach Hornacek is clearly playing to win by giving significant minutes to four players at least 27 years old (Frye, Dragic, Green and Tucker). He has been playing his youth, but the veterans are providing the necessary consistency to win the games. And it's working.

Now, with Barbosa in the fold, look for the Suns "rotation age" to go older yet. Barbosa, at 31, is now the sage veteran on the team. For those of us who watched Barbosa's career, it's crazy to think he's the oldest guy on ANY team.

Youth can be served next year when the Suns will be in even better position to use the youth factor. Len and Goodwin will be a year older, yet only Len will be old enough to buy alcohol. And, the Suns will bring in at least one first round draft pick, if not 2 or 3.

### **Swapping one rookie for another?**

Speaking of Alex Len, all of 20 years old himself, it appears he may be ready for a rotation role just as Archie Goodwin is losing his. Len took the court the last two nights looking tall and talented, if also raw and gangly. He's easily the biggest player on the team and can help fortify the second unit while Plumlee rests.

For only the third time all season, Len appeared in both the first and second halves of a game last night. He grabbed five rebounds (4 on the offensive end) in only 12 minutes of play, a welcome sight for a team that ranks 21st in total rebounds.

We will see over the coming days if his ankle can handle the punishment. Twice before, Len has played in consecutive games, only to be shut down afterward due to ankle pain.