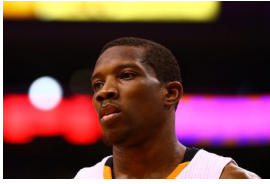


## Going Gorilla: The Phoenix Suns weekly rant - the injury insect

Written by  
Sunday, 12 January 2014 17:57 -

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The Suns are now 5-7 in games that Eric Bledsoe has missed and face tribulations in the coming days. These problems aren't specific to the Suns, though, as the mangled players problem is a league-wide pandemic. This injury insect is really starting to bug me.

Two weeks ago everything was sanguine in Suns' basketball. The team had proved their mettle as one of the better teams in the league. Now, a major loss threatens to undermine the work that had the team poised for a stretch run in a playoff positioning battle.

Let's project, for the sake of argument, that Bledsoe returns from his surgery to remove a torn meniscus in his right knee in six weeks. That would put his return to action on February 21st against the San Antonio Spurs, which gives the Suns 17 more games without their prolific pacesetter at the point.

17 games. That seems like an eternity considering the team's discord in Bledsoe's absence. The Suns future over this stretch appears capricious and their lead over the teams directly behind them seems precarious. Will the team stabilize and be able to attain at least a 9-8 record over this pivotal period? A 7-10 mark could see them on the outside looking in as opposed to possibly making a push for a fourth or fifth seed...

Here is the Suns upcoming schedule:

1/13 at New York Knicks

1/15 vs Los Angeles Lakers

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1/17 vs Dallas Mavericks

1/19 vs Denver Nuggets

1/22 vs Indiana Pacers

1/24 vs Washington Wizards

1/26 at Cleveland Cavaliers

1/27 at Philadelphia 76ers

1/29 at Milwaukee Bucks

1/30 at Indiana Pacers

2/1 vs Charlotte Bobcats

2/4 vs Chicago Bulls

2/5 at Houston Rockets

2/8 vs Golden St. Warriors

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2/11 vs Miami Heat

2/18 at Denver Nuggets

2/19 vs Boston Celtics

But the Suns aren't on an island in terms of dealing with injury setbacks. Significant attrition of talent has spread across the league like wildfire. Ailments have discouraged fans of individual teams and robbed us of enjoyment of the most entertaining basketball possible through dilution of the talent pool.

Here's a stroll around the league to examine the extent of the carnage:

**Atlanta Hawks** - Al Horford torn right pectoral muscle

**Boston Celtics** - Rajon Rondo ACL tear in right knee

**Brooklyn Nets** - Brook Lopez broken right foot (second time), Deron Williams litany of injuries to both ankles

**Chicago Bulls** - Derrick Rose meniscus tear in right knee (ACL tear in right knee last season)

**Denver Nuggets** - Danilo Gallinari partial ACL tear in left knee, Javale McGee stress fracture of left tibia

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**Golden St. Warriors** - Andre Iguodala right hamstring

**Los Angeles Clippers** - Chris Paul grade three AC joint separation of right shoulder

**Los Angeles Lakers** - Kobe Bryant torn ACL in left knee, left knee fracture

**Memphis Grizzlies** - Marc Gasol MCL sprain in left knee

**Milwaukee Bucks** - Larry Sanders torn ligament in right thumb

**New Orleans Pelicans** - Jrue Holiday stress fracture of right tibia, Ryan Anderson right toe fracture, herniated disk

**New York Knicks** - Tyson Chandler broken left fibula

**Oklahoma City Thunder** - Russell Westbrook third surgery since meniscus tear in right knee last season

**Phoenix Suns** - Eric Bledsoe meniscus tear in right knee (second time)

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Then there are injuries to young phenoms Michael Kidd-Gilchrist (broken left hand) and Nerlens Noel (torn ACL left knee) that rob us of being able to enjoy their development.

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This list doesn't even include players like Goran Dagic, Dwyane Wade and Michael Carter-Williams who haven't missed as much time but have been dealing with their own injury issues.

To emphasize the totality of these afflictions I put together a chimerical collection of these players that would compose a nightmarish team.

### Injury All-Stars

Point Guard - Chris Paul, Derrick Rose, Rajon Rondo, *Eric Bledsoe, Jrue Holiday, Deron Williams*

Shooting Guard - Kobe Bryant, Russell Westbrook

Small Forward - Andre Iguodala, Danilo Gallinari

Power Forward - Ryan Anderson, Al Horford

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Center - Marc Gasol, Brook Lopez, Tyson Chandler, *Larry Sanders, JaVale McGee*

*\*Alternates in italics*

This would be a hell of a team. So much so that they might even rival one of the actual teams that will take the floor in New Orleans for the annual superstar scrimmage. Let's look at the [team constructed by Jacob Padilla](#) with his possible reserves...

### Eastern Conference All-Stars

Point Guard - Kyrie Irving, John Wall, Kyle Lowry

Shooting Guard - Dwyane Wade, Arron Afflalo

Small Forward - Paul George, Paul Millsap

Power Forward - LeBron James, Chris Bosh

Center - Carmelo Anthony, Roy Hibbert, Joakim Noah

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Now here is [my team from last week's Going Gorilla](#) :

## **Western Conference All-Stars**

Point Guard - Stephen Curry, Tony Parker, Damian Lillard

Shooting Guard - James Harden, Goran Dragic (this will likely be Kobe... but let's pretend)

Small Forward - Dirk Nowitzki, Anthony Davis

Power Forward - Kevin Love, LaMarcus Aldridge, Blake Griffin

Center - Dwight Howard, Tim Duncan (honorable mention to DeMarcus Cousins)

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## **Steering the Conversation**

Given this information it's your turn to discuss a few relevant topics:

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1. What will the Suns record be over the next 17 games if there are no other personnel changes over this period?

2. Did I miss any other significant injuries that you think should be included?

3. How would the injury All-Stars fare against the healthy teams?

4. Should any of these beleaguered teams make moves (buying or selling)? Suggest some **realistic**

propositions of your own. As far as trade scenarios (#4) go, here are two to start you off:

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Chicago Bulls get Emeka Okafor, Alex Len and 1-2 first round picks (Phoenix's own and/or Indiana's)

Phoenix Suns get Kirk Hinrich and Joakim Noah

This instantly shores up salient weaknesses - rebounding, defense and distributing (Noah would be the team's best frontcourt passer) without subtracting from Phoenix's regular rotation, but is Len's upside too great to sacrifice him in this deal? Can the Suns build a contender around Bledsoe (24), Dragic (27) and Noah (28)? Would this hamstringing their financial flexibility and take away assets needed to go after more of a unicorn type player?

The Bulls clear salary and get pieces to rebuild after their window has been boarded up due to the zombie apocalypse.

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Orlando Magic get Thabo Sefloshe, Steven Adams and PJ3

Oklahoma City Thunder get Arron Afflalo

OKC gets a premiere SG/SF in an attempt to push them over the top. The Thunder are (is) 21-4 with Westbrook and 7-5 without him, so this also helps keep them in the running with the Spurs and Trail Blazers for a top seed until they are healthy.

Orlando gets rid of their best player to help them pass the Bucks in their quest for the most lottery combinations and acquires young prospects in the process.

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Go!