

The Evolution Of Phoenix Suns Guard Eric Bledsoe

Written by

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A deep dive into how Eric Bledsoe's style of play switched up going from a role player off the bench to one of the faces of a franchise.

One of the toughest aspects of being an NBA player is the adjustment from being a role player off the bench to taking a leading role in a starting lineup.

This is a process Phoenix [Suns](#) guard [Eric Bledsoe](#) has gone through and as expected his game has undergone some changes. It's isn't possible for a player to perform the same way in 20 minutes a night as he would in 32. The majority of the alterations in Eric's game were to be able to withstand that 12-minute increase and larger nightly burden.

"I'm a little bit more patient than I was coming off the bench," said Bledsoe after Wednesday's shootaround. "I had to do everything in one stretch and now I can pick my spots."

The first and most obvious modification for Bledsoe was his shot selection. According to [basketball-reference.com](#) the former Kentucky star's average shot distance this season is 12.7 compared to 10.7 in 2012-2013.

This chart breaks down the difference in the location of Bledsoe's shots:

% Of Shot Att	Restricted Area	In The Paint	Mid Range	Corner 3	Above Break 3
2012-2013	46%	14%	25%	3.00%	9.00%
2013-2014	37%	13%	22%	1.00%	25%

The biggest difference showcased is the 9% drop in shots in the restricted area and 16% increase in above the break threes.

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In addition to changing where he's attempting shots, Bledsoe's game has become more risk averse.

Coming into this season what made him such a unique player was the potential for the spectacular on a regular basis, but that has gone away as he's grown into, for lack a better term, a more "traditional" (hate saying that) piece. This is exemplified by the drop in dunks, steals, blocks and offensive rebounds.

"Some of that is we don't want him to crash the boards," stated Phoenix head coach [Jeff Hornacek](#)

"He's got to be one of our defensive guys back there. We say every once in a while if you see a wide open one go for it, but you got to be a little more selective. Same thing defensively, him scrambling around looking for steals, sometimes the gamble pays off, sometimes it doesn't. I think early in the season he was just gambling for all kinds of steals and got us into trouble. Recently since he's come back, he's been very smart about when to go for something and when not to, and he's made some big plays that way."

This is exemplified through the numbers shown here:

Categories	Dunks Per Minute	ORB Per 36	ORB%	STL Per 36	STL%	BLK Per 36	BLK%
2012-2013: 1 dunk every 73 minutes	1.8	6.00%	2.5	3.70%	3.3	3.00%	
2013-2014: 1 dunk every 287 minutes	0.06	1.90%	1.7	2.30%	0.03	0.60%	

The fall off in these categories doesn't mean the energy he exerted is going to waste. Bledsoe has started to concentrate in other areas of greater importance.

"That's something that naturally happened," said Bledsoe referring to how his style of play has evolved. "Those dropped, but other things picked up. I pretty much just go out there and play every game like it's my last."

And the two categories where Bledsoe has put more of his focus are drawing fouls and hitting the defensive boards.

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Categories FTs Per 36 FF Rate ORB Per 36 DRB%

2012-2013 3.1 0.236 3.4 11.10%

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