

Phoenix Suns very unlikely to bring three draft picks to camp

Written by

Saturday, 19 April 2014 08:00 -



Armed with three first round picks from 14-27 in the 2014 NBA Draft, the Phoenix Suns plan to use them in trades rather than on rookies to join Archie Goodwin and Alex Len next year.

With 48 wins under their belts this season, the [Phoenix Suns](#) have already moved beyond the 'get as young as possible' phase of the rebuilding process. From now on, it is about acquiring top-end talent rather than stockpiling rookies.

No one in the Suns front office feels like this past season was a fluke, or that the youth they already possess is likely to regress next season.

"We are not going to sit here as a team that didn't make the playoffs and say we're all set," Suns GM Ryan McDonough said. "There are some roster upgrades you can make. But I don't think there are any glaring holes that aren't filled if you factor in some internal improvement."

Rather, President Lon Babby, GM Ryan McDonough and coach [Jeff Hornacek](#) foresee bright futures for this year's rookies, 19-year old

[Archie Goodwin](#)

and 20-year old

[Alex Len](#)

Add in the almost-certain return of 24-year old [Eric Bledsoe](#) and the continued maturity of mid-20s

[Miles Plumlee](#) , [Markieff](#)

[Morris](#)

and

[Marcus Morris](#)

and you are already looking at six young rotation players on the rise in the coming seasons. And of those six, only Bledsoe will be on an expensive contract next season.

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So would you really add three more rookies to that mix?

"I think it's unlikely that we'll bring in three rookies to the Suns," McDonough said. "With the success we had this year, and it's a good problem to have, it's tough to develop rookies and win a lot of games. If you look at the Rookie of the Year candidates, most of them are on teams at the bottom of the league. It's hard to do both."

Archie Goodwin, 19, showed a great deal of promise, but most of that was in the Summer League and during practices. He did not play much in the second half. Alex Len, 20, was injured for much of the first half of the season but played a bit in the second half as the backup center. Neither got more than 15 minutes per game.

McDonough discussed the options for those six picks in the next two years, and one of them was a new twist.

"I think if we do go in with the 14th, 18th and 27th pick," he said. "It's not likely we draft three guys and bring them to the Suns."

"Our preference would be to trade for a star," he said, just as he always has. In an ideal situation, the Suns would trade some of those picks for a top-10 NBA talent and start planning for deep playoff runs.

The second best option, short of acquiring a star, would be to package picks to move up in the draft for a better talent than is available outside the lottery.

"We could also draft a European player or two and leave them overseas," he said, as option #3.

If all those fail and the Suns can't move up, there's another way of moving out that just pushes the can down the road a bit.

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"We could also trade our pick for future picks," he said. "And kind of spread the picks out."

There's something we hadn't considered before. Why bring in six rookies in the next 15 months to this team? No one really wants to do that. But there are other teams who want youth today, and they might be willing to trade today's mid-teens pick for tomorrow's potentially higher pick.

"You know we have three this year and potentially three next year." McDonough continued. "So we might spread them out a little. Lon did a great job of stockpiling picks and we added to that last summer. It gives us a great deal of flexibility going forward."

But the preference, of course, is to convert those picks into a star. That's always been the plan and will remain the plan going forward. Trading picks into future years only extends the Suns' flexibility if all else fails. You don't trade a 2014 pick for a 2016 pick unless all other options are off the table.

"We would like to retain as much of our core as possible," he said, "but if you look at our cap sheet, we have a lot of flexibility coming up. But we also have big decisions to make. How can you upgrade the talent? Or, how can you retain the talent you already have?"

Rather than six picks in two years, the Suns could benefit from having two picks per year for the next four years. That would allow them to always be able to trade a pick, and even picks in consecutive years. The NBA's CBA does not allow a team to go pick-less in consecutive years, so teams cannot trade consecutive picks unless they have more than one coming to them.

Still, the #1 priority is to acquire a star. The [Rockets](#) did it by getting [James Harden](#) two years ago, and then [Dwight Howard](#) last summer. The [Warriors](#) did it by acquiring [Andre Iguodala](#) last summer after having their own resurgent season in 2012-13.

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"If we can use our draft picks in a package to get better, to get a veteran," McDonough said, "to get us from the upper 40s to the 50s and even the 60s, you know we'll do that."

McDonough concluded with a telling comment that the Suns are not just going to bring back the same exact team next year. They won't trust that everyone will come back with the same attitude and that making the playoffs is only about internal improvement. The Suns have 13 players under their control for next season.

But they are unlikely to bring back the whole team while just kicking a couple of draft picks down the road a bit.

"We could bring back all the guys," McDonough said. "But I think we'll make some tweaks and try to get better."