

Phoenix Suns Report Cards: Ryan McDonough

Written by

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In 2013-14, Ryan McDonough made many great moves as GM of the Phoenix Suns. In the final Suns Report Card, we review the 34-year old's fantastic first year on the job.

The most integral piece in a line of dominos is the first. Only if the leading piece falls do the rest follow, and this forced metaphor serves to demonstrate a truth that holds credence in the NBA as well.

TRANSITION!

The first domino to set off a year of change and turnaround in the Phoenix Suns organization was the firing of Lance Blanks on April 22, 2013. Blanks had a dimly unsuccessful run as the team's General Manager and his time was marked by decisions such as trading Goran Dragic AND a 1st round pick for Aaron Brooks, drafting Kendall Marshall in the lottery, signing Michael Beasley to a six year, \$18 million contract, proclaiming the long-lost Zeller brother as "one of the best shooters in the world," and deciding to have a terribly uncharismatic personality.

Lance Blanks was not well liked in Phoenix. To put it bluntly in a neatly wrapped (and also forced) pun, the dude repeatedly fired blanks in almost all of his moves.

Exactly 15 days after the dismissal of Blanks, the Suns hired Ryan McDonough, who had been part of Danny Ainge's front office with the Boston Celtics for several years, most recently as his Assistant GM. McDonough was only 33 at the time, the newest member of the young, analytically-driven minds more and more franchises were hiring to run their teams.

On May 26, 2013, 19 days after agreeing to become the new GM in Phoenix, Ryan McDonough made his first official move, his first domino: hiring Jeff Hornacek as the Suns' new Head Coach. At the time, this was viewed by most as a great decision. In hindsight, it was a

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phenomenal one. In fact, let's take a look at all the movies McDonough made in his first year in Phoenix:

Hindsight Grades

1. Hired Jeff Hornacek: A+

With Hornacek, the team had an intelligent, charismatic and respected leader to give the squad an identity and orchestrate a Cinderella run that surprised roughly 99% of NBA fans.

2. Drafted Alex Len and traded for Archie Goodwin on draft night: I (Incomplete)

I refuse to evaluate McDonough one year after selecting two project players in one of the weakest drafts in recent memory.

3. Traded Jared Dudley and a 2014 2nd round pick to the LA Clippers for Eric Bledsoe and Caron Butler:

A+++++

In his first trade, Ryan McDonough pulled a rabbit out of the hat. Said rabbit went on to average 17.7 points, 4.7 rebounds and 5.5 assists in 43 games, while said hat ended up benching Jared Dudley in the later parts of the season after he inexplicably forgot how to play basketball. Unless that second rounder (which went to Milwaukee) ends up being used to draft the next Michael Jordan, this trade was an absolute steal for the Suns.

4. Traded Luis Scola to the Indiana Pacers for Gerald Green, Miles Plumlee and a top-14 protected 2014 1st round pick: A+++++

When this deal occurred, it was viewed by most as a win-win for teams. In hindsight, hahahahaha. With this trade, Ryan McDonough effectively snuck into Larry Bird's house like a stealthy ninja, ate his food, enjoyed his massage chair, deleted his DVR'd recordings of Game of Thrones and stole Miles Plumlee and Gerald Green on his way out. Complete Robbery.

5. Traded Caron Butler to the Milwaukee Bucks for Ish Smith and Viacheslav Kravtsov: B

The Phoenix Suns were entering a youth movement and McDonough propelled it by trading veterans for youth. Caron Butler had a glorious run in Phoenix as a jersey model but despite

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McDonough's "man-crush" for him, he was always part of a means to acquire Eric Bledsoe and wasn't part of the long-term vision. Therefore, the Suns decided to trade him away for Ish Smith and The Great Slava, and also to shed payroll to help with the team's very next move last summer...

6. Waived Michael Beasley: A

Let's not talk about Michael Beasley here.

7. Signed Dionte Christmas: A+

If you disagree with my grade for this move, you hate the spirit Christmas and you are a terrible person.

8. Traded Marcin Gortat, Kendall Marshall and Shannon Brown for Emeka Okafor and a top-12 protected 2014 1st round pick: A-

This was another example of trading for the future. After the Suns selected a center with the #5 overall pick in the draft and Miles Plumlee exceeded expectations over the summer, it was clear that their marriage with Gortat would not last much longer. The Suns ended things with him and he moved to Washington, taking unwanted children Kendall Marshall and Shannon Brown with him for a day or two, until they were disowned again by the Wizards. Gortat went on to have a great season for a Wizards team that went to the Eastern Conference Semifinals but his fit on this Suns team would have been a bit more questionable. Besides, we would have never gotten to witness Emeka Okafor in a Suns jersey if it weren't for this trade. Oh wait.

9. Signed Leandro Barbosa: B

Needing some additional backcourt depth after Bledsoe's injury, the Suns brought back the Brazilian Blur in January by way of a couple 10-day contracts before ultimately signing him for the remainder of the season. Barbosa had a mostly uneventful couple months before a left hand fracture sidelined him in early March for the rest of the season. However, he did contribute to keeping the ship afloat during Bledsoe's absence and fans loved seeing the Blur back in Phoenix. Also, he was great at engaging with fans, [even rude ones such as our own Scott Howard](#).

10. Waived Viacheslav Kravtsov: F-

The biggest mistake of Ryan McDonough's career thus far and an ill-advised move that could prove to be the undoing of the Phoenix Suns' bright future. Miss you, Slava.

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11. Signed Shavlik Randolph: C+

Randolph is a solid big man to have at the end of the bench and he helped the squad in his limited minutes. But in the end, he will never be an adequate replacement for Slava on or off the court or in or outside of my heart.

Final Grade: A+

McMiracle, McStunna, McWinna, McWordthatrhymeswithDonough...Ryan McDonough has already earned himself many nicknames after just one year in the desert. After taking over a team that finished last in the conference and had a seemingly cloudy future, he steered the ship to a brighter future faster than anyone expected-faster than you can say "I miss Viacheslav Kravtsov and I will never get over it."

All the tremendous work Ryan McDonough has made has not gone unnoticed around the league-he finished second in Executive of the Year voting behind the Spurs' R.C. Buford, who was essentially given the honor by his peers as a lifetime achievement award.

Ryan McDonough has built the foundation for tremendous growth for the Phoenix Suns and in just one year, he has given fans many reasons for optimism and hope, which is in stark contrast to the general vibes around the franchise before his arrival. And for that, he gets an **A+** (yes, even despite his poor decision to waive The Great Slava).

McDonough has a difficult task ahead of him-building on the success by cashing in assets to field a legitimate contender-but there are many reasons to believe the team is in good hands with him and Lon Babby at the helm, and Jeff Hornacek in the locker room. Suns fans LOVE McDonough and that LOVE will only new levels if he can acquire a superstar player the city can also LOVE.

In McDonough We Trust.

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What grade do you give GM Ryan McDonough for this first year?

- A+
- A-
- A
- B+
- B
- B-
- C+
- SLAVAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!

625 votes | [Results](#)