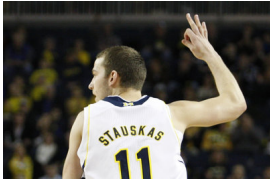


## Draft Prospect Profile: Michigan's Nik Stauskas

Written by  
Wednesday, 25 June 2014 14:00 -

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Michigan's Nik Stauskas shined in John Beilein's heavy pick and roll attack. Could he be the right guy for the Phoenix Suns?

CTRL+V

This was a frequent sequence seen on Detroit News Michigan basketball beat writer's Rod Beard's twitter feed.

No he wasn't talking about copying and pasting. In this case, CTRL+V was a reference to Michigan shooting guard [Nik Stauskas](#) ' smooth stroke from 3-point range. Every time the sweet shooting guard knocked down a 3-pointer, which happened 172 times in two seasons, CTRL+V would show up on the timeline.

To categorize the soon to be 21-year-old Canadian as only a long-range shooter unfairly characterizes his skill set. Stauskas showed extreme growth under Michigan coach John Beilein from his freshman to his sophomore year in expanding his offensive game.

According to statsheet.com, Stauskas' possession percentage went from 16.1 in year one to 23.1 in year two. Typically an increase like that would lead to decreased efficiency, but his true shooting percentage actually jumped to 64.1 percent from 63.3 percent.

Without Trey Burke and Tim Hardaway around Beilein handed the keys of the Wolverines' extremely potent offense to Stauskas and [Caris LeVert](#) , who, despite being wings, took on the

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majority of the pick and roll duties initiating the offense.

With losing two NBA players, one being drafted ninth and the other 24th, along with having a freshman point guard, Michigan's offense ranked first in Ken Pomeroy's adjusted offensive rating stat at 124.1. That bested Michigan's top-ranked O from the year before of 120.3 (psssst that team played in the National Championship Game).

While this is simplifying the situation quite a bit, a good amount of credit falls to the above-mentioned growth as a player by Stauskas.

His high basketball IQ and well-developed skills allowed him to operate in various roles. Out of the PnR Stauskas was a threat to pull up off the dribble or attack the rim and attract the defense while finding a big man diving to the basket.

His ability to shoot with a high efficiency pulling up and skillful handle opens up the rest of his offensive game. Stauskas can attack left and right plus finish with both hands at the rim. He even sneaks in the occasional dunk and doesn't shy away from big shots in high-leverage moments.

Despite showing off his capability to be extremely diversified at the college level I don't expect it to translate to the same type of success in the NBA.

In constructing a team it will be optimal to have Stauskas as your secondary ball handler instead of primary ball handler. You want to be able to take advantage of the spacing he creates as a shooter much like he did as a freshman playing off Burke. He can do this from the two and three positions, which is important in context of how the [Suns](#) play specifically.

If he's asked to handle the ball too much Stauskas will get into some trouble. Two of the games he struggled in most last year were at Indiana and the Big Ten championship game against Michigan State. In those games he was guarded by Yogi Ferrell and [Gary Harris](#) - two short, compact defenders with strong lateral movement and the ability to get into his body. He will face defenders like this in the NBA along with longer wings who have similar foot speed.

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Speaking of his flaws, we haven't even touched on the defensive end yet. There isn't much positive to talk about there. His short wingspan and poor defensive instincts make him a liability on that end. Stauskas struggles keeping his man in front of him, is not attentive off the ball and is a below average rebounder. He will need to play in a strong defensive scheme to help hide him and with a guard that allows him to defend inferior offensive players.

With how much a boon he will be to a team's offense, what he brings at that end of the court will outweigh the negatives on defense. From a Suns perspective he would be a perfect fit next to Bledsoe when Dragic goes to the bench to help the offense not take such a significant dip. If he's available at 14 Stauskas is someone the Suns should strongly consider drafting.