

The market for Phoenix Suns Eric Bledsoe might be secondary

Written by
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Any number of 20 different teams would likely love to have Eric Bledsoe. The only teams who don't want him would be those with All-Stars or young studs already in place.

But as of yet, no team has openly leaked interest in Bledsoe. Yes, I used the term "openly leaked" because that's how it is these days. Teams don't hold media scrums to list out their targets. They simply let someone know on the sly, via text or phone, who they want.

Or, the agents leak interested teams to media folks. Sometimes it's to drum up business, and sometimes it's lies, lies, and damn lies.

But still, there's been no outward word of who wants Bledsoe.

So let's just take a look at the landscape to see who can extend him an offer sheet in July. Remember, Bledsoe is a restricted free agent who will be courted via offer sheets by teams with enough cap room. Alternately, teams without enough cap room can initiate a trade with the [Suns](#), as long as Bledsoe wants to sign with them and the Suns want the assets back.

For now, let's focus on the former - teams with cap room to make an out right offer sheet in early July. Teams who make an offer must have [the open](#) cap room to do so. Barring significant trades to shed salary, these are the only teams with enough open cap room on July to get his signature.

Team	Rough Cap Space	Bledsoe?	Incumbent PG	Notes
Utah Jazz	27	No	Trey Burke	2nd year
Philadelphia 76ers	25	No	Michael Carter-Williams	2nd year
Los Angeles Lakers	24	?	Kenneth Faried	1st year
Charlotte Hornets	18	No	Kemba Walker	4th year
Spokane Grizzlies	23	?	Raymond Felton	expired cap
Detroit Pistons	21	?	Brandon Jennings	2 yrs/16 mil left
Washington Wizards	14	No	John Wall	mid-career
Atlanta Hawks	13	No	Jeff Teague	3 yrs/24 mil left
Oklahoma Magic	12	No	Elfrid Payton	Rookie
Milwaukee Bucks	11	No	Brandon Knight	4th year
Cleveland Cavaliers	11	No	Kyle Irving	4th year
Toronto Raptors	10	?	Kyle Lowry	Free agent

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You will note that the recently-bereft Miami HEAT are not on this list. That is not an oversight. While all their players but [Norris Cole](#) and Chris Anderson have opted out, leaving "55 million in cap space", the HEAT have cap holds on all of them that they won't be renouncing. Cap holds on Wade, James and Bosh alone far exceed the cap. So no, the HEAT have 0 cap space for free agency unless the Big Three re-sign for the midlevel. And, they just drafted PG Shabazz Napier for LeBron.

Back to reality.

Out of that group with real cap space, only the [Lakers](#) , [Mavericks](#) , [Pistons](#) and [Bucks](#) could use an upgrade at point guard. The Toronto Raptors are close behind, at \$10 mill of space. Of those five, only three teams appear to be "interesting" to a young feller like Bledsoe.

I mean really. Would YOU sign with a team in Detroit or Milwaukee unless you had no other options? I'd rather take a little less and work out a contract with Phoenix if those are my only bidders.

Los Angeles Lakers

The Lakers need to make a splash and they've basically only got three guys sure to be on their roster in October: [Kobe Bryant](#) , [Steve Nash](#) and rookie [Julius Randle](#) .

Nash is on the books for \$9.7 million and has been adamant that he will not retire. However, the Lakers could conceivably convince someone to trade for him, but they would have to give something up to entice a team to take on Nash and all they have is Randle and their 2017 first round pick. Not happening.

Sure, the Lakers could use Bledsoe. But they just drafted [Jordan Clarkson](#) (purchased, from second round selection) who Kris Habbas had rated as high as 17th overall on his Big Board for nbadraftinsider.com and most outlets had Clarkson in the top 30 on their Boards. Along with PG Marshall still under cheap contract, the Lakers might prefer to fill their center and small forward positions first.

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In fact, there's a [rumor this morning from Ramona Shelbourne of ESPN](#) that their first targets are [Carmelo Anthony](#)

or
[LeBron James](#)

. Secondly, if they lose out on the top two, the Lakers are also expected to have a strong interest in Washington free-agent forward

[Trevor Ariza](#)

,
[Raptors](#)

guard

[Kyle Lowry](#)

, Detroit center

[Greg Monroe](#)

and Phoenix forward

[Channing Frye](#)

, according to Ramona's sources.

No mention of Bledsoe yet.

Dallas Mavericks

The Mavericks just swapped old point guards, and now have [Raymond Felton](#) on board to man the ship, with

[Devin Harris](#)

behind him.

Think they need an upgrade there? So do I.

The Mavericks have the cap space and probably the inclination. The only thing holding them back is whether they really want to tie up money in a Bledsoe offer that the Suns might match while they pursue the same suspects that the Lakers want: LeBron James and Carmelo Anthony.

Seems to me that Bledsoe will be waiting around for a few weeks to see who loses the James/Anthony race and then can only hope those teams turn their attention to him.

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Toronto Raptors

The Raptors are also shaded in red because they have close to the right amount of money and a free agent point guard ([Kyle Lowry](#)) who might be on the move. Also, the Raptors lost out on Tyler Ennis last week. Wouldn't it be ironic if it was Tyler Ennis that put the Suns in a bind on Bledsoe.

The Raptors could easily release [John Salmons](#) and add another \$6 million to their cap space, giving them more than enough money to lure Bledsoe. They have a great cap situation, just won 48 games, and could really use Bledsoe to continue that hot run they started last year.

The downside for the Raptors is tying up money during free agency while the Phoenix Suns think about matching, and the Suns have told everyone they will match any reasonable offers.

Another downside for them is committing max money to Bledsoe. Their next biggest contract is DeMarr DeRozan, whose contract is under \$10 million/year. Wouldn't they rather just re-sign Lowry for about what DeRozan makes and be done with it?

Phoenix Suns

The Suns won't bid against themselves. It's not smart to outbid yourself, without knowing what the competition is. The beauty of restricted free agency is that no one can take your guy without your permission. They must either convince you to do a trade, or you have to refuse to match their offer.

The Suns have said all along that they will match any offer.

The only way I see that changing is if (a) Bledsoe begs to leave and (b) the Suns can get comparable value back in trade. No way the Suns take a "future first" or "future second" to agree to a sign-and-trade. No way they take back bad contracts. The Suns will want a booty worthy of Bledsoe.

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I see Bledsoe being part of the secondary free agent market, and maybe not even hearing of a strong rumor until mid-July unless the Suns and Bledsoe come to a mutual agreement on a less-than-max contract to pre-empt the competition.