

NBA Free Agency: The Chris Bosh market may be LeBron's impetus to leave Miami

Written by
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In order for Miami's plan to work, Chris Bosh and Dwyane Wade must take 40-50% pay cuts. Recent rumors have Chris Bosh being uninterested in taking such a pay cut, which might lead to his exodus from Miami.

I started thinking about this a couple of days ago, but haven't had a chance to formulate it into a post until now. As it turns out, others are coming to the same conclusion as well.

With the [Bulls](#) , [Rockets](#) , Mavs, [Lakers](#) , Cavs, [Suns](#) and potentially others chasing James, Anthony or both, there are more teams than there are LeBrons and Melos (only one of each). Once James and Anthony have made a decision, the teams that lost out will be lining up to create a market for Bosh.

[--Ken Berger, CBSSports.com](#)

The market for [Chris Bosh](#) might take him out of Miami, which makes Miami's talent pool around [LeBron James](#) a lot more shallow than it already is. And it begs the question, if that's going to happen why would LeBron go back to Miami? He's not winning a ring with [Dwyane Wade](#) and [Shabazz Napier](#)

"Roster. Roster. Roster. Talent. Talent. Talent. LeBron wants a super talented roster that's ready to win NOW."

--Brian Windhorst, ESPN, LeBron beat writer for nine years, on KTAR's Burns and Gambo show

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on July 1

Windhorst went on to say that Miami still had the best roster for LeBron, citing that Dwyane Wade was still a proven winner while the Suns are two years away from contending. His assumption included Chris Bosh in the equation, though he didn't mention Bosh by name.

Let's delve into that a bit more, Brian.

The Bosh file

Miami's Big Three have already opted out of their deals. LeBron has since floated his insistence on a full max deal, starting at \$20 million per year. Chris Bosh and Dwyane Wade are also eligible for max starting salaries of \$20 million.

For those of you who need help, that's \$60 million on three players. With a salary cap of \$63 million and [Norris Cole](#) and Shabazz Napier (the only other players under team control), the HEAT would have no money left to round out a 13-man roster with any real talent. And we already saw last month that Bosh and Wade are not enough anymore to help LeBron win championships. The team would only have the MLE to offer a singular talent, but then could just fill another starting spot and the whole bench on minimum salaries.

So someone has to take less than their max, in order to leave room for President/GM Pat Riley to work. In fact, considering an NBA roster requires at minimum 12 players, the operative phrase is "someones have to take big pay cuts, like 40-50% pay cuts". Those someones are Bosh AND Wade.

Recent reports have Bosh being less than excited about that possibility and, as Ken Berger points out, he has no reason to do that. Why take a ton less money only to come up short again, unless Miami gets lucky on several low-cost free agent signings?

Bosh as Suns Plan B?

If LeBron does stay, would Bosh be the next best thing to add to the Suns roster? He could be

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signed off the street AND the Suns could keep every one of their guys for another year. Adding Bosh to the Suns 2013-14 Suns, as well as the first round picks, and the Suns could plan for a deep playoff run with a bright future.

But don't get your hopes up. Houston is even more ready for a deep playoff run with Bosh, and has the money to pay him what he wants.

But that's exactly what Berger is saying. There's lot of teams with money spend, and too few players to spend it on.

Miami's options

Of course, Pat Riley could decide the writing is on the wall and do an about-face to keep LeBron. He could cut bait with Bosh and use that money to replace him.

Let's pretend LeBron gets his max and Wade takes a pay cut to \$12 million. That's \$35 million for LeBron, Wade, Napier and Cole. The HEAT would have \$28 million to spend in free agency, but would need to spread that among FOUR starters (Wade is no longer a starter for a championship team) and 2-3 bench players. \$28 million is not much when you have to pay market prices for talent because you've got only two players on rookie scale contracts.

With role players [Spencer Hawes](#) and [Jodie Meeks](#) getting \$6-7 million/year deals, \$28 million won't go very far.

But there's even more problems with this plan. You first have to replace Bosh's talent with someone nearly as talented who can shoulder some of LeBron's load. You cannot expect players of Meeks and Hawes talent to carry the team to the promised land even for a few minutes at a time every game.

[Carmelo Anthony](#) is the best available talent, but he's pretty close to re-committing to NY for \$129 million and would have a tough time succeeding in a lineup with both LeBron AND Wade.

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[Pau Gasol](#) is still out there on the market. But he's not a Bosh replacement. He hasn't carried a team before, and he's a few years too old to be that game-changing #2 talent. The fact is that 28-year old Pau Gasol ain't walking through that door. *(even then, the 28-year old Pau Gasol would be too rich for this team's blood)*

After Melo commits, the best remaining individual talent on the market is quickly coming down to restricted free agents. Greg Monroe. Lance Stephenson. [Eric Bledsoe](#) .

All would be great for Miami, but all want at least \$12 million per year. And all require an offer sheet, to which their respective current teams have three days to match. Why would Indiana allow Stephenson to go to arch-rival Miami? Why would the Phoenix Suns allow Bledsoe to go to Miami? Even Greg Monroe, who's being squeezed out of the Piston front line, would likely get matched.

And Miami has nothing to offer in a sign-and-trade.

Edit: Lance Stephenson is unrestricted. Miami could sign him outright. Yet he still poses the same problem as adding Melo - he doesn't have a clear playing position because the wings are already LeBron and Wade, and you can't win a championship having LeBron as your full time PF around those two.

Nothing to offer

That's the thing. By making your team completely fungible every four years, you're ensuring that you're paying market price for every talent on the roster.

Miami has none of the cheap deals beyond Norris Cole and Shabazz Napier, who happen to play the same position. And neither of them are starting-caliber for championship team. Miami has to pay market prices for every other player on their roster. They cannot build a contender under those circumstances.

Today's NBA requires a handful of guys on rookie contracts, who are underpaid for their contributions. That's just the way it is. Super-teams can only be built around two or three market

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priced stars, a couple of market-priced midlevels and then the rest on strike-gold reclamation projects and/or rookie deals.

Meet your 2014-15 Phoenix Suns.

Coming off a 48-34 campaign, the Suns have seven players still on their rookie deals, and another one ([Bogdan Bogdanovic](#)) waiting in the wings whenever the Suns need him. Only one player is likely to get a a \$10+ million/year market-priced contract (Eric Bledsoe) this offseason.

The Phoenix Suns have everything Miami doesn't (youth and depth) while still winning 48 games in the tough Western Conference.

Back to Bosh

LeBron wanted Riley to improve his team in the early stages of free agency before committing to return. Yet not only has Riley not signed any players, there is growing belief that Bosh won't stay at a cut-rate deal anyway.

So why would LeBron return to Miami?