

New Phoenix Sun Anthony Tolliver Fits Right In

Written by

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The newest Sun's sharp-shooting should serve him well in Phoenix.

With the departure of [Channing Frye](#), the [Suns](#) were in the market for a stretch four to replace him. Most fans probably had players such as

[Kevin Love](#)

or

[Ryan Anderson](#)

in mind to fill that role, but the Suns set their sights on a different target.

The Suns have signed the 6-foot-8-inch, 240-pound [Anthony Tolliver](#) to a [two-year deal](#), \$6 million deal with only

[\\$400 thousand guaranteed](#)

in the second year.

Tolliver isn't a big name, and he's not going to step in and make up for all the Suns are [losing without Frye](#)

. What he is is another option to fill that stretch four role along with the Morris twins, as well as a great locker room guy (something the Suns value highly).

For a longer look at Tolliver's journey to the NBA, check out my profile on him for [The Creightonian](#)

For a look at what Tolliver will bring to the Suns, read on.

Anthony Tolliver has had a bit of an up and down career. After a few years of hard work (see above link for details), he finally got a chance with the [Golden State Warriors](#) in 2009-10. Tolliver took advantage of that chance, sticking with the club for the rest of the season and appearing in 44 games with 29 starts while averaging 12.3 points and 7.3 rebounds.

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Tolliver parlayed his success into a two-year deal with the [Minnesota Timberwolves](#) and was a bright spot in a rough season in year one (6.7 points, 4.5 rebounds, 40.9 3-point field goal percentage in 65 games) before suffering an early wrist injury that torpedoed his second season.

Tolliver spent a forgettable year (62 games, 4.1 points, 33.8 3-point percentage) in Atlanta before signing with Charlotte last season. He rediscovered his shooting touch as a Bobcat, playing in 64 games with nine starts and averaging 6.1 points in 20.3 minutes while shooting 41.3 percent from deep.

Taking a look at his 2013-14 campaign on MySynergySports makes it pretty clear why the Suns signed him.

Tolliver morphed into more of a small forward for the [Hawks](#) and Bobcats, but with the Suns he'll slide back to his natural power forward position. As the years have passed, Tolliver has focused more and more on his shooting and less on scoring in other ways, and it resulted in 1.12 points per possession this past year, good for ninth overall in the Synergy database.

A startling 63.8 percent of Tolliver's possessions last year (222 total) came on spot-ups, where he shot 40 percent from 3-point range and scored 1.16 points per possession (ranked 33rd in Synergy). But wait, there's more! Much smaller sample size (only 35 possessions), but as the pick-and-roll/pop man, Tolliver shot 12-25 from 3-point range and scored 1.16 points per possession again (ranked 22nd). I'm not done yet, though. In transition, Tolliver shot 11-25 from 3 and 17-33 overall for 1.4 points per possession (ranked 19th).

All of this is to say Tolliver can shoot. And he can shoot while spotting up, picking and popping or running to the arc in transition - exactly how the Suns are going to use him as a stretch four.

Defensively, Tolliver is a bit limited athletically by NBA standards but has strong fundamentals and gives maximum effort. He isn't afraid of taking on tough assignments. He works hard to contest shots (opponents shot 32.9 percent from 3 spotting up, 1-11 in isolation and 3-10 in the pick-and-pop against Tolliver's defense). He's not much of a rim-protector and can be scored over in the post (opponents shot 15-29 against him last year), but he sacrifices his body (even taking charges in a guest appearance in Omaha's local summer league) and isolation scorers

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only scored 0.7 points per possession against him (ranked 57th).

Tolliver was pretty darn effective in his role for the Bobcats last year. On the Suns, he'll be competing with the Morris twins for playing time.

[Markieff Morris](#) is the most versatile of the three. He's by far the biggest post threat, and probably the best post player on the team right now. 31.7 percent of Keef's possessions came in the post last year, and he scored 0.94 points per possession (39th best in the NBA) while shooting 46.1 percent. Keef is a sub-par spot-up shooter (17-57 from 3-point range), but he is pretty effective as a screener, both popping (7-15 from 3) and rolling (56.5 percent overall) for a 1.19 points per possession mark (ranked 15th overall). With the point guards' ability to collapse defenses, the pick-and-pop is something we might see more of from Keef as a starter. Finally, Keef was very effective in transition: 63.6 percent from the field and 8-21 from 3 for a 50th-ranked 1.27 points per possession average.

Neither of the Morris twins are particularly effective in isolation. They're not awful, but you don't want to call that play too often. Keef was a bit more effective at 0.77 points per possession compared to 0.71 for Mook.

Mook also only got the ball in 25 pick-and-rolls and shot just 3-11 as a popper, which casts doubts as to his ability as a stretch four. He's not a great shooter on the break either, hitting just 31.8 percent of his transition 3-pointers.

Where his true value lies is as a spot-up shooter. Mook shot a blistering 44.5 percent on almost 150 3-point attempts as a spot-up shooter, and he scored 1.12 points per possession (ranked 54th). His numbers as a cutter, an offensive rebounder and coming off screens are terrific as well, but those are all much smaller sample sizes.

In a strange yet not unexpected twist of fate, both Markieff and Marcus ended the season with an identical 0.97 total points per possession average. We're all familiar with the defensive struggles by both twins.

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Each of these guys brings something unique to the position, but as long as they duplicate or even build off of what they did last year, the Suns have some good options.

The other possibility is that Tolliver was a depth signing in preparation to move some other guys in a trade, but that's a discussion for another post. For now, let's just welcome Tolliver to the Valley of the Sun.