



2021 FREE AGENCY

The Spurs show their hand: Rebuilding it is

A new era in San Antonio has arrived

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Kim Klement-USA TODAY Sports

I said in my **offseason preview** “the selections that the front office make will show their hand about how they really feel about the current state of the roster”, and after a busy 10 days, the Spurs have shown their hand; rebuilding it is.

The first sign that the **San Antonio Spurs** were heading in this direction was the night of this year’s NBA Draft. After constant rumors of moving their pick, the front office did what they usually do and stuck at their original position. This wasn’t surprising; what was, was the fact with the 12th pick the Spurs selected, guard Josh Primo out of Alabama. This came as a shock not only to members of Spurs circles but those in the national media as Primo was meant to be a consensus late first round prospect. The earliest any big media mock draft had Primo going was at number 24, TWELVE picks lower than where the Spurs took him.

As soon as you started to do research about Josh Primo, you got the sense of the direction the Spurs were going, as Primo was the youngest player in the draft at just 18 years old. He is considered a raw prospect with high upside that could blossom in the right developmental system. The Spurs picking the youngest prospect in the draft, and one considered to have a high ceiling, over someone who could contribute right away but has a lower ceiling said that the Spurs were going to go young.

After the pick of Josh Primo, heading into free agency it became a forgone conclusion

that the Spurs veterans of DeMar DeRozan, Rudy Gay and Patty Mills were going to exit the organization. With the Spurs heading for a rebuild, it would have made no sense to keep the older guys, who would have just taken up valuable developmental minutes from the young core.

DeRozan is headed to the windy city to play for the revamped Chicago Bulls in a sign-and-trade which saw the Spurs net 2 expiring contracts and 3 picks. Another sign of the Spurs changing their tune was this move, as the Spurs decided to take future assets in exchange for DeRozan instead of taking a player such as Lauri Markkanen back. The two expiring contracts will most likely provide more use than Markkanen, as he would have most likely been on a long term, big money deal. Reports at time indicated the Bulls' asking price for him was more than the Spurs wanted to give, and the fact that negotiations for him are still ongoing indicates the Spurs were right not to pay too high for him.

Instead the Spurs, take two expiring contracts which helps preserve future cap space, which they can use on more impactful players than Markkanen next summer, when there will be a deeper free agency class. They could also flip the expiring contracts for future draft compensation. This is possible with a player like Thaddeus Young as he has real value around the league. The Spurs may find it harder to turn Al-Farouq Aminu into picks, but he is on an expiring deal, so he won't bother the Spurs future money situation. The 3 picks the Spurs got from Chicago involved a lightly protected 2025 first round pick (reported to be top 10 protected; then top 8; and then top 8 again). The other two were second round picks. After the criticism general manager Brian Wright received after the draft, the fact he was able get what he did in return for a player who could have walked for nothing was nothing short of tremendous.

Next saw Patty Mills go to Brooklyn where he is likely to get more playing time and compete for a championship. Then, Rudy Gay left to join up with the ever competitive Utah Jazz. Trey Lyles (Detroit) and Gorgui Dieng (Atlanta) also departed the Alamo City.

The first newcomer the Spurs signed was 29 year old sharpshooter, Doug McDermott. Dougie McBuckets agreed to a 3-year, \$42million deal, at first this may seem like a lot, especially for a team that is looking to rebuild, but McDermott is a career 40 percent three-point shooter and he is coming to aid the worse three point shooting team last season. There is also a real misconception that rebuilding teams can't have veterans, but that is not the case. The veterans rebuilding teams have should help the young

players by playing important roles but not by being the star of the team. Doug will do this perfectly for the Spurs young core, as his floor spacing will open up lanes for the young guys to attack and be playmakers. So even though he is an older player, he will not take away possessions for the younger guys to develop, if anything he is going to help them by allowing them to have more space to work with due to his three-point shooting. The Spurs later on announced that they had turned this signing into a sign-and-trade to help the Indiana Pacers create a \$7.5 million trade exception. For their cooperation San Antonio received a second round pick, this is another example of the front office showing their willingness to build for the future by collecting assets in simple transactions like this.

The deal that came after was much more expected of a rebuilding team, as the Spurs signed Zach Collins to a 3-year, \$22million dollar contract. Collins has only played 11 games in the past two seasons due to ongoing foot issues, including 0 games last year. But the former 10th overall pick is still only 23 years old and has an abundance of talent. He also fills a hole for the Spurs as he gives them options in the front court and is also a floor spacer. The Spurs are rebuilding, and at only \$7 million a year, **this is a risk they can afford to take.**

Jock Landale. Heard of him? I'm guessing before the Spurs signed him last week that was a no. Another move a team in the mist of a rebuild would make. Jock Landale was one of the best available international free agents, and a rebuilding Spurs team have every right to take a chance on a player that could turn out to be a solid NBA player. Want to know more about Landale? **[Click here.](#)**

The Spurs looked set after the Landale signing, they had 15 guaranteed contracts and it seemed like their roster was complete, but then for the millionth time this off-season, the Spurs front office shocked us again. Bryn. Forbes. Is. Back. The sharpshooter is back in San Antonio after his one year stay in Milwaukee, where he won a championship. This was a surprise to many as Bryn was largely scapegoated in his first run in San Antonio for "stealing" minutes from the young core. This was not his fault of course as he didn't choose starting lineups or assign minute allocations, but this move could benefit San Antonio if he is put in a **more suitable role** this time around. Playing spot minutes off the bench to add spacing and shooting could lead to Bryn having a much more favorable run in Texas this time around.

The last move the Spurs made was minor, but it shows the Spurs' willingness nowadays

to make trades if they can receive future assets. San Antonio helped facilitate a Brooklyn-Washington sign-and-trade (as part of a larger five-team trade overall) for Spencer Dinwiddie by taking wing Chandler Hutchison off their hands in order for them to stay under the luxury tax. In return the Spurs received a second round pick. If Hutchison stays on the roster, he has a chance to be a contributor. At just 25 years old, the former 22nd overall pick is heading into his 4th year in the league and his final one on his contract. He hasn't found success in Chicago or Washington but maybe with a rebuilding team with great developmental staff, Hutchison can start to turn his career around while helping San Antonio in the next chapter of the franchise.

After all these ins and outs, lets take a look at the roster.

Roster:

PG: Dejounte Murray - Derrick White - Tre Jones

SG: Lonnie Walker IV - Bryn Forbes - Josh Primo

SF: Keldon Johnson - Devin Vassell - Chandler Hutchison

PF: Doug McDermott - Thaddeus Young - Luka Samanic - Al-Farouq Aminu

C: Jakob Poeltl - Zach Collins - Jock Landale

Non-Guaranteed: Drew Eubanks

Qualifying Offer: Keita Bates-Diop

Unsigned: Joe Weiskamp

Total (If all are signed to full contracts) = 19

Allowed -

15 Full Time Contracts

2 Two-Ways (Players with less than 4 years of NBA experience)

The Spurs roster is deep, in fact too deep as they have too many contracts on the book and will have to trade or release a minimum of two guys. If Keita Bates-Diop and Joe Wieskamp sign full deals, the Spurs will have to then trade or release 4 guys in order to meet the maximum of 15 guaranteed deals on a roster.

The most likely path the Spurs take is that Keita and Joe sign two-way deals, and that leaves the Spurs with 17 contracts. Now begs the question; which two players are most likely not to be on the roster at the start of the season? Aminu, who has a 10 million dollar expiring deal, seems like a likely candidate. The Spurs could look to trade him, but considering his value around the league, waiving him may be more viable, and due to him being on an expiring deal a release would not effect the Spurs future cap space.

Another option is Hutchison, as he seemed to be a throw in to the deal in which the Spurs most likely cared more about the second round pick. A trade with him also seems unlikely, so a release would make more sense. Another choice could be Young; he is a possible trade candidate for the Spurs, as they could very possibly get a future draft asset in return for him. Though the Spurs may have the wait closer to the trade deadline when contending teams are more desperate to add contributors to their championship level teams for the Spurs to get the compensation they want. Lastly the Spurs could choose not to fully guarantee Drew Eubanks' contract, but that seems unlikely due to his solid play last season and the camaraderie he brings off the court with the rest of the team.

The main part of the Spurs offseason may be over, but the front office still have many key decisions left to make before the start of a new era in San Antonio.

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