The Garuba Report: 2024 Edition

A checkpoint on the former 2021 first-round pick

Josh LaFronz

April 7, 2024

Introduction

An update on 2021 first-round pick Usman Garuba, what he has been up to in 2024, and how his development is going.

The Trenches of Santa Cruz

Usman Garuba's 2024 G-League season has come to an end.

The former 2021 first-round pick, who is not a month older than 22 years, played 37 games for the Santa Cruz Warriors, the Golden State G-League affiliate, throughout the regular season, showcase and playoffs.

- 12.8 points per game

- 10.5 rebounds per game (4.1 offensive, 6.4 defensive)

- 1.9 assists per game

- 1.4 blocks per game

- 1.1 steals per game

- 1.9 turnovers per game

He shot 58.8% from the field, 34% from distance, and 61.5% from the free-throw stripe.

Garuba has spent the greater part of his NBA career in the G-League (102 career NBA games across three seasons, just three games in 2024 entering April 7). When he was a prospect, his scouting report was to the point: He has a high motor, great defensive versatility, but limited offensive punch. Garuba is about 6'8" and 220 lbs, which means he is a little small to play the 5, but he was lacking the offensive skill set to effectively stretch the floor as a 4-man.

The crux of his growth plan is increasing his ability to make an impact offensively and to become a shooting threat. How did that go?

Long Ranged Attack

Can Garuba effectively space the floor? This season was a tale of two parts:

Date Range	Games Played	3PA/G	3P%	3PA rate
Before Feb. 1	25 GP	0.72	16.7%	7.8%
Since Then	12 GP	2.50	44.8%	25.4%

Is it a small sample size? Absolutely, but there is still a huge difference. More attempts and the percentage nearly tripling suggest a huge growth in Garuba's confidence. What about free throw shooting, with that same time frame partitioning? (Recall that the G-League does have the rule where one free throw counts for two).

Date Range	FTA/G	FT%
Before Feb. 1	1.20	50%
Since Then	1.83	77.3%

The attempts are similar, and for transparency's sake, his free throw rate has decreased (13% vs 9.6%), but Garuba is not inherently a foul-drawing machine. The point of this is that his free throw percentage increased by more than 50%.

To contextualize Garuba's shooting growth, true shooting percentage is a great metric.

Date Range	3P%	FT%	TS%
Before Feb. 1	16.7%	50%	63.1%
Since Then	46.7%	77.3%	66.6%

For some context, the league average TS% was around 58%. So not only was Garuba better after February 1, he has been above average all season long.

The Highlights

Some other facts about Garuba's season:

- 19 double-doubles in 37 games

- 8 games with more than 5 offensive rebounds (4 with more than 8, 1 game with 10)

- Best statistical game: 24 pts, 14 reb, 4 stl, 12-15 FG

- 2 playoff games: 18 pts, 19 reb, 3 blk on 4/2; 21 pts, 13 reb on 4/4

Usman Garuba is a versatile, intelligent, high-motor, defensive-minded, athletic front-court player with a developing jump shot who still finds ways to score. Garuba should hopefully be given another chance to show what he can contribute when given NBA minutes.

References

[1] "Usman Garuba merece una oportunidad con los Warriors," *mundodeportivo.com*, 12 December 2023, link.

[2] "Usman Garuba at Media Day," uploaded to *NBA.com*, 2 October 2023, link.

[3] Statistics taken from Garuba's page on RealGM, Eurobasket, Basketball-Reference, as well as the 2023-24 G-League leaguewide statistics on Basketball-Reference.

[4] Aggregating work was done using website scraping in Python using the Beautiful-Soup and the Pandas packages.