

= Tyler Ulis =

Tyler Ulis (born January 5 , 1996) is an American professional basketball player for the Phoenix Suns of the National Basketball Association (NBA) . He played college basketball for the Kentucky Wildcats . At Kentucky in 2015 , he led his team in assists , he made the 2015 SEC All @-@ Freshman Team and led the 2014 ? 15 Kentucky team that won its first 38 games before losing to Wisconsin in the final four of the 2015 NCAA Men 's Division I Basketball Tournament . As a sophomore , Ulis was a Consensus first team All @-@ American and earned the Southeastern Conference Men 's Basketball Player of the Year and the Southeastern Conference Men 's Basketball Defensive Player of the Year recognition .

He played for Marian Catholic High School in Chicago Heights , Illinois . He was selected to play in both the 2014 McDonald 's All @-@ American Game and the 2014 Jordan Brand Classic . As a high school junior , he was a first team All @-@ state selection , but he was overlooked by most top scouts until after his junior year of high school due to his height .

= = Early life = =

Ulis was born in Southfield , Michigan , and lived in Lima , Ohio , with his mother . He ran track as a youth , competing in the 800 meters and 1500 meters . He trained for basketball with his cousin and 2009 Big Ten Conference Defensive Player of the Year Travis Walton . Another of his cousins is Shareese Ulis , point guard for Cincinnati Lady Bearcats , who had been a two @-@ time Toledo Blade Player of the Year .

= = High school career = =

For high school , Ulis moved to Matteson , Illinois , where he lived with his father , James . In Ohio , he had been used to winning a high percentage of his games . When he arrived at Marian Catholic , he started his first game as a freshman against future Illinois Fighting Illini men 's basketball starting guard Tracy Abrams . He did not initially enjoy team success . As a freshman he was 5 feet 3 inches (1 @. @ 60 m) tall and was being recruited by opposing high schools . He reached 5 feet 8 inches (1 @. @ 73 m) by late in his sophomore year and began being recruited by college basketball teams . By the beginning of his junior season , Marian Catholic was regarded as a serious contender thanks to Ulis .

Because of his height , Ulis was overlooked until well into the recruiting process for top basketball schools . He was not highly recruited until his 2013 ? 14 senior year of high school . Among schools regarded as high @-@ major programs , only Iowa and DePaul made him offers during his junior year . His other offers were from Dayton , Colorado State , Loyola , Northern Illinois and Oregon State . During his junior season , his stock soared and Marian Catholic started winning . In the March 2013 Illinois High School Association Class 4A sectional round , Marian Catholic vied against Bloom High School and then played Edwardsville High School in the supersectional round . Although Marian lost to a much taller Edwardsville team , it established a school record for wins with a 29 ? 4 record and it won its IHSA sectional for the first time . Ulis finished fourth in the Illinois Mr. Basketball balloting behind Jabari Parker , Jahlil Okafor and Malcolm Hill . He was a first team All @-@ state selection by the Chicago Tribune along with Parker , Okafor , Cliff Alexander and Jalen Brunson .

By August 8 , 2013 , when he was ranked as the 38th best prospect in the national class of 2014 and its 8th best point guard by ESPN , he had several offers and named Iowa , Kentucky (although he did not have an offer from them at the time) , Michigan State and USC as his finalists (eliminating DePaul , Florida State , Northwestern and Purdue) . Walton had played for Michigan State . He received an official offer from Kentucky on August 16 . In early September , Ulis announced that he would not take an official visit to USC and had eliminated them from consideration . On September 13 , Ulis committed to Kentucky . Subsequently , Tyus Jones canceled his September 27 ? 29 official visit to Kentucky .

Ulis entered his senior season as one of the five favorites to win Illinois Mr. Basketball (along with Okafor , Alexander , Brunson and Keita Bates @-@ Diop) . On December 7 , 2013 at the UIC Pavilion in the Chicago Elite Classic , Ulis and Marion suffered one of their only two regular season losses to USC @-@ bound guard Jordan McLaughlin and Etiwanda High School , which was ranked number 6 nationally by USA Today . Ulis had 30 points , 7 assists and 5 rebounds . The January 25 , 2014 , matchup against junior Brunson and Stevenson High School was widely anticipated in the local press as the matchup of the two best point guards in the state . Stevenson won as Brunson had 32 points on 9 @-@ for @-@ 15 field goal shooting and an 11 @-@ for @-@ 14 free throw performance . Ulis had 23 points and 9 assists , including 18 points and 3 assists in the final eight minutes , but was only 5 @-@ for @-@ 20 from the field for the game . Ulis posted a career @-@ high 42 points on February 22 against Lake Forest High School to go along with 6 steals , 6 rebounds and 5 assists .

During his senior year , Marian was the number 1 seed in the Thornton sectional of the IHSA Class 4A tournament . On March 11 , Ulis had 40 points to lead Marian past Bloom High School 66 ? 45 . In the game , which was a rematch from the prior year , he made his first six shots , all three @-@ pointers . On March 18 , Marian lost its supersectional rematch against Edwardsville in overtime , again falling one game short of reaching the final four in Peoria , Illinois and finishing with a 28 ? 3 record . In the game , Ulis , who had 23 points and 4 assists , tied the score with 21 seconds in regulation and with 50 seconds left in overtime . In the April 18 Jordan Brand Classic , Ulis posted 9 points and 9 assists .

= = = Awards and honors = = =

He was selected to the 2014 McDonald 's All @-@ American Game on January 29 (along with fellow Chicagoans Okafor and Alexander as well as along with fellow Kentucky commits Karl @-@ Anthony Towns , Trey Lyles , and Devin Booker) . On March 10 he was one of 26 players selected for the April 18 , 2014 Jordan Brand Classic again along with fellow Chicagoans Okafor and Alexander as well as along with fellow Kentucky commits Towns , Lyles , and Booker . He was named Associated Press Class 4A 1st team All @-@ state with Alexander , Brunson , Okafor and Sean O 'Mara . Ulis finished third to Okafor and Alexander in the Illinois Mr. Basketball voting . He was the runner @-@ up in both the skills competition and the three @-@ point contest at the McDonald 's All @-@ American Game . He was a 2014 USA Today third team All @-@ USA Boys Basketball Team selection .

The decision by Andrew Harrison and Aaron Harrison on whether to enter the 2014 NBA draft would be the determining factor on whether Ulis became an immediate starter or not . Many thought Andrew would be Calipari 's seventh consecutive point guard to declare for the NBA Draft after his freshman season , but that Ulis would likely last much longer at Kentucky . On April 25 , the Harrisons announced that they would be returning to Kentucky .

= = College career = =

= = = Freshman year = = =

Ulis was also named to the 36 @-@ man 2014 ? 15 Bob Cousy Award Preseason Watch List and the Wayman Tisdale Award Watch List . Ulis quickly earned a reputation as a difference maker whose contributions may not be obvious in the statistics . On December 10 , he was sidelined with an injury . Ulis posted a career high 14 @-@ points on December 27 against Louisville in the Kentucky ? Louisville rivalry game known as the The Battle For The Bluegrass , earning the MVP of the game from the The Bluegrass Sports Commission . On December 29 , his effort was recognized with an SEC Freshman of the Week honor . Ulis did not start in any his 37 games played as a freshman , but averaged 23 @. @ 8 minutes played . Following the season , he was named to the 8 @-@ man 2015 SEC All @-@ Freshman Team . Kentucky went undefeated in its first 38 games

before losing to Wisconsin in the Final Four of the 2015 NCAA Men's Division I Basketball Tournament . Ulis led the team in assists per game .

== = Sophomore year == =

Ulis was a selection to the 20 @-@ man Bob Cousy Award preseason watchlist , and the 30 @-@ man Lute Olson Award preseason watchlist . He was also a 2015 ? 16 Southeastern Conference preseason first team All @-@ conference selection by the media . In preseason top 100 player rankings Ulis was ranked 5 by ESPN and 22 by NBC Sports . During the preseason , Mike Rutherford of SB Nation selected Ulis as one of its 10 most important college basketball players for 2015 @-@ 16 . He made the initial 50 @-@ man John R. Wooden Award watch list on November 17 . On December 2 , Ulis earned recognition on the 50 @-@ man Naismith College Player of the Year watchlist and 33 @-@ man Robertson Trophy watchlists .

Ulis opened the season in the starting lineup against the Albany Great Danes on November 13 . On November 17 , Ulis posted game @-@ high and career @-@ high 18 points as well as game @-@ high 6 assists with no turnovers in 40 minutes of play in a victory over the defending national champion Duke Blue Devils in the Champions Classic . He posted a game @-@ high and career @-@ high 21 points as well as a game @-@ high 5 assists on November 21 against Wright State . As a result , on November 23 , he earned SEC Co @-@ Player of the Week (along with Kenny Gaines) . In Kentucky 's 2015 ? 16 Southeastern Conference men 's basketball season opener against the Ole Miss Rebels on January 2 , Ulis posted 20 points and 10 assists . The game marked Ulis ' first collegiate double @-@ double and Kentucky 's first 20 @-@ point and 10 @-@ assist performance since John Wall posted one on November 21 , 2009 . On January 5 , Ulis posted his third straight 20 @-@ point performance with a career @-@ high 23 points in a loss against the Ben Simmons @-@ led LSU Tigers . On January 13 , Ulis was among the 25 players included in the John R. Wooden Award Midseason Top 25 Watch List . On January 21 , Ulis went 14 ? 15 from the free throw line and 2 ? 3 on three @-@ point shots to post 24 against Arkansas . Ulis was named to the January 25 20 @-@ man Oscar Robertson Trophy midseason watch list . On January 30 , Ulis posted a career @-@ high 26 points and 8 assists against # 4 @-@ ranked Kansas , but Kentucky lost in overtime . On February 1 , Ulis was named one of 10 finalists for the Bob Cousy Point Guard of the Year Award . Entering play on February 13 , Kentucky and South Carolina were tied atop of the 2015 ? 16 Southeastern Conference standings . In a game between the two , Ulis posted new career highs with 27 points and 12 assists , leading the team to an 89 ? 62 victory , after coach Calipari was ejected early . He was named to the 35 @-@ man midseason watchlist for the Naismith Trophy on February 11 . Ulis was included in the Wooden Award Late season Top 20 Watch List on February 12 . On February 15 , Ulis earned SEC Player of the Week honors again . On February 29 , Ulis was among the 11 finalists for the Robertson Trophy . On March 5 , Ulis closed out the regular season with a career @-@ high 14 assists and 14 points against the LSU Tigers .

Following the 2015 ? 16 Southeastern Conference men 's basketball season , Ulis was named the SEC Player of the Year by both SEC head coaches and the Associated Press , and was also named by the coaches as SEC Defensive Player of the Year (the AP does not select this award , or an SEC all @-@ defensive team) . He placed on both voting bodies ' All @-@ Conference first teams , and was named to the coaches ' All @-@ SEC defensive team . He was the second player (after Anthony Davis) to earn both the SEC Player of the Year and SEC Defensive Player of the Year honors in the same season . Ulis earned broad 2016 NCAA Men 's Basketball All @-@ Americans recognition . He was a first team selection by USA Today , ESPN , Sports Illustrated , NBC Sports , Associated Press , CBS Sports , and Sporting News ; He was a second team selection by the USBWA and NABC . Ulis was named one of four finalists for the Naismith Trophy on March 20 . He was named one of 10 finalists for the Wooden Award on March 29 . When naming Ulis to its All @-@ American team , Associated Press described Ulis as the shortest All @-@ American since Johnny O'Brien in 1953 . Ulis won the Bob Cousy Award .

In the 2016 SEC Men 's Basketball Tournament , Ulis scored 25 points and had 4 assists in the

semifinal victory over Georgia on March 12 . In the finals against regular season co @-@ champion Texas A & M on March 13 , Ulis posted a career @-@ high 30 points . He played all 45 minutes of the overtime contest . Ulis was tournament MVP . In the 2016 NCAA Men 's Division I Basketball Tournament , Kentucky renewed its rivalry with Indiana in the round of 32 on March 20 . Ulis posted 27 points in the 73 ? 67 loss to the 2015 ? 16 Hoosiers .

= = Professional career = =

At the conclusion of his sophomore season , Ulis announced his intention to forgo his final two seasons of eligibility and enter the 2016 NBA draft . During the 2016 NBA Draft Combine , Ulis was not only the second @-@ shortest player to participate in the event (behind only Kahlil Felder , who measured at 5 ' 9 @. @ 5 " with shoes on (5 ' 8 @. @ 5 " without shoes) as opposed to an even 5 ' 10 " with shoes on (5 @. @ 8 @. @ 75 " without them)) , but he was also the lightest recorded player in draft combine history at 149 pounds . Furthermore , about two weeks before the draft began , it was revealed that Ulis had a problem with his hip that may one day require surgery . As a result , his draft stock declined from being an expected mid @-@ first round selection to being either a late @-@ first round or early @-@ second round selection . Ulis downplayed the issue , claiming that his hip was just fine . However , Ulis was selected by the Phoenix Suns in the second round with their 34th selection , being reunited with his best friend and former college teammate Devin Booker in the process . He became the fifth Kentucky player on the Suns ' roster along with fellow guards Eric Bledsoe , Archie Goodwin , Brandon Knight , and Booker . On July 7 , he signed with the Suns and joined the team for the 2016 NBA Summer League . Ulis received the equivalent of a late first @-@ round pick 's contract , starting at around \$ 1 million and having the same two guaranteed years with two team option years . Over six games at the Las Vegas Summer League , he averaged 14 @. @ 5 points and 6 @. @ 3 assists per game , subsequently earning All @-@ NBA Summer League Second Team honors .