PF - Dario Saric

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BANKABLE NBA SKILL: You can’t teach *size* and you can’t teach *feel*, and Saric has both. Legit size to play PF in NBA, yet has good ball-handling and feet to make plays. Has a good face-up game, though won’t be as effective vs NBA defenses.

SIZE FOR POSITION: Height: 6’10” Plays Like: 6’10”+

Weight: listed at 225 lbs, however I have him closer to 235. He’s strong for his age and uses it well.

BEST STYLE/FIT: A team that prefers to play a control game, with PF at elbow/high-post setting screens and making decisions in offense (i.e.- Pacers w/ David West).

DEFENSIVE LIABILITY? He will have a hard time staying with ‘Space 4’s in the NBA, closing out under control and preventing the drive/step-in J. On the block, I think he will be fine using his body and footwork.

POSITIONING GRADE: (does player put himself in position to do the following, outside of set plays?)

Scoring – Average (has a good feel for where to position himself for scores inside)

Shooting – Average (has good pick-n-pop ability but occasionally floats in too deep)

Passing – Very Good (flashes to open spots well in order to make next pass/swing)

Help Defense – Average (he does this well in ABA Liga/ Euroleague, though the NBA will be a difficult adjustment)

On-ball/Post Defense – Mediocre (he positions himself well on D but I fear he may get out of position against more versatile players who beat him to the spot)

Rebounding – Mediocre (not a great rebounder overseas, which doesn’t bode well at the next level)

ATTITUDE: I like Dario’s attitude. He has a lot of ‘dog’ in him yet and doesn’t pout when plays aren’t run for him (which is frequent occurrence playing for Cibona).

POSITIVES: Dario has a nice touch from outside and the ball-handling/passing skills to compliment it. He also has a body ready for the NBA. At age 19, he already uses his body well on the block. He has very good passing skills from the high-post and also an above average feel for the game (whether to shoot/pass/screen/space-out).

INSIDER: Cibona doesn’t run that many plays for Saric, as they mainly have him setting high screens for guards or occupying the mid/high post. This bodes well for him going forward as his NBA team will also likely not run plays for him. He’ll feel comfortable as a role player and it won’t affect his confidence.

CONCERNS: While he has excellent passing skills and vision in space, this is not the case in traffic. He has a habit of driving into double-teams and then throwing it away (I saw this a lot at *Eurobasket 2013* against better competition). This is more than just a control issue, but a *vision* issue. He passes it to where his teammate was at the start of his drive and not to where his teammate actually is. It’s as if he took a mental snapshot of the play prior to driving and then makes decision based on that ‘out-dated’ information. In addition, he tends to put the ball out in front of him on the drive (resembling former Euro-great Dejan Bodiroga). This could be a problem as he doesn’t have Dejan’s change of direction dribble. In the NBA, he’ll see even stronger help defenses so these things are naturally a concern for me.

FORECAST: Saric has been billed as a ‘poor man’s Toni Kukoc’. This is a very generous comparison. I do NOT see Saric as a 2014 lottery pick, especially considering the amount of talent in this draft. I would take Adreian Payne (Michigan State) or Aaron Gordon (Arizona) ahead of him. I think he should be drafted late in the 1st round, as he won’t be a game-changer at the next level. He has the potential to be a very good role player for years. I picture a Tyler Hansbrough w/ less rebounding but more play-making/shooting. His niche must be to just play solid basketball. Keep the game simple and not try and do too much. He can’t be Kukoc, not at the NBA level. If he can embrace the step-back jumper as opposed to the drive-n-kick game, that would bode well for him. Any team that drafts Dario should have him focus all energy on improving his anticipation at rebounding and defense. This should keep him on the court till he finds his offensive niche.

SIMILAR PRO PLAYERS:

* **Tyler Hansbrough** with less rebounding but more play-making/shooting.
* **Danilo Gallinari** with MUCH less shooting/play-making/shot-creation.

VIDEO CLIPS:

Great passing and vision in space: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNGT98DAK8Y

Poor control on drive: (1:32 mark) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ml-KEPc3ZBE

Poor close-out defense: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZJqzKyC4yE