Nash's deal was part of a busy 24 hours for the Suns, who are looking to get younger and more athletic.

PHOENIX (AP) -- Steve Nash wanted to go to the Los Angeles Lakers. He just needed an assist.

The Phoenix Suns would have to reach a sign-and-trade deal to facilitate the move and, according to Nash, they were reluctant.

Eventually, they relented and the two-time MVP point guard is going to the Pacific Division rival he tried so hard to beat, with little success, in his eight seasons with the Suns.

In one of those odd NBA twists, the Lakers' trade of Lamar Odom to Dallas before last season paved the way for Nash's arrival. Los Angeles used the trade exception it got in the Odom deal to make the Nash move work.

The 38-year-old Nash was a free agent, but a sign-and-trade agreement was necessary for the

Lakers to afford him. He agreed to a three-year, $27 million contract. In return, the Suns get four draft picks - first-rounders in 2013 and 2015 and second-rounders in 2013 and 2014.

Nash's agent, Bill Duffy, said the deal was completed Wednesday about 9 p.m., EDT.

In a statement released by Duffy, Nash said that after he and the Suns agreed to part ways, he went back to the team and asked it to pursue a sign-and-trade deal with Los Angeles "because it is very important to me to stay near my children and family," who live in Phoenix.

"They were very apprehensive and didn't want to do it," Nash said. "Fortunately for me, they reconsidered. They saw that they were able to get assets for their team that will make them better, assets they would not have otherwise had, and it made sense for them to do a deal that helps their team get better."

There had been sign-and-trade talks with New York and a lucrative free agent offer from Toronto.

The deal will put Nash on the floor with the team he tried to unseat as a Western Conference power, teaming him with Kobe Bryant, Andrew Bynum and Pau Gasol. That could be enough to lift the Lakers back into title contention.

The Suns at least get something for the loss of their longtime leader and one of the city's most popular athletes, although no one to help immediately, unless some or all of the picks are used in future trades.

Nash's Phoenix teammate Jared Dudley tweeted that Nash "has not only been the best but the most unselfish player I ever played with. I only wish him the best. He deserves everything. Steve Nash has made many players millions. Only fitting to trade to a team that has a chance to win the ship and pay what he deserves."

Nash has never made it to the NBA Finals. He was last in the Western Conference finals against the Lakers in 2010, when the Suns lost in six games and Los Angeles went on to win the NBA title.

The Suns drafted Nash in 1998, but traded him to Dallas after two seasons because Phoenix already had Kevin Johnson and Jason Kidd at the position. Nash played six seasons for Dallas, but bolted when owner Mark Cuban declined to spend big money to keep him. Then-Suns owner Jerry Colangelo brought a plane load of Phoenix players and officials to Dallas to woo Nash.

Nash thrived in Mike D'Antoni's run-and-gun system, earning MVP honors in 2005, when he averaged 15.5 points and 11.5 assists, and again in 2006, when he averaged a career-high 18.8 points and 10.5 assists. Nash averaged fewer than 10 assists only once, 9.7 in 2008-09, and topped 11 per game five times in his eight years with Phoenix.

Despite his age and the fact his team failed to make the playoffs for the second year in a row, Nash was second in the NBA in assists last season at 10.7 and averaged 12.7 points. His 53 percent shooting rate was a career high.

He is one of the most accurate free throw shooters in NBA history at 90.4 percent. His 9,916 assists rank him fifth in NBA history behind all-time leader John Stockton, Kidd, Mark Jackson and Magic Johnson.

The Suns resisted trading Nash during his final season and insisted they were interested in bringing him back, but they never seriously were in the discussion. Toronto and New York dominated the talk until the Lakers came on quickly Tuesday.

Nash's arrival should rejuvenate the Lakers, who lost in the second round for the second straight postseason after their back-to-back championships in 2009 and 2010. The Lakers struggled to move on from departed coach Phil Jackson's triangle offense to new coach Mike Brown's system during the lockout-shortened season, with four-time All-Star forward Gasol particularly failing to fit in while getting pushed to the third option on offense most nights.

Nash's peerless playmaking abilities and veteran presence could smooth over those problems, particularly after a full training camp to define the Lakers' roles in Brown's offense.

The draft picks probably don't mean too much to the Lakers, who have traded away their first-round picks the past three seasons. They haven't drafted a regular starter since 2005.

Nash's deal was part of a busy 24 hours for the Suns, who are looking to get younger and more athletic.

On Tuesday, according to a person familiar with the talks, they agreed to a four-year, $58 million offer with restricted free agent guard Eric Gordon, although the Hornets say they will match it.

After the Nash agreement Wednesday night, according to a source who requested anonymity because deals can't be announced until July 11, the Suns reached a three-year, $18 million deal with free agent forward Michael Beasley. Then, an hour or so before midnight, they reached an agreement to bring back point Goran Dragic in a three-year, $30 million deal that can reach $34 million with incentives. The fourth year is a player option.

Suns fans anticipated Nash's departure. They gave him a roaring standing ovation when he took the court in Phoenix's regular-season finale. They knew he was probably headed somewhere. They doubtless would prefer it was not the hated Lakers.