

Full Coverage: Suns vs Knicks

Written by

Sunday, 02 December 2012 08:33 -



The Phoenix Suns went into Madison Square Garden and got blown out by the New York Knicks. It was hardly a surprise, but still a disappointment.

The easy part of the [Suns](#) 11-day road trip is over. They couldn't manage wins against Philly (10-7), Cleveland (4-13) or Toronto (4-13). So, what do you think the odds are the rag-tag Phoenix squad will leave Madison Square Garden (11-4) with anything other than a loss?

The odds are actually not posted yet (probably due to injury uncertainty with the Knicks...or more likely, a lack of betting interest in this Sunday game that's going up against the mighty NFL). [now posted](#) and have the Suns as an 11.5 point underdog.

The Knicks, in their first full season with Mike D'Antoni's replacement (Mike Woodsen), are playing fantastic basketball despite Amare Stoudemire's inability to yet take the floor (knee).

They are defending well (Def. Eff. 103.7, 13th) thanks to DPOY [Tyson Chandler](#) and a renewed commitment to play team defense.

With [Carmelo Anthony](#) playing the four, they are scoring the ball as well (Off. Eff. 112.7, 1st). The amazing stylings of [J.R. Smith](#) and [Steve Novak](#) help too. And Raymond Felton but down the pie and is playing solid PG ball (15 pts, 7 ast. per game).

In theory, it's a team the Suns might be able to beat in the paint with the power forward combo of [Luis Scola](#) and [Markieff Morris](#) if they are going to go small. But of course, do you really look forward to seeing either of those guys defending Melo?

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Anyway, the Knicks seem like they will start with a traditional line up with Chandler, Kurt Thomas and Melo on the front line and Felton and Ronnie Brewer in the back. Jason Kidd (back spasms / old man) is listed as "doubtful".

In years past, Gentry would give [Grant Hill](#) that Melo assignment. I'm curious (only slightly) to see if Gentry goes small as well and uses [P.J. Tucker](#) on Melo and maybe even plays Morris or Scola at the five a bit.

- **Start time: 10:00am local / 12:00pm ET**

- **TV: Fox Sports AZ / NBALP**

- [Knicks roster and stats](#)

- [Posting and Toasting](#)

New theory, the balance bane

The Toronto game was interesting to me. The team looked like they were focused and determined coming off the Detroit Disaster, but I'm starting to think this roster's biggest problem (outside the lack of top flight talent, duh) is too many guys who are too good to bench but not good enough to dominate.

There are no clear roles. There are no clear patterns and predictable moves. There is no guy or guys who the team can look to on a consistent basis to deliver on either end (P.J. Tucker excluded). They are looking at their teammates and saying, "I'm the guy" instead of trusting and following each other.

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As a result, Gentry seems to spend the first half the game spreading the ball around trying to find a hot hand and then the second half adjusting to what he thinks might work. The problem is that none of his "hot hands" are good enough to really dominate. No Suns player has scored over 30 this season. No one player has shown the ability to put the team on his back. As a result, everyone thinks they are good enough to do it and they all want the ball, but none of them are "the man".

It's been Gentry's M.O. early in the season to spread the minutes and the touches around and he's already "tightened" up to a ten-man rotation and benched Wes Johnson. Is it time to try cutting that back to eight?

Would it help to look at [Michael Beasley](#) and say, go get me 30 points, I don't care how many shots you take? Probably not.

The balance could be an advantage if teams don't know which Suns will bite them on a given night. But if none of them are good enough to do it, maybe there's another strategy to use.

Probably not.

This roster was always destined to be a sub-.500 team and early season struggles should come as no surprise -- we've seen it every year of Gentry's tenure including the 14-17 start to the 2010 WCF team.

One day at a time, folks. At least this game will be over early in the day.