

For Suns & Mavs, it's all about 'star-less' basketball

Written by

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The [Suns](#) host the Mavs Thursday night in what used to be headlined as the Nash & Nowitzki Reunion Show.

Tonight's game looks more like the Shawn Marion Bowl...hardly the same effect.

Tonight, these two former powers in the Western Conference are playing in a super star's league without one of their own ([Dirk Nowitzki](#) is still out following knee surgery). I can only imagine how difficult it is for [Alvin Gentry](#) and [Rick Carlisle](#) find consistency without a marquee name in the lineup.

In Phoenix's heartbreak loss at Memphis Tuesday night, there was one play in the 2nd quarter that spoke volumes. [Markieff Morris](#) was smothered on a turnaround shot in the post. As he looked to the referee in shock, [P.J. Tucker](#) got the rebound and put up a shot of his own. Tucker, too thought he got mauled inside. While the Griz quickly headed downcourt following two misses, Markieff and P.J. were both still beside themselves in the backcourt looking at the refs. That pretty much sums up the task of trying to win in the NBA without a super star player.

Nash and Nowitzki used to do more than lead their teams to victory, their mere presence allowed role players to get All-Star respect. Even their supporting casts fed off of that referee respect.

This season, the Suns and Mavs are both in the bottom half in free throws attempted. They also give up more than they shoot, averaging in the bottom third. Phoenix has shot 390 free throws while their opponents have gotten 442. Dallas, meanwhile, have totaled 378 while giving up 475 (only one team gives up more).

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Winning consistently in the NBA is hard enough without this 'charity discrepancy'. So, as the Suns host the Mavs in a nationally televised game, anticipate a very competitive contest.

But don't expect to hear "and one" very often.