Written by Sunday, 09 December 2012 21:22 -



The Phoenix Suns defense against J.J. Reddick was terrible in this game, be it leaving him open for a three-pointer (he made four of the them, was fouled in the act on another) or allowing him to drive into the lane and pass off for uncontested layups to his big men. Really poor defense all around.

Orlando even tried to collapse in the third quarter, with the Suns taking a five-point lead and looking healthy, when the home team hit yet another dry spell and really never recovered. Bad offensive sets, hero-ball three-point attempts and otherwise wild shots doomed the Suns.

The sparse crowd really wanted something to get excited about - an offensive rebound by Telfair and good drives to the hoop by Dudley and Gortat. They made some noise, for sure.

But when the loudest cheers in the arena were for a four-year old National Anthem singer (really good singer, to be fair), your team is not very exciting to watch. The Suns now have the league's longest streak of game scoring less than 100 points.

We love the Suns, but we can apply some tough love sometimes. And these guys need some tough love.

Shannon Brown scored 17 points, while Jared Dudley added 15. Not enough guys stepped up with Dragic out sick and PJ Tucker not there to provide hustle.

The game started with the <u>Suns</u> on a 6-game losing streak, facing a fairly empty arena and a fairly young Orlando team that had blown the Suns out just four weeks ago in the sunshine state.

Suns Final Score: Orlando Downs Suns on Sunday Night, 98-90

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To make matters worse, the Suns best player - PG Goran Dragic (flu) - and their best energy guy off the bench - P.J.

Tucker

(knee) - were scratched from the lineup.

But lest you fear the Suns were facing insurmountable odds, let's reset reality. The Orlando were

just 7-12 on the season, no more wins on their season docket than the home team itself.

And the Suns were playing at home, generally the difference-maker for two similarly-talented teams.

At tipoff, the game was a tossup.

The Suns started strong to take a 15-6 early lead, but the Magic started making their shots while the Suns started missing theirs and the first quarter ended much closer than we might have guessed - 23-20, still in favor of the Suns.

The second quarter, featuring seldom-used Wes Johnson and <u>Diante Garrett</u> along with just-demoted Micheal Beasley was a relative disaster. No one knew who was doing what and when they weren't going to do it. After an okay start, the Magic took control as the Suns dissolved. The starters recovered a bit to bring the Suns back to only a 5-point deficit at 48-53 at half.

J.J. Reddick finished the half with 17 points, 13 of them on four 3-pointers, and four free throws off being fouled on 3s by Wesley Johnson .

The Suns regained their composure in the second half while the Magic lost theirs, taking their own 5-point lead in the first seven minutes of the second half. But again when the second unit came in, led by Garrett, Scola and Beasley came in, the Suns defense became a sieve and Orlando scored at will again. At the end of the quarter, Orlando had retaken a one-point lead.

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This second unit started poorly in the fourth, allowing the Magic to take a 5-point lead several times in the first three minutes.

Then Telfair, Dudley, Morris and Brown joined Jermaine O'Neal to try to right their ship against an Orlando team that really shouldn't be winning a road game.

For more, visit Orlando Pinstriped Post.

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