

Game Preview: Memphis Grizzlies (14-4) vs. Phoenix Suns (7-15) - Carpe Diem!

Written by

Wednesday, 12 December 2012 13:00 -



The Grizzlies are a sterling 14-4 on the season and sit atop the West. But in their last three games, they needed overtime to beat the lowly Phoenix Suns, squeaked out a late win over the lowly [New Orleans Hornets](#) and lost by a wide margin to the [Atlanta Hawks](#) .

Yet, the Suns can only wish they had those troubles. Phoenix has lost seven consecutive games, kicked off by a horrific 40-point drubbing at the hands of the lowly [Detroit Pistons](#) two weeks ago. Since then, the Suns have found ways to lose every game.

Update: Another new lineup

Per Paul Coro, the Phoenix Suns are starting Luis Scola against Memphis tonight in place of Markieff Morris. Scola put up 16 and 8 last week, while Morris was manhandled. Good move.

Full Strength

At least tonight, they get back to full strength on the court (as strong as that is). [Goran Dragic](#) (19 and 7 with 2 steals against Memphis last week) and [P.J. Tucker](#) (4 and 6 in 23 minutes against Memphis) practiced fully yesterday, both reporting good news afterward.

Dragic said that he's regained one of the six pounds he'd lost during his illness (flu) and Tucker "felt good" after spraining an MCL ligament last Thursday night.

Sebastian Telfair has taken it easy in practice this week, but will also be ready to go against Memphis. The Suns really missed Dragic on Sunday against Orlando, so Alvin Gentry must be relieved to have his regular rotation back.

Ready to go

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[Alvin Gentry](#) , after practice yesterday, [was back to his reassuring self](#).

"We went through a tough time last year," he said. "We kept plugging away at it and we found a way to get it turned around. We'll do the same thing this year."

The Suns have not lost this many games in a row since the 90s, but they didn't start much better a season ago (8-14 last year vs. 7-15 this year after 22 games).

It should help that he got a vote of confidence from the team's managing partner, Robert Sarver, the other day. Sarver told several national news outlets that Gentry was safe for the whole season, that he wasn't expected to win immediately after turning over the roster. Okay, that kind of endorsement never goes bad.

And maybe defend a little? Never mind...

Our own Jason Feldman did some busy-work research by watching most of the Suns defensive plays during their losing streak, and came to the conclusion that [the defense is a much bigger worry than the offense](#)

What is completely obvious by watching the Suns guard pick and roll plays is that they far too often get beat [or another way of more accurately stating it - far too few times do they get stops]. What is less obvious are the culprits for this ineptitude.

Many have pondered that our guards/wings have played inferior perimeter defense, allowing opposing guards/wings to light them up. After watching every PNR possession, that conclusion would be flat out wrong.

The main culprits for the defensive breakdowns are our bigs [more specifically the man guarding the picker] and to a lesser extent, the other players responsible for rotating [more on that later].

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Go read the rest of this article. Really insightful work!

Or the Suns could just try to outscore them

Against the Grizzlies, that's no easy task. On the season, they score more than the Suns (98.2 vs. 97.8) and give up a lot less (91.2 vs. 103.1).

That 97.8 PPG for the Suns is even misleading. The Suns have failed to top 100 points in 7 consecutive games.

At least try to control the big man

And I am not talking about Marc Gasol. It's Zach Randolph who swallowed up the Suns in the last meeting, scoring 38 points (his best offensive game of the season, per Zach) and grabbing 22 rebounds. Every Suns big was made to look bad against this guy.

Build off last week's almost-win?

Can the Suns rely on last week's game tape to help them win this time? The Suns had a 16-point lead on the road against Memphis last week and only lost when Randolph went nuts on them.

Maybe the Suns will do even better this. Or, maybe the Grizzlies will be more ready for the Suns.

"We get a good look at them and see how they play us and it allows us to prepare for them a little bit better," [Mike Conley] said about the next three opponents, all of whom the Grizzlies have played this year.

Keys to the game

To win this game, the Suns would need a lot of things to break their way. They have to play focused, quality basketball for 48 straight minutes and someone has to step up in a big, big way.

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[Luis Scola](#) said he was encouraged after the Memphis game last week, even though they lost. He had 16 points and 8 rebounds in 38 minutes of playing time. (by contrast, Gortat had 11 and 7 in 35 minutes, while Morris had only 6 and 2 in 15 bad minutes).

"If you had asked me yesterday," he said, after the subsequent loss on Thursday night to Dallas. "I would have been a lot more positive. We played well against Memphis."

The Suns need to do that again.

Fight. Claw. Scrap.

And maybe they will get another opportunity to hit the game-winning shot. On this losing streak, the Suns have had the opportunity to tie or take the lead in the final seconds of three of them, and missed every one.

Maybe the next time, the law of averages will begin to even out.

Keep the faith, Suns fans!

[Grizzlies vs Suns coverage](#)

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FG	3PT	FT	Rebounds	
G	M	M	A	Pct
Rudy Gay 18		37.2	7.2	17.3
Zach Randolph 18		36.7	6.9	13.9
Marc Gasol 18		36.1	5.7	11.2
Mike Conley 17		34.6	4.9	10.6
Tony Allen 15		24.2	2.9	7.3
Quincy Pondexter 18		23.8	2.3	5.2
Jerryd Bayless 18		17.3	2.3	5.6
Marreese Speights 18		14.7	2.2	5.5
Darrell Arthur 7		14.4	2.6	5.6
Wayne Ellington 18		16.4	1.9	5.1
Hamed Haddadi 2		4.5	0.5	1.0
Josh Selby 5		3.0	0.0	1.0
Tony Wroten 3		2.3	0.0	1.3

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Here's Alvin talking about this game: