Tonight, the 8-15 Phoenix Suns will take on the 13-10 Utah Jazz at home. The Suns are coming off their most impressive win of the season thus far after beating the Memphis Grizzlies, one of the best teams in the league, and breaking a seven-game losing streak. However, the Jazz are also coming off a very impressive win of their own against one of the other best teams in the league, the San Antonio Spurs.

The good news for the Suns is that they appear to be healthy once again, with Goran Dragic, Jermaine O'Neal, and PJ Tucker all returning to form and contributing significantly to the Suns win over the Grizzlies. They will also be playing the Jazz at home in Phoenix--a much different situation than having to face them on the road. Do the Suns have what it takes to string together another quality win tonight?

When: Tonight, 7pm MST/9pm EST

Where: US Airways Center, Phoenix, AZ

Watch: Fox Sports Arizona (locally), NBA League Pass

The History:

- This will be the 160th meeting between the two teams with the Suns leading the all-time series 86-73.
- The Suns have won 56-22 against the Jazz at home.
- LAST MEETING: In Utah November 10, 2012, Jazz beat the Suns 94-81

Probable Starters:

Goran Dragic vs. Mo Williams
Shannon Brown vs. Randy Foye

Jared Dudley vs. Marvin Williams
Luis Scola vs. Paul Millsap

Marcin Gortat vs. Al Jefferson

Keys to a Suns Victory:

Momentum:

The Suns are coming off a much needed feel-good game against the Memphis Grizzlies. The Suns need to try to build on that momentum in hopes that it can carry them through to another win at home. The last thing the Suns can afford to do is start off flat, as has been their *modus operandi*
so far this season. If they can start the game aggressive and with crisp execution on both ends of the floor, they should be able to pick right back up where they left off.

Defense Wins Games:

Especially for teams who lack a superstar or a true go-to scorer. As the Suns showed against the Grizzlies, they have the ability to be a good defensive team when everyone is on the same page. The Suns simply don't have the firepower to outscore their opponents any more...those days left with Steve Nash , Amare Stoudemire , and Shawn Marion . However, the Suns can still win games with defense, and that is exactly how they will need to win tonight's game as well.

Dudley and Tucker:

Although Jared Dudley has been frequently moved around between the starting unit and the bench as a shooting guard, Alvin Gentry may have finally found the best place for him. Dudley has only been playing as the starting small forward for two games now, but he has been much more effective in that role than in either circumstance as a two-guard. Dudley was the x-factor against the Grizzlies, and for the first time this season showed that energy and hustle that earned him the "junk-yard dog" moniker just seasons ago.

As for P.J. Tucker , the Suns desperately need his defense and hustle, and missed it badly the past few games when he was injured. Now that Tucker seems to be healthy again, he needs to continue playing at 110% on defense and being around the ball to get rebounds and offensive put-backs. If both he and Dudley can have a similar performance against the Jazz that they did against the Grizzlies, then I like the Suns chances a whole lot more.

Battle of the Bigs:

Marcin Gortat has been the Suns biggest enigma this season--looking great at times, but more frequently, looking either out of sync or uninspired...or both. Jermaine O'Neal has been great off the bench, but he is not meant to be relied upon to play starter minutes. The Suns need Marcin Gortat to step up tonight against the strong and crafty Al Jefferson and not only provide poi ts in the post, but also the kind of defense that Gortat is capable of playing when he's motivated to do so.

Likewise, someone has to step up against Paul Millsap as well. Luis Scola certainly isn't known for his defensive abilities, outside of his ability to take charges. However, he's certainly been playing better defense than Markieff Morris so far, and he will need to give his best effort against Millsap who has averaged 22.6 points and 10.3 rebounds over his last three games. The Jazz certainly have the front court advantage, so it will take a great effort by the Suns on both ends of the court to win this match-up.

Bench Bunch:

In my opinion, the greatest advantage the Suns have against the Jazz is their bench. The Suns will likely see substantial minutes from Sebastian Telfair , PJ Tucker, Jermaine O'Neal...each of whom are known for their defense and hustle on the court and their ability to help close out games in the fourth quarter. The Jazz' best bench player by far is
Gordon Hayward
who plays starter minutes as a sixth man. Both Enes Kanter and
Derrick Favors
can also get hot on occasion, but the Suns should be able to win the match-ups of the second unit as long as Hayward is held in check.

The Bottom Line:

It's hard to say if Wednesday's game against the Grizzlies was just a fluke, or a culmination of

the Suns starting to form a new identity. The safe bet is to say they just played a good game--after all, they certainly haven't shown that they can play at that level with any sort of consistency thus far.

However, if Alvin Gentry and the Suns can take what worked for them Wednesday night and translate it into their new identity--along with the adjusted line-ups and minutes for players who have earned it, and players who have not, then maybe the Suns can tack on another impressive win tonight. The Suns certainly have the ability to win this game...Time will tell if they have the resolve.