Over the summer, Marcin Gortat's most troubling memory was his terrible showing in the loss to Utah on April 24, 2012 that knocked the Suns out of playoff contention. He made only one of eight shots for two points in the game, getting five of those eight shots blocked in the process. He couldn't shake the memory and needed to redeem himself this season.

Gortat sorry for Utah debacle | October 16, 2012

He stressed over that game all summer - what he did wrong, what he could have done better. But what he talked most about at practice yesterday with SB Nation Arizona's Kris Habbas was the team's fans.

"I feel sorry for the fans, I feel bad for them. They were supporting us from the first game to the last game. Being the guy who was leading the team most of the games in points and boards, and all of a sudden the main game is coming and you're failing.

"You know, it hurts.

"The only thing I can say is I'm sorry to the fans. I will try to do better. I'm just going to learn from it."

The 2012-13 season started off with a bang. Marcin Gortat averaged 15 points, 11 rebounds and 4 blocks in the first six games of the season.

Then came another roadie at Utah.

And another beatdown. Despite stressing over that Utah game all summer, this time he didn't even make one shot, going 0-for-6 from the floor with his only point coming off splitting a pair of free throws.

After that, Gortat receded into a shell of himself.

In the 17 games since that Utah loss, Gortat's averages dropped by 3 across the board even when factoring in equal minutes - points, rebounds and blocks all dropped precipitously. In those 17 games, Gortat pulled down 10+ rebounds only twice. This after pulling down 10+ in five of six games to open the season and averaging 10 per game last year.

It seemed like the Marcin Gortat we all knew and loved had died. His body was still here, but his spirit was gone.

He alternated between blaming himself and blaming the team, the rotations, the coach, the offense, anything he could think of (though not to us - just to the Polish media). To be fair, he blamed himself as much as all the other things combined.

"I am working every day with Jermaine, trying to put myself in a better position to score," he said. "I am working hard every day, trying to become a better player."

When he faced Utah last night, he could have continued to curl up in his shell but to his credit he came out with a fire in his belly. Even when he missed 5 of his first 6 shots, he stayed aggressive and never lost that fire.

"That kind of game I need," he said. "I came ready to play. Even though I missed a lot of shots at the beginning of the game, I was trying to stay engaged."

Marcin Gortat finished the game with his first double-double (12 points, 14 rebounds) in two weeks and only his third such effort since the first Utah game.

Gortat was relieved and smiling afterward, though still a little wary of the media who caught wind of his tirades to the Polish press and had questioned him about it for the past month.

"Utah is my little nightmare," he said. "I am happy I had a good game today."

Maybe now we will get back that double-double machine who last year was the Suns best defender.

Asked what has changed over the last two wins, Gortat said without hesitation, "Our defense. Our energy. Staying more one on one. Not doubling too much. We are helping each other."

Both Gentry and PG Goran Dragic thought Gortat was a big key to their defense as well as their offense.

"He was playing well on defense against Jefferson," Dragic said. "And in the pick and roll, he was rolling hard and sucked that defense inside. JD had some open looks [from that]."

Maybe just like the last Utah games killed Gortat's game, this quality game against them will throw that monkey off his back.

Whether you want Gortat traded for future assets, or you want him to lead a Suns resurgence, you have to be happy with Gortat's return to prominence.

You may have witnessed our Polish Machine, our Phoenix, being reborn.