The rising Phoenix Suns face the struggling Bobcats in their fifth straight home game (3-1 so far) after a season-long 6-game roadie that sapped the life out of the club (0-6 on that trip).

For the second game in a row, the Phoenix Suns are facing a road-weary team that's pretty bad on the road regardless of whether they are weary or not.

The Charlotte Bobcats just lost to the Los Angeles Lakers last night in a tight battle, and now must face a Phoenix Suns team that is rested and feeling good about themselves. Charlotte led for most of the game against a Laker team that can't figure out how to play
Pau Gasol
and
Dwight Howard
at the same time (they were alternating minutes last night while
Metta World Peace
took minutes at the 4-spot), but ended up losing by being unable to sink a shot in the closing seconds.

On this home stand, the Suns just beat two teams with winning records (Memphis and Utah) and then overcame a lazy 19-point deficit to beat the struggling Sacramento Kings . Their defense has come alive, allowing 80, 84 and 90 points on 40% shooting in those games.

The Charlotte Bobcats enjoyed 15 of their first 24 games at home but have been unable to take advantage of the early home schedule, losing their last 12 consecutive games after starting the season as good as 7-5.

One of those first early losses came at the hands of the Suns when Shannon Brown dropped 6 threes in the fourth and the Suns won one of their two road games on the season, 117-110. Brown had 24 points, but he wasn't the best player that night.

Michael Beasley had 21 points, 15 rebounds, 7 assists and a steal. Easily still his best all-around game of the season. By far. He may not have tallied 15 rebounds in all the games since, but I'd have to check on that. Marcin Gortat tallied 23 points, 10 rebounds and seven blocks - a career high.
Goran Dragic
had a good game as well, with 16 points and 8 assists to go with 3 rebounds.

Since then, Charlotte has gotten worse and worse. Even worse than the Suns at their worst - to the tune of 12 consecutive losses (7 of those at home).

Best Players

Kemba Walker is by far their best player at 18.1 points per game and 6.1 assists, along with 2 steals. He is explosive, having eight games of at least 20 points and has been game-high scorer four times. He scored 28 against the Lakers last night.

Gerald Henderson is back from injury to man the shooting guard spot. He averages about 14 points and 3.5 rebounds per night, dropped a huge dunk on Howard's head last night while scoring 19 with 9 rebounds and 4 assists. Henderson did not play in the teams' first meeting last month.

Ben Gordon can still be a microwave as well, with five games of at least 19 points (and three over 25 points). His season averages are pedestrian (ie. Suns-ian) though at 13.4 points per game. He is much more likely to score few points than he is to go off.

Their only other serious threat (besides Mullens going off on 3s) is backup PG Ramon Sessions. Sessions gets to the line nearly three times per game (5.8 FTAs per game). He averages 14.4 points and 4.2 assists. Against the Suns earlier this season, he had 17 points and 9 assists off the bench.

Unfortunately for the Bobcats, two of those best players don't even start for them. Rookie Michael Kidd-Gilchrist has struggled, and the Bobcat bigs are nothing to blog about (unless you're a Bobcats blogger).

Offense

Neither offense is very prolific. The Bobcats have topped 100 points only thrice in the last 13 games, while the Suns have topped 100 only once in their last 11.

Charlotte has the league's 25th ranked offense in terms of points-per-100-possessions (98.5). The Suns have vacillated between 15th and 20th in efficiency, currently sitting at 15th (101.1).

One thing the Suns did really well against the Bobcats in their first meeting was to pull down an astounding 22 offensive rebounds, and convert that to 18 second-chance points. The Suns need to do that again to make life easier on themselves.

Defense

Worried about the Suns defense this season? Well, Charlotte can only dream of being as good.

While the Suns are only 26th in the league in defensive efficiency (105.2), the Bobcats are a solid 30th (107.3). Dead last. Does that mean the Bobcats will give up 107 points to the Suns? Heck no. It just means that they usually give up that many, or more, in a game.

Streaks

While the Suns have won three in a row after losing seven straight, the Bobcats are still mired in the muck. They have lost twelve consecutive games and counting.

Let's hope it's 13.

FG	3PT	FT	Rebounds	M

G	M	M	A	Pct
Kemba Walker	23	35.3	6.6	15.3
Ramon Sessions	23	26.7	4.5	11.7
Gerald Henderson	10	25.0	4.5	10.3
Ben Gordon	21	22.6	4.7	10.8
Byron Mullens	23	30.5	4.5	11.8
Michael Kidd-Gilchrist	23	27.6	4.0	8.4
Jeff Taylor	22	25.7	2.7	6.5
Tyrus Thomas	8	17.8	2.3	6.6
Brendan Haywood	22	23.2	2.4	4.6
Bismack Biyombo	21	24.6	2.0	4.0
Reggie Williams	16	8.9	1.5	3.4
Hakim Warrick	10	9.5	0.7	2.7
DeSagana Diop	12	10.1	0.4	1.3

Hey, Hakim Warrick is on the Bobcats! Think he'll take the court tonight against the Suns? He has appeared in 10 games this season, so it might happen. If he does step out there, cheer for him to do well (just not well enough to beat our home team, of course).

Bobcats vs Suns coverage

Check out Rufus on Fire for exclusive Bobcats coverage on SB Nation.