

## Phoenix Suns failing in late-game execution without Goran Dragic

Written by

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Goran Dragic's injury has come at a bad time for those fans who want to watch the Suns win games. With Dragic at the helm, the Suns are very steady in the closing minutes and find ways to get easy scores. Without him, the Suns are just as likely to turn the ball over as they are to score. When you do that, your chances of winning go in the toilet.

In the last two games, the [Suns](#) have held a fourth quarter lead against a winning team (90-86 over [Knicks](#) , 83-81 over [Pacers](#) ) only to lose.

After taking late leads at the 5:19 mark of each game, the Suns scored on only 7 of 24 possessions (5 field goals, 2 trips to the line) while committing 7 killer turnovers for an overall 29% conversion rate. Not surprisingly, they got outscored 29-15 by the New York Knicks and Indiana Pacers in those closing minutes.

Compare that to a 47% conversion rate on late-game possessions in the 6 prior close games (decided by three points or less), with only 4 turnovers in 63 chances, when Dragic is at the helm and the last two games look even worse. That kind of conversion rate would have been won these games.

Let's look at the Pacers and Knicks games in more detail.

**Pacers game:** In the final 5:19 after taking a 2-point lead, the Suns made only 3 of 11 shots with 3 turnovers to 1 assist while the Pacers outscored the Suns 16-8 on the back of 14 free throw attempts and 0 turnovers.

[Sebastian Telfair](#) , who otherwise had an excellent game, went 1-5 with a turnover while

[Luis Scola](#)

had 2 turnovers and committed 2 personal fouls. The Suns only attempted one shot at the rim during this run vs. 10 jumpers.

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**Knicks game:** In the final 5:19 after taking a 4-point lead, the Suns made only 2 of 6 shots with 4 turnovers to 2 assists while the Knicks outscored the Suns 13-7 on the back of 5-for-9 shooting against only 1 turnover. Yes, this was the JR Smith game in which he made 2 tightly contested jumpers to score the Knicks last 4 points in the final 30 seconds.

Failure in late-game execution without their starting PG Goran Dragic has killed the team. Amid all the failings of the team so far this year, late-game execution has not been one of those failings. In fact, the Suns have done well at the end of games. Sure, they have missed a few gimmes in closing seconds and conversely have allowed back-breaking contested jump shots but that's it. The Suns misses were good shots while they have been killed by bad ones.

Before Dragic hurt his tailbone on a bad foul, the Suns were 3-2 in games decided by three points or less in regulation with another three going to overtime where the Suns won 1 of 3.

How was the Suns' execution in those?

- Portland, Dec 22: In the final 6:49 after taking a 1-point lead, the Suns made 5 of 12 shots with 1 turnover to 5 assists, but Portland outscored the Suns 14-10 by making 5 of 9 shots, including both of their 3-pt attempts. Dragic missed his only two shots attempts but did have 1 assist to 0 turnovers.

- Memphis, Dec 12: In the final 5:43 of a tie game, the Suns scored on only 3 of 9 possessions (two baskets, one trip to the line vs. 2 turnovers) but outscored Memphis 6-4 by holding them to 2 of 6 shooting with 2 turnovers of their own. Dragic made the game-winning shot, a twisting layup amongst three defenders with no time left.

- Dallas, Dec 6: In the final 5:30 with Dallas holding an 10-point lead, the Suns scored on 11 of 16 possessions (7 baskets, 4 trips to the line vs. 1 turnover) and outscored Dallas 23-16, only to lose on Mayo's step-back contested jumpshot. Telfair and Dragic played together in those final minutes, scoring or assisting on 6 of 11 scoring trips.

- Philadelphia, Nov 25: In the final 6:00 with Sixers holding a 7-point lead, the Suns scored on 7 of 13 possessions (6 baskets, 1 trip to the line vs. 0 turnovers) and outscored Philly 14-10. But Beasley missed a tying layup attempt in the final seconds and Philly closed out the win.

- New Orleans, Nov 23: In the final 5:40 of regulation plus 5 minutes of OT with the Suns holding an 11-point lead, the Suns scored on only 7 of their last 19 possessions (5 baskets, 2 trips to the line vs. 0 turnovers), and were outscored by Orlando's hot shooting 23-15. Luckily, Orlando's run started with the Suns holding an 11 point lead. Dragic scored or assisted on 4 of those 7 possessions with committing any turnovers.

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I could go on, but you get the gist.

The Suns have had a lot of failings and head-shaking moments. But even the darkest-hearted Suns fan has to admit that the Suns have played a lot of exciting, close games.

In close games, the Suns have been protective of the ball and pretty successful on offense in the closing minutes. Sure, the Suns don't have a "closer" but Gentry and Dragic have done a reputable job getting buckets in closing minutes without turning the ball over.

In those prior 6 close contests decided by three points or less or in overtime, the Suns scored on 33 of 69 possessions (47% conversion rate) with just a small handful of turnovers littered in those 69 possessions. The Suns won 4 of 7 tight games overall, with the three losses being those the Suns were fighting back from larger deficits only to make the game close at the end.

But in the last two games (both losses), the Suns scored on only 7 of 24 possessions (29% conversion rate) with as many turnovers as scores.

Killer.

Let's hope [Goran Dragic's](#) butt feels better tonight against Minnesota.