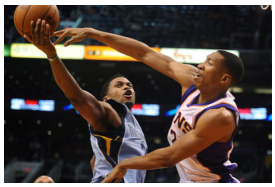

With the way the Phoenix Suns (12-23) played this week there were a lot of positives to take a way, but the 1-4 overall record is more of an indication of who this team really is.

Game Recaps

@ Oklahoma City Thunder - L (114-99)

vs. Philadelphia 76ers - W (95-89)

vs. Utah Jazz - L (87-80)

vs. Memphis Grizzlies - L (92-81)

It was an embattled week for the team as they went 1-3 despite the ambitious level of defense they played. No matter what this team does to correct one issue, another rises to the surface and becomes the teams Achilles Heel for that game or week.

This was a stretch that the team need to take advantage of with winnable games, but fell flat. That was mostly due the offenses inability to score points early and in general when they were needed.

In the past the Suns never struggled with offense, but they are embarking on a new era in basketball for the franchise. That new era was known to be a different one, centered around

team defense and young players, but there were not any signs that pointed to the offense to becoming the worst the team has seen in nine years. They are also the ninth worst offensive rated team in the teams franchise history.

The funny thing about a good offense is that generally it forces other teams to play your style and they fall into the trap, scoring at a high rate, but not enough to win. Same thing can be said for a bad offensive team that slows the game down and gets into grind it out battles with their opponent.

The Suns went from being that first team to the second team over night with the loss of Steve Nash , just like they did the opposite eight years ago when he arrived.

Key Stats

0.96 Points Per Possession

A stark contrast to the 1.08 PPP that they are giving up on the season to opposing teams. That is a stat that shows how many points a team comes away with per possession, which is very important in a game that comes down to a few possessions at the beginning or ends of games for a struggling team. Hence the 1-3 week behind a strong defense, but a feeble offense.

The Highs

Revenge was on the menu -- sort of, and the Suns delivered with a win over the 76ers. It was the defensive effort the team put forth against Jrue Holiday , who torched them for 63 points scored and created combined. Sure, he had a triple-double, but oddly enough the Suns held him in check to a tune of 36 points combined between points and assists.

The Lows

There was a stretch in the Utah game where both teams shot impeccably bad from the field missing wide open lay-ups, turning the ball over at an alarming rate, and finding ways not to score. In that second quarter both teams combined for 26 total points, seven turnovers, 32 missed field goals, and set basketball back to a peach basket with their offensive play.

Practice Report

Another line-up change wielded another mixed bag of results as the Suns seem to react well to the constant shuffle of the starting line-up. This season they have made four primary changes to the starting line-up and have netted six of their wins because of it.

The team was coming off of a big win over Philadelphia, but didn't seem satisfied in practice. They were happier, more confident, but not satisfied.

As I reported in the practice report the only off element of the practice was after it was all over Michael Beasley secluded himself. He was the furthest outside of the team huddle, immediately went to a table away from everyone else, and left without talking to anyone. He is not assimilating well to the team and there is a bigger disconnect than before.

Grades

A look at three different players on the Suns for the week forming a good, bad, and a surprise either way each week.

A- for Goran Dragic -- For the week the point guard put up respectable numbers leading the charge on both ends of the floor. His 15.5 points per game and 5.5 assists per game were a touch above his season averages.

DNG for Michael Beasley -- The now ostracized forward has three Did Not Play Coaches Decisions this year, which means his grade is simply Do Not Grade for his lack of performance.

This week in two games he manages to shoot 1-4 with two points and four rebounds total.

B- for P.J. Tucker -- Well every Garbage Man gets their day in the sun and Tucker took advantage of his with four consecutive starts which ironically coincided with the defensive play of the team this week. Despite the record, the defense has improved dramatically.

Player of the Week:

Luis Scola - 16.75 PPG 6.0 RPG 5.0 APG

Over the course of the last five games, lumping in last weeks tilt with Minnesota in the mix, the first year Suns forward has found a rhythm finally. He is distributing the ball from the elbow giving the offense more fluidity and shooting the ball like an assassin from the perimeter. On the season Scola has three games of 5+ assists the Suns are 3-0.

Is that a coincidence?

One could say yes, but it is hard to ignore how the offense can be effective when the ball flows through Scola as a secondary play-maker. The rocket fueled duo or Dragic and Scola seem to give the team their best chance at winning on a nightly basis.

Previewing the Week Ahead:

Tuesday, January 8th @ Milwaukee Bucks (16-16)

Wednesday, January 9th @ Boston Celtics (16-17)

Friday, January 11th @ Brooklyn Nets (19-15)

Saturday, January 12th @ Chicago Bulls (18-13)