When: Friday, January 11, 2013, 5:30 PM local time (7:30 EST)

Where: Barclays Center, Brooklyn, New York

Watch/Listen: TV: FSAZ, Radio: 620 KTAR

Last Meeting:

The Suns first game against the "Brooklyn" Nets came almost exactly a year ago in Phoenix on January 13, 2012. The Suns lost that contest 110-103 as Deron Williams poured in 35 points while distributing 14 assists. The departed, but never forgotten, Ronnie Price started in place of Steve Nash and went for a career high 18 points, but was unable to countervail the brilliance of Williams on the other end.

This is the first contest between the teams this season and the Suns first visit to the Barclays Center in Brooklyn.

Team Bios:

Brooklyn Nets: 20-15

Points per game: 96.2 (T-17th) Points allowed: 94.7 (5th)

Injuries: None.

The Nets kicked off the season in impressive fashion by racing to an 11-4 record, but then stumbled to 14-14 by losing 10 of their next 13 games. Now they are back in surge mode, having won four straight games and six of their last seven. So who are the Nets? The successful bookend team, or one that is streaky and prone to periods of futility?

Brooklyn hangs their hat on defense, which is not a propitious omen based on the Suns recent offensive inadequacy. The Nets on offense is another story. They share the same concerns as the Suns with points, field goal percentage (.444) and three point shooting (.344) all barely floating or underwater compared to NBA sea level.

The Nets are headlined by Brook Lopez, Deron Williams and ex-Sun Joe Johnson. Of the three, only Lopez is having a season at or above his career levels. All three of these players are capable of taking over a game, though, so making every attempt to keep them in check, or at least mitigate the damage, is imperative.

Phoenix Suns: 12-25

Points per game: 95.9 (19th) Points allowed: 100.2 (25th)

Injuries: None, except for their pride.

The Suns are in tailspin mode. Terrible on court performance is now translating to frustration and finger pointing off the court. Aspirations of competing for a playoff spot are long forgotten, but now the Suns are staring directly into the grim rictus of the situation descending to a new depth of despair (or ascending to the apogee of the lottery).

The latest twist to the Suns season long swoon sees an average offense trying to emulate the woes of the defense and rebounding that are near the bottom of the league. The Suns are running out of facets of the game where they can claim to be better than deplorable. Hopefully a defense that has recently appeared to have a flicker of life since Tucker entered the starting lineup (grasping at straws moment) will show up for tonight's game.

The Suns new starting lineup of Dragic, Dudley, Tucker, Scola and Gortat has made the Suns competitive with starting lineups of other teams and each individual has played fairly dependably (and at times well above that mark). The bench, meanwhile, has become a pernicious force where the only dependability is that they play consistently terrible. In games that the starters have played well, the bench has squandered leads and/or given the opponents separation and the starters have been unable to regain traction.

What To Watch For:

Lopez vs. Gortat: Gortat tends to struggle against long bigs (due to the fact that he is not himself long). Lopez is having a stellar year which will probably culminate in an all-star appearance this season (not too many exceptional bigs in the Eastern Conference). Gortat has also stepped up his game recently with four double-doubles in the last five games.

Williams vs. Dragic: In a league with very solid, if not spectacular, point guard play across the board, Goran doesn't get many nights off. Tonight he faces Williams, who is not having a prodigious year by his own lofty standards, but is still a capable and dangerous threat.

The Bugaboo: Unless someone has actually cast some kind of wicked imprecation on the

Suns that prevents them from ever winning another road game unless Goran Dragic gets kissed by a charming prince, the Suns have to stumble into a win at some point. Right?

Pulse Check: Several players on the Suns implied, or directly stated, that players were going through the motions or had "quit." It will be interesting to see how the players respond up and down the roster. Challenging a player's effort can be like challenging his manhood (depending upon the disposition and character of the player). Then again, for players with a life direction dominated by turpitude, it probably won't matter. I will be watching to see who is bringing it.

Notes/Stats:

The Suns have lost 10 of their last 11 games overall.

The Suns are 2-16 on the road this season. They have lost 11 straight on the road, which is their longest road losing streak since the 1983-84 season.

Brook Lopez leads all NBA centers in scoring at 18.7 per game. Gortat (11.6) is 15th, one spot behind Brook's brother, Robin (11.8).

Shannon Brown is averaging 5.2 points per game since his demotion to the bench. Prior to that he had been averaging 13.2....

2013 Lottery Watch

The Suns are currently in 5th place in the race for the #1 seed in the lottery.

Last night's games of interest: Dallas (14-23) beats Sacramento (13-23) 117-112 in overtime

Tonight's slate:

Charlotte Bobcats (9-25) at Toronto Raptors (13-22)

Detroit Pistons (13-23) at Milwaukee Bucks (18-16)

Minnesota Timberwolves (16-16) at New Orleans Hornets (10-25)

Cleveland Cavaliers (9-28) at Denver Nuggets (21-16)

Oklahoma City Thunder (27-8) at Los Angeles Lakers (15-20)

Good chance for the Suns to gain some ground!

The Final Word(s):

The Suns probably aren't going to win this game, but it's not completely beyond the realm of possibility. For instance, if you subscribe to an infinite number of possible realities philosophy,

I'm sure there are at least one or two in which the Suns win tonight. Since anything can happen, I still give the Suns a scintilla of a chance. That being said, I'm mostly tuning in to see how the Suns manage to lose this one...