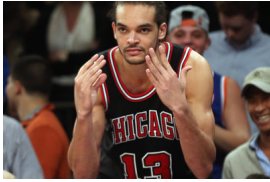


Suns try to avoid getting blown out in the Windy City.

Written by
Saturday, 12 January 2013 14:56 -



When: Saturday, January 12, 2013, 6:00 PM local time (8:00 EST)

Where: United Center, Chicago, IL

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

Last Meeting:

Wednesday, November 14, 2012 in Phoenix

The Suns early season proclivity for amassing huge deficits and battling back to make games competitive was on display this night, as the Suns trailed by 18 before using a 31-17 fourth quarter to complete their comeback in regulation. PJ Tucker gathered the ball out of a scrum to tie the score at 100 and the game headed into overtime. The Suns appeared to have expended too much energy at this point and the Bulls rolled to a 112-106 victory.

Carlos Boozer had 28 points and 14 rebounds to help the Bulls pull away, but only scored two while the Suns made their comeback in the fourth. Luis Scola led the Suns with 24 points and 14 rebounds.

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Team Bios:

Chicago Bulls: 20-14

Points per game: 93.9 (26th) Points allowed: 92.2 (3rd)

Injuries: Derrick Rose is out (torn left ACL), but is expected to return before mid-March. Kirk Hinrich has been nursing a sore elbow, but played in last night's victory over the New York Knicks.

The Bulls are a defense centric team that slows down the game (24th in pace) and wins with inexorable pressure that disrupts the offensive flow of their opponents. They play ugly, grind it out basketball. Despite their parsimonious nature on defense, the Bulls munificence on offense slots them at 6th in the league in team assists per game. The Bulls are also in the top half of the league in rebounding, rounding out a solid overall team.

Chicago is coming off recent road wins against the Miami Heat (96-89) and the Knicks (108-101 in a game that wasn't that close). The Bulls, who have won four of five, will look to continue their winning ways against the lowly Suns. Chicago will be playing on the back end of a back-to-back, just like the Suns, after a couple of players logged heavy minutes, topped by Luol Deng with 42.

Deng leads the Bulls in scoring with 17.9 points per game (he had a season high 33 last night). Carlos Boozer and Joakim Noah complete a very competent frontcourt, but one that lacks great size and shot blocking. The Bulls backcourt is probably their weak spot, at least relative to the forwards and center, as the team awaits the return of their leader, Derrick Rose, later in the season.

[Chicago Bulls team statistics.](#)

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Phoenix Suns: 12-26

Points per game: 95.5 (19th) Points allowed: 100.2 (25th)

Injuries: Wounded spirit.

The Suns reach their last stop on a four game, five night eastern road swing. The losses have been progressively worse, culminating in last night's massive mortification. The second half against the Nets, where the Suns were outscored 53-26, ranked right near the top of the humiliation scale in what has become a forgettable (please let me forget) season. [Check out my earlier recap for more grisly details.](#)

The Suns enter tonight's matchup against the Bulls with a record of 2-17 on the road this season, including 12 consecutive road losses. If the Suns lose to Chicago they will be 2-18 which would put them on pace to go 4-37 for the full campaign. Four road wins. Four.

The Suns have been led by absolutely nobody Jared Dudley during the recent stretch that has seen them drop 11 of 12 games. Jared has averaged 14.9 points, 5.4 rebounds and 3.9 assists over this period and has exuded dependability and composure. The rest of the starters haven't really been that bad either, but ironically the Suns appear to have sunken to new depths after inserting the whirling dervish, PJ Tucker, into the starting lineup and banishing Michael Beasley to the end of the bench. Every time the second unit steps onto the court I can sense a collective cringe from the fans.

What To Watch For:

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PJ Tucker vs. Luol Deng: Deng scored a season high 33 points last night, but logged heavy minutes (42) in the process. Tucker will be given the task of preventing a repeat performance tonight against the Suns.

Suns doing the scoring limbo: The Suns were limited to 77 points twice earlier in the season, a 103-77 loss at home to the Clippers and a 117-77 loss at the Pistons. The Suns have now scored 79 points in back-to-back games and are trudging and stumbling into their fourth game in five nights on the road. Is the stage set for the Suns to go low?

Notes/Stats:

The Suns last win on the road was November 27th against the Cleveland Cavaliers. That was 47 days ago.

The Suns are 2-17 on the road and have lost 12 straight road games.

The Suns have lost 11 of 12 overall.

2013 Lottery Watch

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Last night's games of interest:

The Toronto Raptors (14-22) beat the Charlotte Bobcats (9-26) 99-78

The New Orleans Hornets (11-25) beat the Minnesota Timberwolves (16-17) 104-92 - the Suns are now tied with the Hornets for the fourth worst record in the NBA

The Detroit Pistons (14-23) beat the Milwaukee Bucks (18-17) 103-87

The Oklahoma City Thunder (28-8) beat the LA Lakers (15-21)

Tonight's matchups:

Orlando Magic (12-23) at the LA Clippers (28-8)

Atlanta Hawks (21-14) at the Washington Wizards (5-28)

Charlotte Bobcats (9-26) at the Indiana Pacers (22-14)

Utah Jazz (19-19) at the Detroit Pistons (14-23)

Memphis Grizzlies (24-10) at the Dallas Mavericks (14-23)

Miami Heat (23-11) at the Sacramento Kings (13-23)

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The Final Word(s):

The Suns have kept it interesting by continuing to find new ways to reveal their horrid nature as the season has progressed. Casual fans have largely tuned out by this point, much like several of the Suns players, but fans with an unhealthy obsession who truly love Suns basketball are welcome to join me in watching them make positive history (slim chance) by winning franchise game #2,000... or more likely try to set records of futility as this season descends into the ranks of worst ever.