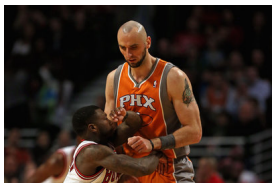

Center of the Sun: A Week In Review 01/07 - 01/13

It was a long grueling week on the road for the Phoenix Suns (13-26) as they managed a few highs, met a milestone, and saw some new lows.

Game Recaps

@ Milwaukee Bucks - L (108-99)

@ Boston Celtics - L (87-79)

@ Brooklyn Nets - L (99-79)

@ Chicago Bulls - W (97-81)

Some good before the bad.

The team was in all of the games this week going into the fourth quarter of every game on the road down by less than eight points, staying within striking distance with good defense.

The question becomes pretty simple about the teams "improved" defense as of late. How much

are they sacrificing on offense and how much improvement has there been overall on defense? In three of four games the opposing teams scored less than 100 points, in three out of four games they had more possessions than their opponents, and they slowed things down to a halt, purposely.

On the other side of that in all three losses the opposing team shot over 45% from the field and found a way to score in limited possessions with efficiency.

In terms of points allowed this was easily the best four game stretch on the road only giving up 93.75 points per game. Normally the defense yields 104.1 points per game on the road. Small tweaks have been made and fundamentally they are doing some things better, but the defense as a whole is not a great unit and remains in bottom five of the league overall.

Key Stats

88.5

On the season the team averages 95.5 points per game and 94.8 points per game on the road, but during this stretch of four games they hit a season low in producing points. The 31.6% shooting from three (19 made), 42.0% from the field, and 67 total turnovers really hurt any consistency from being formulated.

The defense is not fixed, but it is improved, primarily because the offense was a sacrificial lamb in the efforts.

The Highs

Anytime you can win your franchises 2,000th win, always, or at least in the case of the Suns, take six cracks at it until you can finally break through! Deflating loss after deflating loss the Suns fought though the adversity to become the fourth fastest team to 2,000 wins in NBA

history. They are the 10th team to reach that mark, but are the "newest" team in that regard playing between 1 and 22 less total seasons than the other teams ahead of them.

A high amongst lows, but a landmark high nonetheless for the team.

The Lows

Unfortunately Jared Dudley went down with a strained right wrist, missed the last game on the trip, and is questionable for tonight's game at home against the Thunder. Without Dudley the team will likely start Shannon Brown again and utilize Michael Beasley and Wesley Johnson more.

He has been the best all-around player on the team for a few weeks now and is instrumental in winning games against the good or the bad of the league. Getting Dudley on the court sooner verses later has to be a major priority if the team has any chance at a push in the standings.

Practice Report

All road games check back next week!

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 Jared Dudley : He missed the last game on the road trip, but was the teams most consistent player in three losses, which means a lot of different things. Dudley did a good job

mixing it up rebounding, distributing, and scoring while being a consistent defender on the perimeter.

D+ for Shannon Brown : The team needs a one-on-one scorer in spots that can come in and score in bunches. For the most part that has been Brown, but shooting 13-35 in four games hurt the team on the road.

C+ for Marcin Gortat : Getting back to what he does best was a good sign for the Suns as Gortat grabbed 46 rebounds and blocked 8 shots. Once he starts doing that with consistency he can become a top tier center in the league again.

Player of the Week:

Luis Scola - 15.5 PPG 7.75 RPG 2.25 APG 49.0 FG%

When the team claimed the former Houston Rockets forward off of Amnesty Waivers my initial thought was, "great, they got their go-to scorer for this year and he is worth at least 10 wins to the team." That was not to mean he is a great player that will lift the team to an amazing season, but that adding Scola means 35-40 wins rather than 25-30 wins. He has not been used in that capacity with consistency this season, but there is little doubt that when the ball funnels through the crafty forward the team is at their best.

This week in particular he was the catalyst in their only win, the most consistent guy on the court, and proved my theory correct.

In the long run Scola is not in the teams plans past next season, but he has easily been the teams best offensive weapon thus far. That does not say much as the team is second to last in the league and sitting on 13 wins in 39 contests, but beggars cannot be choosers and Scola is the teams best offensive option. Period.

His craftiness on the block gets the other team in foul trouble, frustrates opposing front-courts taking them out of the game mentally, and is the balancer in a slower paced game. If the team wants to slow it down to limit the defenses ability to lose games, then giving it to the slowest player on the court is the best option.

Previewing the Week Ahead:

Monday, January 14th vs. Oklahoma City Thunder (28-8)

Thursday, January 17th vs. Milwaukee Bucks (19-17)