

In Each Teams Second Game Without Their Leader, The Suns Rose To The Occasion

Written by

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It goes without saying that the any team is different without their star player, but the [Los Angeles Clippers](#)

(32-12) sans

[Chris Paul](#)

have a lot of ability, but little direction. In the first two match-ups against the

[Phoenix Suns](#)

(15-28) the All-Star point guard put up 16.5 points, 12 assists, and 3.5 steals per game in two routes.

Without him it was a grind for four quarters.

Early Game Success

The first quarter had a lot of things to like as the Suns forced four early turnovers that led to eight points. That energized the team as well as did the presence of Suns great Charles Barkley and the TNT crew. They did not want to get embarrassed on National TV so despite coming in on a back-to-back they grinded this out with solid defense and effort.

That energy translated to the second quarter as they took a 35-8 lead (proof below) on the Clippers. Everything possible is being give to new interim head coach [Lindsey Hunter](#) including knowledgeable assistants, player support, and scoreboard malfunctions.

[Scoreboard Snafu](#)

Getting To The Line

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A major part of the Suns ability to hang in the game was their knack for getting to the foul line. For the game they shot (26-37) which was eleven more attempts than the Clippers. They were the aggressor led by [Goran Dragic](#) with a career-high 14 trips to the line on the night going 11-14.

Grant Came Back... Home

Early in the game former Suns wing [Grant Hill](#) came in and played exactly as you would expect him to against a young team that he knows pretty well. He toyed with opposing wings [Michael Beasley](#) and [Shannon Brown](#) taking charges, making passes, and plays on the defensive end. It was nice to see Hill back, healthy, and on the court.

The fans of the Valley showed their appreciation with a loud cheer and nearly unanimous standing ovation.

The Bottom Line

A Chris Paul-less offense is tough to watch. On the season the Clippers average 101.5 points per game as a team, good for seventh in the league.

Without Paul the team sputtered late with miscues, turnovers, and a lack of a clear direction. [Blake Griffin](#) was not the focal point of the offense that was erratic and lost. [Jamal Crawford](#) was able to get up some shots, but they were not efficient.

Three brutal possessions (two shot-clock violations and a bad early shot by Shannon Brown) allowed the Clippers to cut the lead to 86-85 with 26.9 to go behind a Crawford three. He then proceed to clank his first free-throw moments later allowing Brown to leak out for a clear path

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foul. Two free-throws and the ball. Game.

In the end the Hunter regime proved consistent with a second straight win behind that defensive effort he spoke about in his news conference. The Suns pulled it out late with a 93-88 victory.