

## Center of the Sun: Goran Dragic Unleashed

Written by

Monday, 04 February 2013 11:00 -

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Sometimes you have to move a few steps back to get the lay of the land, learn how to lose, and therefore see things clearer to know how to win. Right now the Phoenix Suns (16-32) are in the phase of learning how to lose. At times they trick themselves into thinking they are getting the lay of the land, but right now they are not there.

### Game Recaps

vs. [Los Angeles Lakers](#) - W (92-86)

vs. [Dallas Mavericks](#) - L (109-99)

@ [Golden State Warriors](#) - L (113-93)

A 1-2 week is not a banner week by anyone's standards, but the team did "Beat L.A." spoiling the return of [Steve Nash](#). That win was short lived as they dropped back-to-back games by double-digits. The first quarters were bright spots, but the rest of the game there was not the same energy.

With Kendall Marshall taking over as the primary back-up to Goran Dragic this week there has been an obvious drop-off in the teams execution with the second unit. They have not been bringing the same energy and effort on defense, and still not scoring the ball at a high level. There are some solid fixes to some problems, but a lot of the fixes have proved to be band-aids thus far.

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### Key Stats

2-10

That is the current record of the team on back-to-back games. Just to give perspective the best team in the NBA (San Antonio) is 6-4, the most average team (Boston) is 5-6, and the worst team (Washington) is 2-11 in the same type of games. That is a scope of three teams on three different levels, which one is the most similar to Phoenix?

### The Highs

Steve Nash Came Home

Unfortunately the "Coming Home" video was removed by the team after putting it up for everyone to see, here is Nash in the post-game talking about the fans, his reception, the video package, and the game.

And even sweeter than that the Suns dropped the Lakers helping morale, team confidence, and their lottery standings!

### The Lows

All season offensive rebounds have made a quality Suns defense look below average to bad because they did not finish the possession with the ball. In a lot of cases it was unacceptable. Against the Mavericks it hit a new low with seven offensive rebounds allowed. In the fourth quarter.

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Marion with three (led to four points)

Mayo with two (led to three points)

Brand with one (led to zero points)

Collison with one (led to zero points)

The Mavericks scored 35 points in the fourth quarter, but seven on easy shots after misses.

### Practice Report

Here is this past weeks [Practice Report](#)

Look for this weeks later today.

### 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 [P.J. Tucker](#) : The stats won't tell the entire story here as Tuck clamped down on [Kobe Bryant](#)

and

[O.J. Mayo](#)

playing great on and off ball defense. Is going too far to call him a Top 5 Off-Ball Defender?

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D+ for [Kendall Marshall](#) : This is not an indictment on Marshall, but when you are given the opportunity as the back-up point guard in back-to-back games, basically given an opportunity to showcase your game, you cannot total three points and five assists. Not to mention the four turnovers. He has taken [Sebastian Telfair's](#) job, but now he needs to do something with it.

C+ for [Michael Beasley](#) : It was an up-and-down week for Beasley who brought his A Game (27 points 6 rebounds) against the Lakers, but didn't show up against the Mavericks (4 points 6 rebounds). A lot of the shots were the same, but the results were not.

### Player of the Week:

[Goran Dragic](#) - 14.3 PPG 3.7 RPG 8.0 APG 41.2 FG%

Those numbers tell the story of an entire game, but it has been the play of Dragic in the first quarter that has elevate the Suns offense early. On the season the team is averaging 25 points per first quarter and are typicalling giving up 25.5 to their opponents. Over the course of the last three games that is up to 28.6 while giving up the same to their opponents.

Dragic is the one to credit with the extra energy in the first as he has averaged 8.0 PPG 2.3 APG and 1.3 RPG in the first quarter alone. He is bringing the energy and attacking early.

Part of that is a newfound confidence or freedom in the offense. He had the ability to take over games earlier this season, but just didn't do it consistently, now it is a regular thing early in games. So far the only negative is that the second quarter has been a major drop-off, primarily because Dragic has to sit a considerable amount after playing so hard for the first 10+ minutes early on.

### Previewing the Week Ahead:

Tuesday, February 5<sup>th</sup> @ [Memphis Grizzlies](#) (30-16)

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Wednesday, February 6<sup>th</sup> @ [New Orleans Hornets](#) (15-33)

Friday, February 8<sup>th</sup> @ [Oklahoma City Thunder](#) (35-12)

Sunday, February 10<sup>th</sup> vs. Oklahoma City Thunder (35-12)