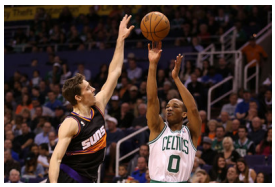

The first game after the trade deadline, I wondered if the Suns would come out breathing fire or ice. It was ice. While the small-ball Celtics took it to the Suns, and right past them to the basket for a layup, the Suns stood around as if they had all eaten turkey and were ready to take a nap.

Boston started the game with a dominating 13-0 run that included only one jumpshot - the rest were layups and a free throw - while driving to the rim every time. The Celtics, resting Kevin Garnett, started an entire small-ball lineup with the "stocky" 6'8" Brandon Bass and wafer-thin 6'9" Jeff Green as their biggest players.

In the old days, the Suns would have thrown out a big smile with Amare Stoudemire at C and Shawn Marion at PF and run these guys out of the gym. In fact, Rivers never would have gone with that lineup, instead trying to bully Amare with Chris Wilcox.

But these are the slower, plodding Suns who boast Luis Scola and Marcin Gortat as the bigs, and Boston was able to take advantage. Gortat looked out of place and spacy (let's call it unengaged) and Scola was just too slow no matter hard he tried. And to his credit, he was trying hard.

On the wing, Goran Dragic waited until it was 13-0 Boston before asserting himself at all, while P.J. Tucker hustled his usual hustle but couldn't carry the team (or make a basket) and Jared Dudley made a couple of bad plays.

"I am not a fan of small ball," Hunter said before the game, of maybe going without a center sometimes.

It didn't take him long. Gortat and Dudley, two of the most talked about tradeable players, were replaced by Markieff Morris and Wesley Johnson within three minutes of game time. They must have had deadline-party hangovers. Or maybe its the realization that their season is just 27 more meaningless games.

The Suns came back a bit and outscored Boston 20-15 after the opening run, but the Suns were still down by 8 heading into the second quarter. Not a good-looking night for the guys in black.

Through the whole first half, the Suns played a step slow. Transition defense was horrible. No one stopping the ballhandler, no staying with their man, just floating in no-mans-land.

Mid-second, the Suns went with a 2-PG lineup of Dragic and Marshall to pick up the ball movement, along with Beasley, Dudley and O'Neal. That worked for a couple minutes, until Beasley threw the ball away on a fast break.

With a 10-point deficit and only 33 points in 18 minutes of play, Hunter gave the starters one more chance at the 6-minute mark as the Celtics went back to their small ball starters.

The Suns kept it close this time, but the Celtics held the Suns at bay and led by 12 at halftime. The Suns team was just not in synch while Boston looked like they were running on all cylinders.

Gortat continued his deep funk. In eight February games, the Polish Hammer has produced just 9 points and 6 rebounds in 26 minutes per game. By contrast, Jermaine O'Neal has produced 11 points and 8.4 rebounds in only 22 minutes a night. Preseason, Gortat did warn people he might hit a wall at some point this year after playing year-round with the Suns and Poland for three years straight. Here we are. Hope the wall is a short one.

On the opening possession of the second half, Tucker fought for about three o-boards on one possession (on Gortat's missed 15-footer) while Gortat floated out to midcourt waiting for Boston to get the ball.

The Suns played with a little more heart in the third quarter, but a combination of Boston guard Avery Bradley's dynamo defense on Dragic and the Suns' frantic (and ultimately bad) defensive rotations on the other end, the Suns could not cut the lead for longer than a possession or two and third ended with the Suns trailing 81-67.

At least the Suns offense was better than it has been lately. Already 67 points in only 3 quarters!

Boston brought in newcomers Terrence Williams (from overseas) and Jordan Crawford (from the Bullets) and even those guys played well despite only being with the team on the road trip.

Diante Garrett finally got some playing time alongside Dragic and Marshall in a 3-PG lineup with Markieff Morris and Jermaine O'Neal. Garrett had two assists within seconds on consecutive fast breaks with Dragic and Marshall.

But then the Suns gave up consecutive three-pointers to Crawford and Williams. Did I mention those guys just joined the Celtics in the last two days? On a road trip? That's how loose and free this game was. For them. And the Suns.

Hunter called another timeout with their biggest deficit yet: 21 points. What to do in the last 7 minutes?

Keep Dragic in, of course. he's only 1 assist shy of a third consecutive double-double.

Finally, Hunter put Marcus Morris is the lineup and after a couple of miscues, Morris made his first shot as a Sun: a three-pointer. Let's hope there's a lot more of those.

Boston extended the lead because they just couldn't miss - ending the game by making almost 60% of their shots.

The game wound down with the Celtics fans drowing out the crowd with a "Let's Go Celtics" chant.

it was one of those nights.

Dragic finished with 17 and 10, along with 5 rebs, 2 steals, 2 blocks and 5 turnovers.

Marcus Morris got 7 points, 2 steals and a rebound in the last 6 minutes of the game.