

Center of the Sun: The Phoenix Suns Were Perfect For A Week

Written by

Monday, 04 March 2013 11:09 -



For the first time in a calendar week the [Phoenix Suns](#) (20-39) were undefeated. They did not lose a single game beating two playoff teams including the best team in the NBA to go 3-0 for the week. It did not start off too pretty with a callously visual win in overtime over Minnesota, but that is the style they are trying to imprint on the franchise.

Game Recaps

vs. [Minnesota Timberwolves](#) - W (84-83 OT)

@ [San Antonio Spurs](#) - W (105-101 OT)

vs. [Atlanta Hawks](#) - W (92-87)

The transition to becoming more of a defensive team has been tough at times, but having the flexibility of a deep roster has allowed interim head coach [Lindsey Hunter](#) more rope to play with. He is not handicapped with a star or two that are allotted minutes based on status. If someone is not playing well, he is headed to the bench. Of course it is nice to have a star and that is the goal going forward to find one, but for now this is about the development of future role players and the rotation.

With [Marcus Morris](#) , [Markieff Morris](#) , [Wesley Johnson](#) , and [Jermaine O'Neal](#) on the bench there are four players ready and able to come in when someone else is not getting the job done.

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None of those players are stars, that much is obvious, but they help maximize effort on the court. If [Jared Dudley](#) , [Luis Scola](#) , or [Marcin Gortat](#) are not getting the job done there is someone teething at the mouth to get into the game and take those minutes. Nobody's minutes are guaranteed or promised to them. Other than

[Goran Dragic](#)

and

[P.J. Tucker](#)

, nobody on this team has been consistent enough to earn that right. When you are 19 games under .500, no single player has earned 40 minutes a night.

This past week when [Michael Beasley](#) and Gortat were not performing, in came Johnson, the Morris Twins, and O'Neal. They played great and should continue to push the starters to play better, or weed out those who do not belong here.

Key Stat

0.909

One of the most impressive factors this week was that the Suns defense allowed 0.91 points per possession meaning they were in the trenches, fighting and clawing on the defensive end to limit these teams as much as possible. Forcing turnovers, finishing off possessions with rebounds, and playing the entire shot clock defensively has been paying dividends for the Suns over the past week.

The Highs

Every team the Suns beat this week was better (based on winning percentage) than them. Every team the Suns beat this week were held to at least four points below their season averages in scoring. Three wins and zero losses is enough of a high for a fleeting team, there is no need for a specific moment.

The Lows

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What does three wins in a week where the team easily could have lost all three games mean? Well, it means that they go from potentially 17-42 and the third best odds in the lottery to 20-39, tied for sixth. There is nothing wrong with winning games, that is the job of a professional sports team, but in this case it hurts the teams odds in the lottery. It is still a lottery so any position 1-14 can win, but the odds are the odds. More on that as the season progresses.

Injury Report

One of the lower moments of the week was when Goran Dragic tried to initiate contact with [Jef Teague](#) on a fast-break play and missed everything except the hardwood floor. He got up and went to the locker room where the x-rays were negative. This happened earlier in the season and cost Dragic a game, if it is a similar type of injury expect the same time off, but with four days off he may be ready to go on Wednesday as [Sebastian Telfair](#) comes to town.

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 Goran Dragic: In the win over the Hawks Dragic took another big hit on his lower back after he lost control mid-air on a fast break. In three games against quality point guards he either out-played them or played number for number with them.
- A+ for for Jermaine O'Neal: He is playing in a manner that is translucent to the defensive style that the Suns are looking to do going forward. This past week, he averaged 14.7 PPG and 10.3 RPG as he has become the teams go to big man.
- D+ for Marcin Gortat: In three games, Gortat averaged 0.28 rebounds per minute. The starting center is averaging fewer rebounds per game over the past eight games than the back-up center on his own team.

Player of the Week:

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Wesley Johnson - 12.3 PPG 5.7 RPG 1.0 APG 44.1 FG%

Aside from the big three he hit in San Antonio to force overtime, Johnson had a very good week on both ends of the floor. He didn't score big or have the statistical week that some others had, but he was great off of the bench. With the recent benching of [Shannon Brown](#) the bench has lacked a spark on the offensive end, and that is what Johnson has provided, while playing very solid defense against the opposing teams top scorers.

Previewing the Week Ahead:

Wednesday, March 6th vs. [Toronto Raptors](#) (23-35)

Friday, March 8th @ [Sacramento Kings](#) (20-39)

Saturday, March 9th vs. [Houston Rockets](#) (31-28)