These teams have a lot more in common than meets the eye. This season the Phoenix Suns (21-39) and the Toronto Raptors (23-38) seem to be in denial about rebuilding, battling themselves and their own lottery odds in the process.

One positive is that over the years, the Suns have dominated the Raptors to a tune of 23-9 lifetime.

Someone is going to lose lottery balls tonight, which is what happens when two lottery teams dance this late in the season. The past few years have been different for the Raptors as they went into a full rebuild after losing Chris Bosh : bringing in Kyle Lowry and Rudy Gay, drafted Jonas Valanciunas, and shifted to a younger more athletic core. They have not improved dramatically in terms of wins and loses, but are moving in the right direction.

On the side of the coin the Suns have been seemingly fighting the reality that is the rebuild. This game gives the fans a first hand look at what a team with two Top 10 picks and a handful of other young assets can look like. Right now the Raptors are playing a good brand of basketball since the the Gay trade, going 7-7 and showing signs of being a quality team going forward.

The Suns are improving as well, winning their last three games and having a realistic chance at tying their season high (four games) for wins in a row as they host another team in a very similar situation to themselves. These wins have dramatically changed their lottery odds, as will a win tonight.

(Recent) History Lesson

Remember the seven game losing streak earlier in the season? It wasn't all blowouts. In fact, there were a few very close games, including the controversial loss to the Raptors on the road. It was a tough loss to swallow as Luis Scola looked to have been fouled in the paint with a chance to tie the game at the free-throw line. Instead, Kyle Lowry rebounded the ball and iced the game at the line.

Head-to-Head (past four seasons including Playoffs)

Suns: 105.1 PPG (4 wins)

Raptors: 98.6 PPG (2 wins)

Before last season, the Suns had won 14 straight games against the Raptors dating back to 2003. They were the whipping boys for the Suns to an extent. As of late, it has been a closer series with the talent gap closing considerably over the years.

Head-to-Head (career)

Andrea Bargnani vs. Suns: 19.8 PPG 4.6 RPG 1.1 APG 0.45 BPG 47.6 FG% (11 games)

Luis Scola vs. Raptors: 12.0 PPG 8.8 RPG 1.7 APG 0.54 BPG 45.1 FG% (11 games)

A tale of two power forwards. On one hand, Bargnani has dominated the Suns for his second most points per game and shooting the ball at a great clip. Most of his points come inside and he only ventures out to three-point line when necessary instead of living out there like he can do for whole games. Then you have Scola who has had the most modest games of his career against the Raptors. They hold him to the second fewest points per game in the league.

Starting Line-Ups

PG - Goran Dragic v. Kyle Lowry

SG - Jared Dudley v. DeMar DeRozan

SF - P.J. Tucker v. Rudy Gay

PF - Luis Scola v. Andrea Bargnani

C - Marcin Gortat v. Jonas Valanciunas

Potential Suns Inactives: Diante Garrett (Coaches Decision), Hamed Haddadi (Ankle), and Jermaine O'Neal (Personal)

Potential Raptors Inactives: Linas Kleiza (Knee) and Mickael Pietrus (Knee)

Key Match-Up

Wesley Johnson vs. Alan Anderson

This season Anderson has put together a great year off of the bench as a scorer, giving them a surprising punch that they were sorely lacking. He is scoring from three, getting to the line, and shooting the ball well all-around on the perimeter. The Suns' counter-punch is Johnson, who has been playing very well as of late. He has developed as the season has progressed, giving the Suns their very own surprise off of the bench. These two will battle it out on the reserve unit

to try and give their team an edge.

Interesting Stat: 1.6 more minutes per game

That is all that Toronto is giving Rudy Gay in terms of minutes per game since the trade, not much more than in Memphis, but he is putting up bigger numbers with that extra minute plus. In that extra time, he is scoring 3.7 more points, 0.7 more rebounds, and getting to the free-throw line 1.4 more times per game. He is not shooting the ball any better, actually much worse statistically, but has been playing very good basketball for the improved Raptors. They are 7-7 since acquiring the borderline All-Star.

Meaningless Stat: -3.7

Since the Gay Trade, which at one point was going to be for Suns forward Jared Dudley, he has declined in productivity. Before the trade, Dudley was one of the teams' more consistent performers on both ends of the floor. Well, take a look for yourself to see what he has done since then:

	MIN	PTS	REBS	ASTS	STLS	FG%	3PT%	FT%
Nov-Jan (pre-trade)								
	30.5		12.0			3.6		2.7
Feb (since trade)								
	24.7		8.3			2.6		2.4