Tonight's matchup faces two teams in a pivotal bout with playoff aspirations at stake. Both teams face a steep, uphill battle to secure one of the final playoff spots in the Western Conference. I know the Suns aren't bereft of hope, however, as competing for a playoff spot was one of their main goals coming into the season. Either team may very well have to run the table to have any chance, so tonight's game is of paramount importance. On the off chance that neither of these teams ends up competing for a playoff spot as the season reaches its inexorable end, this game will shift gears and become a struggle between two lottery bound teams with the loser gaining the laurels. In that case, a win for the Suns could be a pyrrhic victory as it would put the Kings three behind in the loss column.

Compelling basketball folks. If the Suns usurp the tyrannical autocrats, we cheer our revolting rebels (no, not that kind of revolting). If Sacramento plays the role of Helios, we get closer to becoming table tennis champions.

Win win.

When: Friday, March 8, 2013, 8:00 PM local time (10:00 EST)

Where: Sleep Train Arena, Sacramento, CA

Watch/Listen: TV: FSAZ, Radio: 620 KTAR

Last Meeting:

The last meeting between the teams this season was in Sacramento on January 23, 2013 which featured coach Lindsey Hunters's debut as Phoenix's head coach. Hunter did not disappoint as the Suns used a 32-19 fourth quarter to secure the W by a final score of 106-96. Luis Scola led all scorers with 21 points. Phenom Michael Beasley chipped in with 19. The perpetually troubled DeMarcus Cousins led the Kings with 15 points and 15 rebounds.

The Suns have owned Sacramento to the tune of a 2-0 season edge and can clinch the season series by throttling the Kings at the ever energetic Sleep Train Arena.

Team Bios:

Sacramento Kings: 21-42

Points per game: 98.5 (13th) Points allowed: 104.9 (30th)

Full Statistics

Unlike Midas, who had the transformative power to turn anything he touched to gold, pretty much everything the Kings touch turns to $#%^. The Kings are in year number seven of a brief rebuild and aspire to finish the season with 26 wins, which would be their highest total in five years.

Not all is doleful in Despotville, however, as the Kings were already successful in unloading the player they took fifth overall, Thomas Robinson, in last year's draft. The resulting

reimbursement for that transaction was Patrick Patterson, who has averaged just under seven points since his arrival. The Kings are led by..... Let's go with DeMarcus Cousins since he leads the team in scoring (16.8) and rebounding (9.9) despite not being eminently qualified as a leader of men.

The Kings have won just two of their last eleven games and, like aforementioned, will need a near miraculous reversal of fortune to sneak into the backdoor of the playoffs. Teams they will need to pass include... everybody, since the Kings are dead last in the Western Conference. Maybe the rebuild isn't progressing at quite the frantic pace I just referred to....

Phoenix Suns: 21-40

Points per game: 95.3 (20th) Points allowed: 99.6 (22nd)

Full Statistics

The team has been somewhat decimated by injuries (Marcin Gortat) and unfortunate circumstances (O'Neal - best wishes), but fortunately the Suns trade deadline acquisition of Hamed Haddadi makes the front office look like soothsaying sorcerers. Whether the Iranian Enforcer will play a major role in tonight's game remains to be seen, however, since he pretty much sucked in his first appearance.

Phoenix followed an impressive three game winning streak by suffering an impressive ass whipping at the hands of the Toronto Raptors (98-71). The game devolved into an Oklahoma City-like decimation, but the Suns still managed to cheat death and avoid a franchise record for fewest points in a game, much to the relief of the dozens of fans in attendance.

The Suns shouldn't be offensively challenged against the spaghetti strainer defense of the

woeful Kings as they give up the most points in the association and have a tendency to look bad in doing so. On an actual positive note (I'm being serious here, pay attention) this game should give Suns faithful a chance to watch the young player get some burn. Young players who have actually been precocious in spurts recently.

So tune in... or else. Actually, that's a completely empty threat.

What To Watch For:

The Wunderkinds: The kids are alright. You wanted to watch the Suns develop young players in a lost season? You got it.

DeMarcus Cousins: He has owned the Suns at times in this series, and with Gortat and O'Neal out he may have a huge game... even if the Suns counter with Haddadi.

2013 Lottery Watch

The Suns are currently tied for 6th in the race for the #1 seed in the lottery. Currently, seeds 3-8 are only separated by two games. Instead of looking at the dregs of the league, today's lottery watch focuses on the Los Angeles Lakers and the Suns pursuit of their lottery pick.

Tonight's Games of Interest:

The Lakers (31-31) face the mighty Raptors tonight, those of the 27 point victory on Phoenix's home court, but the odds are that will be a win. Cheer for the Raptors anyway, despite the fact that they just humiliated us.

The Houston Rockets (33-29) visit the Golden St. Warriors (35-27). While both of these teams are still within the Lakers reach, cheer for Houston as a loss coupled with a Lakers win would put the Lakers within one game of the Rockets. Which, believe it or not, would mean the Lakers actually control their destiny against them by virtue of a season finale game and tiebreakers....

The Utah Jazz, as they venture into a declivitous descent, face the Bulls in Chicago. Root hard for the Jazz. Really hard. The Jazz have lost five of six and have the potential to venture into freefall with their upcoming schedule. A Jazz loss coupled with a Lakers win puts LA within a half game of the recently hapless Jazz....

The Final Word(s):

Friday night basketball. In all seriousness, this should actually be a great night to follow the action. With 12 games on the slate there are plenty of contests with direct implications towards the Suns near future. We can't afford too many more nights like Wednesday. You know, nights that make you physically ill.

Plus, if you join the gamethread you'll get the pleasure of my company, which should be reason enough to... oh nevermind.