

Game Preview: Phoenix Suns (22-41) host Denver Nuggets (42-22)

Written by
Monday, 11 March 2013 14:00 -



The [Denver Nuggets](#) are 44-22 on the season, but only 14-19 on the road.

The [Phoenix Suns](#) are 22-41 on the season, but at least they are 15-16 at home.

Yet, it's difficult to imagine anything but a blowout in favor of the Nuggets tonight. Denver has topped 100 points in 22 of their last 23 games for an average of 104. The Suns average about 10 points less than that on the season.

Even factoring in the Suns' improved D (keeping opponents to 4 points below their season average of late), you've still got a clean victory for the Nuggets.

Add in the fact the Suns topped 100 points on Saturday night for the first time at home in 2013 (they hadn't scored 100+ points at home since before Christmas), the outlook looks even bleaker.

Not to be a pessimist, but...the Nuggets have won 9 consecutive games (18 of their last 22), while the Suns are feeling pretty about a 5-5 record since the All-Star break (9 of their last 22).

Key Matchups

[Kenneth Faried](#) vs. the Morri

In a part-time matchup of 2011 draft picks, the Suns trot out Markieff and [Marcus Morris](#) ("the Morri") - who were drafted #13 and #14 overall - opposite the Nuggets' Kenneth Faried who went #22 overall.

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It's easy - and proper - to bash the Suns' front office for this oversight, but don't forget to throw 20 other teams into the same fire. Faried has exceeded pre-draft expectations of pundits, scouts and front office personnel alike.

Faried starts at PF for a winning team, bringing the kind of fire and energy that new Suns coach [Lindsey Hunter](#) absolutely craves. He grabs 9.6 rebounds a night despite being only 6'8", and drops 11 points in the bucket each night as well.

Marcus and [Markieff Morris](#) bring less to the table - about 9 points and 4 rebounds per game, each.

Don't expect the Morri to outplay Faried, but it will be interesting to see how they fare.

[Ty Lawson](#) vs. [Goran Dragic](#)

Here is a better matchup to watch. Both point guards will dominate the ball, trying to score first and pass second.

Lawson's stats (17 points, 7 assists on the season, but 23 and 7 over his last 10 games) are gaudier than Dragic's.

Dragic has season averages of 14 and 7, with 15 and 9.8 in his last 10 games.

Expect one of these guys to set the tone, while the other takes a back seat in comparison. Could be either of them.

[Andre Miller](#) vs. [Kendall Marshall](#)

Some have looked at Marshall's physique and skills and tried to peg his ceiling as Andre Miller. Well, Suns fans get to see a first-hand comparison tonight when each steps into his team's second unit, even pairing with the starter for stretches at a time.

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My guess is that you won't see a lot of similarities once you see them facing off.

Marshall is a better passer and even slightly better at shooting open 3s (33% now on the season). Marshall sees the floor better, but as a rookie he struggles to predict the speed of the NBA game at times.

Andre Miller is a good passer and a pretty good defender, but still a terrible shooter after more than a decade to work on it. Miller defends better than Marshall ever will.

Neither is good at creating their own shot anywhere on the court, so there's that.

Good wings vs. average wings

Both teams play a lot of wings. It's just that Denver's are better. [Danilo Gallinari](#) and [Andre Iguodala](#) start, with [Wilson Chandler](#) backing them up along with [Corey Brewer](#).

Phoenix counters with [Jared Dudley](#) , [P.J. Tucker](#) , [Wesley Johnson](#) , Marcus Morris and [Michael Beasley](#)

. The most engaged players that night play the most minutes.

No superstars

Denver is the poster child of winning without a superstar. They have a lot of pretty good players, but no one guy who can carry the team. Not one guy made the All-Star game this year, even.

Can they win a championship without a superstar? Probably not. But they are a darn good team regardless.

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Summary

The Suns did beat Denver at home earlier this season. It was Phoenix's first win of the year against a winning team (only 4-3 at the time).

So take that for what it's worth.

I wish I could say the Suns will win this game, but don't count on it.