

Game Preview: Phoenix Suns @ Atlanta Hawks

Written by

Friday, 15 March 2013 11:07 -



When: Friday, March 15, 2013, 4:30 PM local time (7:30 EST)

Where: Philips Arena, Atlanta, GA

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

Last Meeting:

March 1, 2013 in Phoenix

The Suns relied on a big night from the reserves, as the four starters not named Goran Dragic combined for just 15 points on a paltry 7-25 from the field. An all-bench lineup of Kendall Marshall, Markieff Morris, Marcus Morris, Wesley Johnson and Jermaine O'Neal played the entire fourth quarter and fended off a Hawks team that was never able to make a run to cut the Suns lead to less than five in the period.

The Suns 92-87 win was their third consecutive victory, which marked their second longest winning streak of the season. Dragic led the Suns in scoring with 19 despite sitting the entire fourth quarter. Al Horford had a game high 20 points for the Hawks.

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Team Bios:

Atlanta Hawks: 35-29

Points per game: 97.1 (17th) Points allowed: 96.8 (12th)

[Full team statistics.](#)

The recently floundering Hawks did the Suns a solid by virtue of defeating the Lakers 96-92 on Wednesday night. To add injury to insult, Kobe Bryant sprained his ankle when Dahntay Jones stepped under him while Kobe attempted a fall away jumper in the game's closing seconds. Bush league or not, it was an obvious foul (the league said as much after the game)... so I'd like to thank the referees involved for not paying attention to the game and/or swallowing their whistles.

[You can watch the incident here, if you haven't already seen it ad nauseam.](#)

Prior to vanquishing the soulless, opprobrious Lakers the Hawks had managed just one win in their past seven games, albeit mostly against fairly stiff competition (they did lose to the Suns, though). To add to their struggles, the Hawks are now battling injuries to Josh Smith and Jeff Teague, both of which sat out the victory over the Lakers. The Hawks will be looking to build on the momentum of that win as they sit in a three way tie for fifth in the Eastern Conference and are only 2.5 games out of fourth.

Phoenix Suns: 22-43

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Points per game: 94.4 (22nd) Points allowed: 100.4 (21st)

[Full team statistics.](#)

The good news is that it will take a herculean effort from the Suns to get pulverized as badly as they did Wednesday night against the Rockets. Losses like that require a special brand of horrible. Or do they? Despite a recent stretch where the Suns matched a season high with four wins in six games, the Suns have now been brutalized by at least 20 points in six of their last 12 losses. Massacres have become mundane.

After a 13-28 start under Alvin Gentry the Suns are now 9-15 under Lindsey Hunter. While the team has responded at times, they have been hopelessly overwhelmed at others. This shouldn't be a shocking revelation, though, since bad teams are generally consistently inconsistent. The Suns fell to 7-26 on the road after their loss at Houston, which puts them just a half-game ahead of Charlotte for the second worst road record in the league and doesn't inspire much confidence in their chances tonight.

What To Watch For:

Injuries: If the Hawks are without Smith and/or Teague that will obviously improve the Suns chances. Even if one or both play it is possible that their effectiveness may be limited.

Goran Dragic: Other than a nondescript performance against the Timberwolves, Dragic has been indispensable in the Suns other recent wins. Just like the team, though, Goran's play has been lent to caprice as he's failed to provide consistent performances. If Dragic doesn't have a good game it's hard to envision a scenario where the Suns win.

Revenge: It wouldn't take a leap in logic to surmise that the Hawks might still be sore about

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their recent loss to the Suns. Yes, the Suns have become an embarrassing loss. Hopefully the Hawks don't go all Houston on us...

2013 Lottery Watch:

The Phoenix Suns currently stand tied for fourth in the table tennis race. With the Hornets visiting the Wizards tonight, a Suns loss would either leave them in sole possession of fourth place or in a tie for third. Unfortunately, the Cavaliers and Timberwolves, two of the Suns fiercest adversaries, play on the road in very losable games.

There is a sense of renewed hope surrounding the Lakers potential lottery pick after the aforementioned loss and injury. The Lakers visit the Pacers tonight in a game that would appear to be a very likely loss. That would drop Los Angeles back into a tie with the Jazz, which would effectively put the Lakers on the outside looking in by virtue of tiebreakers. I will be a Pacers fan tonight.

The Final Word(s):

This is a game that has loss written all over it. It would be nice if the Suns decided to play more than 19 minutes of basketball tonight, though, and bounce back from one of their most demoralizing losses of the season. I would expect Hunter to give players a very short leash after the performance in Houston since he was just as disgusted that the team quit as I was. With a pretty full slate of games this should be a good night to catch the Suns and do some scoreboard watching.