Recap:

Goran Dragic came out in the first quarter trying to make his presence felt with six points in the first 3:15 of the game (albeit one on a defensive three second technical). Meanwhile, Josh Smith (who missed the Hawks last game due to injury) and Devin Harris scored the first 14 points for Altanta, who made six of their first nine shots. Both teams hit a cold spell in the middle of the quarter, with the Suns going scoreless for 4:07. To further illustrate the team's offensive difficulties, the Suns finally got their first assist with just 1:25 left in the quarter. Apparently the Hawks were also playing excellent free throw defense, as the Suns managed just two makes on six attempts in the quarter. Despite these inadequacies, the Suns managed to keep the game close as Dragic shouldered the load and dropped 10 in the quarter. Markieff Morris contributed seven boards in the quarter and capped the period with a circus shot with just .5 seconds left on a full court pass. Josh Smith topped all scorers with 11. Score: Hawks 27, Suns 23.

The Suns returned the first quarter favor to the Hawks by committing their own defensive three to start the second period. The Suns followed that with six straight points and took their first lead (29-28) since 6-4 on a truculent throwdown by Jared Dudley (by his comparative standards). The teams went back and forth, but after a tomahawk dunk by Jermaine O'Neal made the score 37-39 the Hawks went on an 11-2 run to stretch their lead to 50-39. The Suns regained their composure and kept the game from getting out of hand, but a buzzer beating three (emphatically responding to Morris's first quarter theatrics) by DeShawn Stevenson resulted in an 11 point Hawks lead at the half. Score: Hawks 57, Suns 46.

The Suns managed to survive the first half only down by 11 despite being dominated in most aspects of the game. The Hawks shot 53.7% from the field compared to the Suns 40.5% and made 7-14 threes while the Suns were a meager 1-10. Dragic did his part to keep the game within reach with 15 points and three assists in the half. Jared Dudley also chipped in seven points, four rebounds and four assists in the second quarter. Most of the rest of the team appeared enervated... Harris was Goran's doppelganger with 15 and three of his own, while Smith had 13 points and seven rebounds.

The Suns got off to a quick start in the third as O'Neal ripped off 10 quick points, but the demons of the three point shot continued to haunt them as triples helped the Hawks maintain their separation. After the Suns had closed the gap to five points (63-68) the Hawks went on a 12-3 run to go up by 14. It was pathetic defense coupled with putrid offense. The Suns hemorrhaged points on defense while managing just five points on offense the last 6:17 of the quarter. Dragic transformed from scorer to facilitator as he handed out five assists in the period, but scored just one point. Smith crept closer to a triple double, finishing the period with 17 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists (and one technical for throwing a temper tantrum). Score: Hawks 82, Suns 68.

The Hawks just crept further and further away from the Suns in the fourth. By the midway point the Hawks led by 18 (96-78) and the game was effectively over. The Suns displayed more gumption than two nights ago in Houston, but that helped little in the face of a chasmic discrepancy in team talent and the boisterous Hawks crowd (being facetious there - the Hawks crowd is so subdued you can barely tell they're awake).

Final Score: Hawks 107, Suns 94.

Game Boxscore.

Player of the Game:

Dragic gets the nod with game highs of 21 points and eight assists. The Hawks had solid, but not spectacular, performances by all five starters.

Comments of the Game:

Woo!

JO is back

Atlanta crowd/announcers suck really really hard...

Who thinks Dragic can hit the 30 mark tonight?

Marcus Morris with an "All-bad" statline

4 misses, 3 TOs, 1 PF and not a single other stat.

Unsurprisingly

Lakers look fluid with Nash instead of Kobe running the show

Lol, Dragic and O'Neal. That is it. The rest are scrubs.

When Haddadi smiles, children in the 42nd row start crying.

I watched to the end to see if we could lose by less than 10.

Oh well.

The Good:

Goran Dragic stepped up when the Suns needed him and provided a scoring punch in the first half while his teammates muddled their way to 12-35 shooting. He's the team leader and tonight he led. Goran tapered off after his scorching start, but still finished with game highs of 21 points and eight assists.

Jermaine O'Neal punished the Hawks inside all night long, providing a much needed inside presence that was sorely lacking in his absence. O'Neal, who finished with 18 points on 7-9 shooting, has truly been a bright spot in this morass of a season.

A Markieff Morris sighting resulted in a double double of 15 points and 11 rebounds. It would be nice to see more consistent play from Markieff.

The Bad:

The Suns three point defense. After Kyle Korver had just drained the Hawks ninth three pointer I realized I couldn't remember if I'd seen the Suns close out on a three point shooter the whole game. Couple that with the Suns own ineptitude from deep and it makes it pretty hard to win.

Tempo. The Suns are trying to become a defensive-minded team, but that doesn't go very swimmingly when they can't dictate pace. Surrendering 57 points in the first half is the antipode of controlling tempo. It's far too easy for other teams to impose their will on the Suns.

The Ugly:

Nothing too hideous tonight. It wasn't a tribute to basketball excellence and the defense was pretty deplorable, but after the Rockets fiasco it didn't seem bad at all.

Final Thoughts:

The Suns just aren't talented enough to compete for 48 minutes most nights. At least tonight they kept it somewhat respectable. Another loss, another lottery number combination as the Suns approach their second worst record in franchise history.

Also, screw the Lakers.