

Suns can't keep pace with Jazz, crumble in fourth in 103-88 loss

Written by

Wednesday, 27 March 2013 22:25 -



Recap:

The game started out with both teams on fire as the Suns went 8-11 and the Jazz went 10-12 in the early going. Luis Scola and Markieff Morris provided the early pyrotechnics for Phoenix while Al Jefferson countered for Utah. The Suns shooting grew tepid after the torrid start as they connected on just one of their next seven shots. After scoring 18 points in the first 5:17, the Suns managed a meager five in the next 6:43 and the Jazz took advantage by closing out the period on a 17-5 run. Scola led the Suns with nine points in the quarter. Kendall Marshall, starting in his first NBA game in place of Goran Dragic (who was out due to tanking fatigue), had six assists. Gordon Hayward led all scorers with 10. Derrick Favors led all player with two charges. Score: Jazz 34, Suns 23

The highlight of the early minutes in the second quarter was lumbering giant Hamed Haddadi sprawled out on the floor hustling after a loose ball. Dude's trying. The Suns experimented with a Haddadi/Jermaine O'Neal lineup (which I don't remember getting much burn this season) to counter Utah's size inside. Shannon Brown and Diante Garrett also made rare appearances. Everybody was joining the fun! Amidst the roster shuffling the Suns kept hanging around. Phoenix clawed to within four at 36-40 and kept pace with a sputtering Jazz offense that managed just 16 points in the quarter before a last second three gave them a nine point lead headed into halftime. Score: Jazz 53, Suns 44

Both teams shot the ball well in the first half - Jazz 56.8% and Suns 51.3%. The teams combined to shoot 3-11 from three point range and 4-8 from the line. Utah led the stat to watch (points in the paint) 30-16. Ominous foretold. Scola led all players with 15 points (on 7-9 shooting) in the first half. Marshall had the unusual first half stat line of zero points and nine assists. Jefferson had 14 points and five boards for the Jazz. The Suns played 11 players in the first half, with eight logging at least 10 minutes. Participation ribbon game?

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The third quarter started with more (gasp!) outstanding play from Marshall, as he added six quick points to complement his double digit assist total. The Jazz stretched the lead to as many as 13, but couldn't put the game away as the pesky team from the island of misfit toys just kept on wolfing down Snickers. The Suns closed the quarter on a 13-4 run, capped by a three before the buzzer by Wesley Johnson after an offensive rebound, to close to within just four. Johnson had 10 in the period. Score: Jazz 75, Suns 71

And just when you thought the Suns were going to make this interesting... 17-2 Jazz run to start the fourth quarter. Ha! You must be pretty naïve to fall for that one again, although I really doubt most people who've been watching this season really thought the Suns would actually hold it together. The Suns have basically mastered, maybe even reinvented, the art of the fourth quarter collapse.

Final Score: Jazz 103, Suns 88

Player of the Game:

Al Jefferson had 25 points and nine rebounds and was the catalyst in Utah's game plan to impose their will on the Suns in the paint. The Jazz dominated the "What to Watch" category of points in the paint 56-32.

Comments of the Game:

Full tank mode tonight

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Dragic out due to "Rest"

Am I reading the box score correctly?

Kendall with 5 assists in the first 9 minutes?

Oh boy, Mehmet Okur interview coming up!

So glad I tuned in tonight.

They (Minnesota) haven't beaten the Lakers since Bush was President

THANKS OBAMA

Can't stay long

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Just stopped by to mention that Matt Harpring is a moron.

Lindsey looks quite dignified tonight

That pink shirt is quite dapper

Jazz can barely hold off a team trying to lose

Suns ought to bring in that skinny white dude at the end of the bench.

He looks like he could play.

The Jazz have needed a confidence booster

Hopefully they can step on our faces and rise up a bit

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The Good:

Kendall Marshall was given an opportunity and he capitalized on it magnificently to the tune of 13 assists (he did have five TOs if you just have to be captious). These are the types of performances that adumbrate favorably for Kendall becoming a solid player in this league. Not bad for his first NBA start.

Wesley Johnson continued his assault on looking like a real NBA player with 22 points and three steals. Keep on smilin' Wes.

The Bad:

Or is it? Goran Dragic did not play in the game due to "rest", "fatigue" or some other concocted reason that seemed like a thinly veiled excuse for the Suns to have every possible opportunity to lose the game. I'm not taking an individual leap of logic in suggesting an ulterior motive to resting Goran (and I really don't disagree with the move, either), the fans know the deal.

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The Ugly:

The fourth quarter collapse. The Suns snuggle up to getting curb stomped in the fourth like it's a warm, fuzzy blanket.

Final Thoughts:

The Suns came into this game wanting to lose (as an organization) and got what they wanted. It is far too convenient for Goran to miss this game due to whatever farcical explanation the team offered for us to believe there weren't machinations and innuendos involved. The fans aren't that stupid. Now my mental deficiencies, that's another story. At the same time, the team can't just come out and blatantly state their intention is to purposely reduce their chances of winning. I'm not advocating the strategy from a basketball purity standpoint, but I understand why that it is prudent at this stage and have no quarrels with the team's decision.

Successful night in many ways. The Jazz won, the Suns lost and Marshall showed promise in his professional debut as a starter. That's about the most desirable outcome I could have imagined going into the game.