

Suns defensive schemes exploited by Clippers

Written by
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Look, at this point there is VERY little that the [Phoenix Suns](#) do on the court that is of interest to me. This season is good and thoroughly dead and buried. To the degree that anything still happening matters in the big picture, it's about individual players and perhaps anything we might glean about the coaching stylings of Mr.

[Lindsey Hunter](#)

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I'm not going to spend a lot of time on this, but watching the Suns vs [Clippers](#) game on Thursday morning (no, I don't stay up late to watch this team very often), something caught my eye regarding the the play of the perimeter defenders.

Most notably, the combination of über-aggressiveness combined with ever-changing coverages and assignments.

Here's what Interim Coach Hunter had to say about a game that saw the Suns give up 57 points in the first half and still score 50 to keep the game...not a blow out (yet).

[Fight breaks out in 4th quarter of Phoenix Suns vs. Los Angeles Clippers game](#)

"It was turnovers (21), it was a lack of execution and, in some cases, it was a lack of effort," Suns interim coach Lindsey Hunter said.

That's fine. All those things are true. But how about the defense from the defensive specialist coach?

I'm going to show you two plays that typify the problems I saw. In both cases, poor [Luis Scola](#) has the unenviable task of trying to guard the monster

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[DeAndre Jordan](#)

and trying to protect the rim. Not to pick on Scola, but he's not exactly well-suited for either task. And yet, as you will see, he's got no chance when guards enter the lane so easily.

This first play started when Jordan reached over Scola and back-tapped an offensive rebound which proceeded the sequence we see here with the [P.J. Tucker](#) closing out WAY too hard and getting easily beat off the dribble by the super quick still effective [Caron Butler](#)

At the point, Scola steps out to stop penetration which leaves Jordan open for an easy lob-dunk.



On the second play, Goran goes over the [Blake Griffin](#) screen to chase [Willie Green](#) into the lane. This time, Scola stays home on Jordan to protect the lob and gives up a layup to Green. There's very few NBA bigs who can both stop penetration and prevent their own man from dunking behind them. To say the least, Scola is not one of those guys.



Now, go back and watch both clips (no pun intended) again and focus on Markieff Morris. In both cases, Morris stays with Blake in what was obviously part of the game plan. Griffin, by the

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way, finished the game with just nine points. So congrats, you "shut him down" but put the rest of the front line in an impossible position.

OF COURSE, this is a problem the Clippers create for a lot of teams. They have a lot of talent and they are tough to defend. If you don't paste a defender to Griffin's hip, he's going to tear you apart. If you do, you open up other things. Congrats to the Clippers for (in this game at least) taking advantage of those advantages.

But still, I wonder about the decision to be so aggressive on the wings knowing you have so little ability to help in the paint. I'm also not seeing a lot of the simplification that Hunter talked about when taking over. I could be completely wrong, but it seems he's falling into the trap of trying to over-coach for each situation. This is very much a flaw of Mike D'Antoni's defensive style (yes, he has one).

Is this a player problem or is this Hunter's aggressive philosophy that served him so well in his own career in a different era not fitting in with today's NBA? This is one of many questions that Lance Blanks will have to answer when it comes time to replace or stick with Hunter.

More: [Recap: Suns fall to Clippers](#)