

Preview: Phoenix Suns (24-55) @ Minnesota Timberwolves (29-50)

Written by
Saturday, 13 April 2013 12:41 -



When: Saturday, April 13, 2013, 5:00 PM local time (8:00 EST)

Where: Target Center, Minneapolis, MN

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

Last Meeting:

The Timberwolves beat the Suns in Phoenix 117-86 on March 22nd. Minnesota leads the season series 2-0.

Minnesota made short work of Phoenix, who was unprepared for the blitzkrieg that awaited them. After the Suns were pummeled 67-39 in the first half they were never able to get any closer than 19 points in the second half as the rout ensued. The 31 point loss was the Suns biggest margin of defeat at home this season. Luis Scola led the Suns with 17 points and 12 rebounds. Andrei Kirilenko led all scorers with 20 points.

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Team Bios:

Minnesota Timberwolves: 29-50

Points per game: 95.7 (20th) Points allowed: 98.2 (15th)

[Full team statistics.](#)

At the start of the season the Timberwolves had aspirations of making the playoffs for the first time in nine seasons. NINE. Those whimsical musings were quickly derailed by a slew of injuries to major components. Nikola Pekovic, Andre Kirilenko and Ricky Rubio missed significant time and Kevin Love and Chase Budinger missed most of the season.

After a 16-16 start Minnesota stumbled to a 7-27 record in their next 34 games. After that horrific stretch, though, the Wolves have been trying to finish the season on a high note and are 6-7, despite losing their last three, in their last 13 games. 19-20 at home on the season, Minnesota can finish with a winning home record by beating the Suns and Jazz in their last two contests at the Target Center.

The Timberwolves loss last night to the Utah Jazz assures their sixth 50+ loss season in the past seven years.

Phoenix Suns: 24-55

Points per game: 94.9 (21st) Points allowed: 101.3 (25th)

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[Full team statistics.](#)

The Suns broke a 10 game losing streak in their last game by stunning the Dallas Mavericks. Even in the three losses preceding the slump buster the Suns had been competitive in losses. These last three games offer Phoenix a chance to play for dignity, something they've had a paucity of this season. Even with the last impressive victory the Suns find themselves mired in a recent morass to the effect of 3-16 in their last 19 games.

Goran Dragic has had a strong second half as he has elevated his numbers to 14.7 points per game (tied for 11th among point guards) and 7.2 assists (tied for 10th) on the season. His play has been one of the few redeeming qualities in a season marked by considerable tumult and atrocious play.

What To Watch For:

Verve: 48 minutes of effort the Suns vs. the Wolves on the second night of a back to back. Minnesota played at Utah last night and had to fly home to get ready for tonight's exhilarating matchup. In the last game against Minny the Suns came out lackadaisically and got curbstomped in short order. Can the Suns capitalize on a Minnesota team hindered by lassitude?

Ricky Rubio vs. Goran Dragic: After a slow start coming off an injury, Rubio has elevated his play and is averaging 13.3 points and 8.5 assists per game. Dragic has averaged 16.2 points and 8.9 assists over the same period. Goran will look to extend the 22 year old wunderkind's indoctrination into the league with dominating play tonight.

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2013 Lottery Watch

The Suns come into their game against the Wolves at fourth in the lottery standings by virtue of Cleveland holding the tiebreaker between the teams. After tonight's game the Suns finish with a home game against Houston and at Denver. The Cavaliers have games remaining at Philadelphia, home against Miami and at Charlotte. Although the Suns are firmly entrenched in the top four, they will probably have to lose out to wrestle the third spot away from Cleveland.

The Lakers have become a horror movie villain that just won't die. Dwight Howard has struggled to regain his previous form, Steve Nash and Pau Gasol have missed considerable time, Ron Artest is playing after taking only 12 days to rehab from meniscus surgery, and now the inimitable Kobe Bryant has torn his Achilles tendon. Will that injury finally be the bane of their run for the postseason? LA has home games left against San Antonio and Houston, while the Jazz play at Minnesota and Memphis. The Jazz has the tiebreaker, but will still need to finish with a better record over these two games to overtake the Lakers. That means Utah will likely need to go 2-0 to have a chance.

The Final Word(s):

It would be nice if the Suns at least came out with a spirited effort, regardless of the results. A primer before the last home game of the season against Houston would be felicitous, and hopefully adumbrate for a season ending win for fans that have toiled through this season. In my roseate scenario, the Suns lose on a buzzer beater in overtime, giving us a photo finish while still battling Cleveland for third place.