

Written by

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From a [Phoenix Suns](#) fan perspective, everything happened the way it needed to happen on Monday night. I know some Suns fans are worried about a win, but the Suns can do no worse than 4th overall and were unlikely to get the 3rd overall lotto seeding thanks to Cleveland's epic tanking efforts.

By beating Houston last night, the Suns forced Houston to play as hard as possible against LA on Wednesday to keep their #7 playoff seeding intact (to face hobbled San Antonio). If they lose to LA, they drop to the #8 seed to face OKC. No one wants that.

Now a hungry Houston team is the Suns' best chance to knock the Lakers out of the playoffs, and start their summer vacation on the same day as the Suns.

If the Lakers beat Houston to make the playoffs, the Suns will get the #30 pick (via the [Miami Heat](#)). But if the Lakers MISS the playoffs by losing to Houston (while the Jazz win), the Suns will get the #14 pick outright.

What happened last night

- The Phoenix Suns beat the [Houston Rockets](#) , which makes the Rockets/Lakers game REALLY important for both teams. For either team, losing is tantamount to disaster. If the Lakers lose, they may be out of the playoffs. If the Rockets lose, they will drop to the 8th seed, facing OKC in the first round in a likely slaughter.

- The Utah Jazz beat Minnesota by 16 points, keeping their hopes alive for that 8th seed. While Houston wants to avoid dropping to #8, the Jazz would be thrilled to rise up to it.

- The [Los Angeles Clippers](#) and [Denver Nuggets](#) won, placing the [Memphis Grizzlies](#) (the Jazz' Wednesday opponent) firmly in the #5 playoff position with little chance for home court advantage, and little to play for in their last game.

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- Memphis can still get home court advantage (HCA) over the #4 seeded Clippers, even though they are seeded lower, but only if their record is better than the Clippers. Clippers get the #4 seed by virtue of winning their division, but are not guaranteed HCA. Head coach [Lionel Hollins](#) is so worried about HCA, though, he didn't play a single starter more than 24 minutes in Monday night 6-point win over Dallas that wasn't decided until late in the 4th quarter.

What still has to happen

- The Clippers need to win out (Portland today, Sacramento on Wednesday)
- The Jazz need to beat Memphis on Wednesday
- The Rockets need to beat LA Lakers on Wednesday.

Scenarios

- If the Clippers win **tonight** (hosting Portland) they will tie Memphis' win total with a game to play. The Clippers get the tiebreaker, so that diminishes the Grizzlies chance to get HCA. As long as the Clippers win out (at Sacramento on Wednesday), the Clips have HCA in round one.

- But if the Clippers lose one of their last two games, the Grizzlies could get HCA by beating the Jazz on Wednesday. However, as pointed out above, the Grizz coach didn't play his starters much on Monday night with the same stakes in play.

- If the Jazz win on Wednesday over the Grizzlies, they would have the same number of wins as the Lakers currently have (who play later that night), and would win any tiebreaker for a playoff spot. But the Lakers would still have a game to play later that night.

- If the Jazz beat Memphis, the Lakers **HAVE** to win or they are out of the playoffs. Period.

- If the Lakers beat Houston, they get the #7 seed to face the [Spurs](#). Houston would drop to #8 thanks to losing to the Suns and Lakers in the final week.

- If the Rockets win on Wednesday and the Jazz lose, the Lakers get the #8 seed while the Rockets get #7.

- If the Rockets win on Wednesday and the Jazz win too, the Lakers are **OUT OF THE PLAYOFFS**.

Clear as mud?

Basically, Suns fans should cheer for the Clippers to win tonight and tomorrow (over Portland, Sacramento), the Jazz to win (over Memphis) and the Rockets to win (over LA).

That's a lot of IFs, but there is a solid chance they all happen. The Clippers want HCA, so they

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won't rest against easy opponents Portland or Sacramento.

Memphis is a wild card - will they fight for HCA, more than they did on Monday night?

And thanks to the Suns win last night, Houston now HAS to beat LA on Wednesday. If Houston had won last night, they might have not even shown up, having the #7 seed locked up already.

If these things happen, the Suns get a second lottery pick (#14 overall) while the Lakers start their summer vacation on the same day the Suns do.

GO CLIPS! GO JAZZ! GO ROCKETS!