

Mercury Meter: Are the Phoenix Mercury getting back on track?

Written by
Monday, 05 August 2013 11:00 -



Record: 10-10

Place In Standings: Third

Points Per Game: 82.8

Points Against: 84.9

All things considered, the Phoenix Mercury should consider trying to change conferences if that is possible. After another win over the L'Eastern Conference the team improved to 6-1 against the best teams out east, but remain 4-9 against the Western Conference. A large part of that is an 0-5 record against the Minnesota Lynx.

The team got a rare win over a playoff caliber team, but as head coach Corey Gaines stated, "right now we are just worried about us."

With 15 total games remaining in the season the Mercury still have a chance to rattle off a few wins to chase down the Los Angeles Sparks, 13-7 on the season, and only 3.5 games back. The Mercury play nine straight opponents that are currently under .500 on the season. Time to play catch-up and there are a few ways they can do this going forward...

Zone Defense

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"We are getting better," Gaines said. "Every team is different."

Obviously the team is going to only get better in the zone with time going from game to game and even quarter to quarter. In the first half against the Atlanta Dream the Mercury did not show well as they pulled Brittney Griner out of the paint and scored on back door cuts like clockwork. It was almost too easy.

The parts are getting put in the right position, but whether they go small, big, or traditional with the line-up the zone is still a work in progress.

"Phoenix put a zone in there a little bit more upscale," Dream coach Fred Williams said about the Mercury Zone. "We took some shots and they kind of got some runs out of us."

After the game it was clear that Mercury can get the zone going as a weapon for them on the defensive end translating to more offense. It also allows the Mercury to play with a certain intensity...

Playing Angry

On top of playing the zone more effectively the Mercury turned the corner last week playing angry. That seems like a simple and odd strategy, or simply odd, but nonetheless the team responded well when they fell behind. That gave them an edge, a chip, and an aura of angry confidence that lit the fire under the team on both ends of the floor.

The team came out strong with that edge attacking the rim, playing with a controlled aggressiveness, and slowing the game down.

In the second half of the victory over the Dream the Mercury slowed things down to a halt. The first half featured 55 possessions and a three-point deficit. The team was playing too fast and sloppy. In the second half they cooled things down with 45 total possessions (despite 10 more turnovers) and a nine-point swing to get the victory. That style requires every player to play with

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a chip every game and every quarter to take advantage of that desperate, but effective style.

That will be needed with the upcoming schedule this week of tough, but winnable games for the Mercury...

Upcoming Schedule:

Tuesday vs. Seattle Storm at 7 p.m. AZ Time

Friday vs. Tulsa Shock at 7 p.m. AZ Time

Sunday vs. Tulsa Shock at 3 p.m. AZ Time