

Mercury Meter: Down to the final seven games and things are just heating up

Written by
Monday, 26 August 2013 11:00 -



Record: 14-13 (4-2)

Place In Standings: Third (+1.0 on Seattle)

Points Per Game: 81.0 (77.6)

Points Against: 82.0 (72.6)

It seems as soon as the Phoenix Mercury gain some momentum, they hit a wall, and then have to figure everything out all over again. The team has had high peaks like winning three games in a row at home with strong defense, but the momentum gets snapped with their low points like a loss to a potential playoff team like the Seattle Storm or the San Antonio Silver Stars.

Overall the team is comfortable in the playoff hunt as the third seed today (1.0 games ahead of Seattle) and four games ahead of the Silver Stars for the fourth spot. With seven games remaining making the playoffs is realistic, but staying in that third spot is not a given.

This season the Mercury are now a combined 2-9 against the other three playoff teams. This loss to the Storm was the perfect storm to give them the first season sweep of the Mercury since 2010. In losses this season the two common denominators that have plagued the Mercury have been turnovers (16) and losing the rebounding battle (-4). Teams like the Minnesota Lynx, Los Angeles Sparks, and the Storm do that to them. It does not make sense that the Mercury lost this game when you look at the shooting (47.1%), free-throws (20 points), sharing the ball (20 assists) alluding to a positive offensive performance, but that is why this game is played on both sides of the ball.

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The Importance of the Third Spot...

As mentioned above the Mercury are 2-9 against the other Western Conference Playoff teams. Adding in their performances against the Eastern Conference Playoffs teams they are 6-10 against teams they may face in the race to a Championship. Obviously they have done better against the East this season.

Specifically with the West, it is important for the Mercury to secure the third spot in the playoffs with their combined record against Minnesota (0-5) and Seattle (0-3). Avoiding the Lynx in the first round and giving themselves an opportunity in the first round to make it to the Conference Finals is a strategy that has to be discussed. Eventually there has to be a meeting of the Lynx to get to the ultimate goal, but pushing that out with some momentum in a series against Los Angeles could benefit them. Then again, they may not be as good this season as most thought...

...and Quality Defense.

Where did it go?

After the three game winning streak against the worst team in the West and the injury riddled defending Champs there was mention of "grains of salt." Since then the team has reverted back to their old ways giving up 85.0 points per game losing three out of four games. These three games was an unsavory call-back to the turnover prone, poor rebounding, and poor defending Mercury teams of recent years and even earlier this season.

Was the defense a product of a new coach?

Was it a product of playing against inferior competition?

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Were the first three games the outlier and the last three games the norm? Or is it the inverse of that?

Again, like I have said numerous times this season; this team has more questions than answers and more potential than substance on the year. How can that change in a week, and furthermore, over the final seven games of the season?

Upcoming Schedule:

Saturday vs. Connecticut Sun at 7 p.m. AZ Time

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