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Careless turnovers and bad habits have a way of resurfacing when they are buried, not resolved. Sweeping broken glass under a rug puts the shards out of sight and therefore out of mind. Then, over time, those same shards carve their way through the fabric and lacerate what was being protected in the first place.

The shards always poke through.

This season the Phoenix Mercury have made strides defensively and came together late to become a much better overall cohesive unit as the season progressed, but a broom just cannot do the job when a blow torch is needed. Interim head coach Russ Pennell was the torch bearer for all of the change and has done an admirable job with the way he held the team accountable on both ends of the floor, something that was not a part of the fabric of the team in years past, and made the team overall more well rounded. They were held accountable on both ends of the floor.

This Is Like A Heavy Weight Fight. - Carol Ross, LA Sparks Head Coach

Three ugly little truths about the Mercury resurfaced in Game Two against the Los Angeles

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Sparks that were under the carpet in Game One.

All season long "mental errors" or miscues that plagued the team from sloppy, careless passes between multiple defenders to just not being in the right spots on the floor at the right time. Most of the errors and turnovers were self inflicted wounds that could have been avoided.

"There were a couple of times we rebound the basketball and had people running off toward the other end and the ball went right behind them," stated Pennell about the turnovers. "We just didn't have a real awareness."

"We did some things that were not really characteristic I think of this team," Pennell continued. "I don't know if that's what you say trying to hard, you could say complacency, you could say tired. Those are all excuses. Bottom line is we just didn't get it done and we have to try to correct it before we play again."

Spotting a team double-digit turnovers every night and the fruits of those turnovers, points, are an easy way to create a hole that is tough to climb out of nightly.

With the ball sticking in one spot on most possessions the offense becomes more and more stagnant coupling with the turnovers can make any team, no matter how talented, vulnerable to lose on a nightly basis. That plays directly into the inconsistency of the Mercury all season playing great in stretches, but having the turnovers rear their ugly heads back into the picture to foil their bigger picture plans.

In the big picture the Mercury became a better team going forward because of the general care on the defensive end with the cast they have and the coaching on the staff they can be a great defensive team.

However, the porous rotations for stretches leaving shooters open and lanes agape for penetration came back into the picture again.

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The weakside corner is consistently open as well as the middle of the floor with players like Brittney Griner setting up for a block and Diana Taurasi and DeWanna Bonner struggling to stay in front of their man. Switching from zone-to-man and man-to-zone has helped quell the defensive inefficiencies, but they still revert back to the habits of old giving up easy baskets and putting more pressure on the offense.

This is the time of year where you either produce or you go home. -Russ Pennell, Mercury Head Coach

All of that contributes to the teams' lack of a killer instinct and being able to put teams away when they might be more talented, better, and have a lot more to play for.

Going forward game three becomes a game of inches, a game of mental toughness, and a pitting of two heavy-weight fighters having a rubber match to finally see who can make the adjustments, if there are any, to move forward to the Western Conference Finals. Both teams are desperate for a win and have everything to play for. There should be no complacency.

This series from the regular season to the playoffs has been about adjustments. No team has won two games in a row in the six total games played with each team winning three games and like a checker board, the Mercury are up next for a win as the series comes to a close. This has been a heavy-weight fight with the amount of sheer quality of talent, former lottery picks, and game changers.

In Game One the Mercury countered the hey-maker that closed out the season with a rope-a-dope win hanging in there to the end before closing out the Sparks. They were countered with a strong power game as the Sparks worked the body in Game Two for the win. Punch, counter punch. Punch, counter punch.

"I am a big believer that in the playoffs it is about getting your team in the right mental place," stated Sparks coach Carol Ross. "The right emotional place. We are not going to reinvent anything at this point."

Mercury Meter: The Phoenix Mercury are reverting back to old, bad habits, and despite that are one win away

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Coach Pennell has his three key factors for winning games in field goal percentage, rebounding, and turnovers.

All three of those are important, but in relation to the Mercury this season defensive rotations, turnovers, and a lack of a killer instinct are the factors that have plagued the team this season. Sweeping them under the rug has worked in spots to the point where they are in a one game playoff for the right to head up to north to challenge the Minnesota Lynx again for a fourth trip in five years to the WCF.

In a vacuum this one game will define the Mercury this season and going forward with their relevance as a contender in the conference. Can they land the knockout blow?