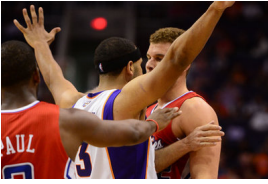


Written by

Tuesday, 15 October 2013 14:00 -



It's not often that a preseason game is something to look forward to, but that's exactly what we have here.

Clearly in an effort to rest up for the undefeated Suns tonight in Phoenix, [Blake Griffin](#) , [Chris Paul](#) , [DeAndre Jordan](#) and [Matt Barnes](#) all sat out a loss to [Sacramento Kings](#) last night while former Suns [Jared Dudley](#) and Louis Amundson scored 4 points between them in 39 minutes of play.

But tonight, the fight is on. Surely, the Suns will see the best of the [Clippers](#) , but that likely won't be good enough to stop the juggernaut that is [Phoenix Suns](#) Preseason Basketball.

Back to reality

While it's true that all those guys took last night off, it doesn't mean they are gearing up for the Suns either. Preseason is a time for experimenting, and for giving minutes to guys who won't see them once the regular season starts. Teams are looking for someone(s) to step up to play a bigger role than originally envisioned. Preseason is also about staying healthy, as a quick check of the league's injury report can attest.

Expect the unexpected. It's still the preseason after all.

About the Suns lineup

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In three preseason games, the Suns have started 3 different shooting guards ([Eric Bledsoe](#) / [Goran Dragic](#)

,
[Shannon Brown](#)

,
[Archie Goodwin](#)

) and 3 different small forwards (

[P.J. Tucker](#)

,
[Marcus Morris](#)

and

[Gerald Green](#)

). The point guard spot has seen Goran Dragic start twice, while Eric Bledsoe started once.

[Markieff Morris](#) and [Marcin Gortat](#) have been the only two mainstays in three games, at power forward and center respectively, though they have each been subbed out liberally throughout the game.

Looks like it's time to start experimenting with different front court lineups in the starting roles. My guess is that Hornacek will go with a big man lineup against the high-flying Clippers, and will start [Miles Plumlee](#) or [Alex Len](#) at C with [Channing Frye](#) sliding into the starting PF spot for a night in his first home game of the season,* or Gortat will shift to PF as he has recently requested for a chance of pace.

**It's also possible that Hornacek will wait to bring Frye into the game as a backup so he can get his own round of applause outside the hoopla of the starting lineup intros.*

About the Clippers lineup

Who knows what the Clippers want to do, but my guess is that all the guys who sat last night will play tonight. That includes 2 All-Stars - Griffin and Paul, a shot-blocking extraordinaire in Jordan and another former Suns player Matt Barnes.

With the Clippers liberally sitting guys out, it wouldn't be a surprise to see former Suns Jared Dudley and Louis Amundson ride the pine the whole game after playing last night. Why play a back-to-back when you don't have to?

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Here's hoping they each at least get a cameo at some point. Certainly, each will get an ovation of appreciation from loyal, classy Suns fans.

Special matchup

I would call this a "special" matchup rather than a "key" matchup. It's preseason, after all.

It makes sense to start Eric Bledsoe against his mentor, Chris Paul, at point guard tonight. After two years of beating each other up in practice, this is Bledsoe's first chance to play competitive basketball against Paul and prove he's a starting caliber point guard in this league.

It's better to get this game over with before the games count, too. Bledsoe is likely to be really hyped, probably translating into a lot of steals and rebounds but also turnovers and bricked shots.

Bledsoe's turnovers seem to be more about over-passing to unsuspecting teammates than lazy play, and against the Clippers he might try too many alley-oops that the Suns just aren't ready to convert.

The other bench

I'm sure there will be some quotes out of the visiting locker room before and after the game tonight, as former head coach [Alvin Gentry](#) returns to US Airways Center for the first time since being unceremoniously ousted last season by the Suns after a 13-28 start. Gentry is a noted performer for the media, so he will certainly make some obligatory benign comments for local papers with the outside chance of a zinger or two.

Fighting for minutes

Jeff Hornacek still has 17 players to rotate. With so many of relatively equal talent/skill combinations, it's not yet possible to write anyone off besides the rehabbing [Malcolm Lee](#) .

In three games, Channing Frye sat out once (and since said he was told he's playing from now on). Also sitting a game are Shannon Brown, [Dionte Christmas](#) , Viacheslav Kravstov and

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James Nunnally. Four of those five acquitted themselves with 10+ point scoring game to offset the DNP. Only Nunnally has seen the numbers really crunch his opportunity.

What will happen tonight? Is it possible, or practical for that matter, for Hornacek to narrow his rotation down? He's played 16, 16 and 13 players in the three games.

Lineup Prediction

PG: Chris Paul vs. Eric Bledsoe

As I wrote above, this figures to be a big game for Eric Bledsoe and I would expect Hornacek to give Bledsoe plenty of minutes tonight. Bledsoe loves to play basketball and will likely get 35 minutes a night this season for the Suns so why not start now, against his mentor? Paul, on the other hand, has nothing prove so he will likely play less than 20 minutes, with the remainder going to his new backup - [Darren Collison](#) .

SG: [Jamal Crawford](#) vs. Goran Dragic

Everyone plays with lineups in the preseason, so why not start the gifted sixth man Crawford? I have no idea what the Clips will do here. For the Suns, Dragic barely played on Sunday so it figures he will get some time tonight in a lineup next to Bledsoe. It's interesting that they've still barely shared the court this preseason.

SF: Marcus Morris vs. Matt Barnes

Despite some hot shooting by Gerald Green this preseason, it's still my guess that Marcus Morris has the small forward spot in hand. The Suns need someone who can make 3-point shots when Dragic and Bledsoe are on the floor. That could be Green, but I'd guess it Mook's job to lose. He's younger and potentially a better NBA player. P.J. Tucker will be the first backup off the bench, and may end up playing more minutes than Mook overall.

PF: Marcin Gortat vs. Blake Griffin

Gortat has mentioned a few times that he'd like to play big with another of his 7-foot teammates, and that he'd love to try the PF spot when that happens. The problem with this is that Gortat has no game outside the paint, so the middle will be clogged when this happens unless the other big is Channing Frye. My guess is that Frye will come in the game later, so he can get his own applause outside the lineup intros. Maybe even just a minute or two into the game.

C: DeAndre Jordan vs. Miles Plumlee

Phoenix Suns Game Preview: Hosting Jared Dudley, Lou Amundson and the Clippers - What up, what up!

Written by

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Miles Plumlee has been a revelation so far this preseason. He appears to have a future similar to [Jeff Foster](#) (former dirt worker in Indiana) or Louis Amundson (former Suns fan fave). Expect Hornacek to reward him with a start either tonight or sometime soon before the season starts.

Final Score

Who cares? All I want is a feel-good, entertaining game featuring a lot of fast breaks and dunks. Whoever wins this game has no more than momentary bragging rights. Preseason.

Go Suns!