

Preview Phoenix Suns vs. New Orleans PELICANS: Eric Bledsoe and the Suns look to remain undefeated

Written by

Sunday, 10 November 2013 11:00 -



Hey look in the desert air, it is a bird, it is a plane, no it is a... Oh, wait it is a plane full of birds. The PELICANS are in town for a re-match. What happens when a Pelican flies into a desert?

This game happened the other day in the bayou where the [Phoenix Suns](#) (4-2) took care of the [New Orleans Pelicans](#) (3-3) who are still trying to figure out how to swallow the fish they have collected, so to speak.

The first time these two teams faced off the Suns were out of their minds from three (6-12) by their standards.

The first time these two teams played the Pelicans were indifferent as a defensive unit (98.2 points per game) giving up 100+ in two out of three games.

So many things have changed. Since then the Pelicans are undefeated, college basketball has started, and another Thor movie has hit theaters. Things have changed and these two teams are very different since the first meeting. That was a little tongue in cheek, but in a few ways these are two different teams than they were just five days ago.

The Pelicans have won their last two games and, as a unit, are starting to fortify their defensive identity. The Suns have maintained their play begging the question: Is this Suns team for real?

It is early in the season, but these two teams look like they could both vie for a 6-8 seed in the playoffs. Again, this is very early to talk about the playoffs, but the Pelicans and the Suns have intangibles for good regular season teams. They are both scrappy defensive teams with young talent that competes nightly. Right now they each have rising stars, but neither has a superstar.

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The first match-up was fun and the Suns came away with the win, they will look to repeat that formula again tonight.

(Recent) History Lesson

104-98, Suns Win

The history of the Pelicans and the Suns is short. For the Pelicans, they have a short history with every team in the NBA and no history with most. Once a Hornet, now a Pelican, either way they are a flying thing of a different name. They still sting the same.

In the first meeting Eric Bledsoe was unguardable and dominated the game (10-12 shooting) giving them a quality edge going into the fourth quarter where his heroics were not needed. More on that below.

Head-to-Head (past four seasons including Playoffs)

Suns: 97.9 PPG (6 wins)

Pelicans: 97.0 PPG (6 wins)

Whether it was [Steve Nash](#) v. [Chris Paul](#) battling for playoff seeding or more recently as two lottery teams trying to figure it out, the series has been dead even over the years. As of late the games have been more defensive struggles with the Pelicans/Hornets getting the better of the Suns, but this year the teams have each evolved. This series could remain dead even in the coming years, but with more entertaining games with young talent.

Head-to-Head (Snapshot of new point guards in new places)

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Holiday: 13.7 PPG 7.2 APG 2.0 SPG 37.3 FG% (6 games)

Bledsoe: 20.5 PPG 7.3 APG 2.0 SPG 50.6 FG% (6 games)

While Holiday had an opportunity to be a starter and run his team out in Philadelphia, he, like Bledsoe, is in a new place running a new franchise. Through six games each of these point guards have their respective teams playing winning basketball.

The primary difference between the two; fourth quarter points. This season Bledsoe has been the closer and Holiday has not. Bledsoe has scored 50 fourth quarter points (8.3 per game) while Holiday has only scored 17 (2.8) in the final period, a total Bledsoe matched in one game this season.

Starting Line-Ups

PG - [Eric Bledsoe](#) v. [Jrue Holiday](#)

SG - [Gerald Green](#) v. [Eric Gordon](#)

SF - [P.J. Tucker](#) v. [Al-Farouq Aminu](#)

PF - [Channing Frye](#) v. [Anthony Davis](#)

C - [Miles Plumlee](#) v. Jason Smith

Potential Suns Inactives: [Goran Dragic](#) (Left Ankle, Gametime Decision), [Alex Len](#) (Left

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Ankle, Game-to-Game), and
[Emeka Okafor](#)
(Neck, Out Indefinitely)

Potential Pelicans Inactives: [Ryan Anderson](#) (Toe, Questionable)

Key Match-Up

Frye vs. Davis

Even for his standards, Davis has been playing out of his mind these past two games. He is averaging 25 PPG 10.5 RPG 4.5 BPG 2.5 APG 2.0 SPG while shooting 53.1% from the field. Oh, and 16-20 from the free-throw line going head-to-head against the [Memphis Grizzlies](#) front-line and [Pau Gasol](#) in LA. where the Pelicans won both games. He is on another planet right now and the responsibility for slowing him down could be tasked on Frye.

Frye's ability to spread the floor as a shooter could be his best defense against Davis keeping his length out of the paint making plays as a shot-blocker and causing turnovers. Frye (and Markieff Morris, more on him below) will have to keep the pressure on Davis on the perimeter to water down his effectiveness like in the last game.

Interesting Stat: 22.7 PPG 9.0 RPG 4.7 FTA 68.3 FG% (3-Games)

That is the best three game stretch for [Markieff Morris](#) in his career at the NBA level. That stretch is current and started against New Orleans earlier this week. In the end the numbers will come back down to earth, but if they do not then the Suns have the 6th Man of the Year, Most Improved Player, and a Top 5 Power Forward on their bench this year all wrapped into one No. 11 Suns jersey.

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Meaningless Stat: -11 First Quarter

On the road the Suns were down 17-28 after the first quarter, a trend on the road as they are -16 collectively in three games, but came back to win by six points against the Pelicans. That is a +17 swing in quarters two through four. The Suns are a different team at home starting off the first three games 3-0 with a +26 margin in the opening quarter. That start in New Orleans is meaningless, misleading stat.