

Preview Phoenix Suns (12-9) v. Sacramento Kings (6-14): What does a win against a bad team mean? For

Written by

Friday, 13 December 2013 09:30 -



This series has been one-sided for the past two years and it has not been in the favor of the team that actually has a winning record this season...

Last time the [Phoenix Suns](#) (12-9) hosted the [Sacramento Kings](#) (6-14) at home they played lethargic, lacked energy, and dropped a second straight game against a team that is positioning themselves in the lottery. The Suns are trying to position themselves in the playoffs and to be that caliber team it requires consistently beating teams like the Kings at home, on the road, and in every facet of the game.

This is a test for the Suns more so than a game against the [San Antonio Spurs](#) , [Portland Trail Blazers](#) , or the [Oklahoma City Thunder](#)

Against those teams the Suns are 2-3 on the season (6-4 overall against winning teams) collectively with close losses on their resume.

A win against the Kings puts the Suns just .5 games behind the Division Leading [Los Angeles Clippers](#) (14-9) and prove that they are a team with some staying power. This season the talk of the NBA has been how poor the Eastern Conference is compared to the Western Conference, but the reality is the West has a very soft middle. Teams 4-14 are all good, but uniquely flawed to where most would not consider them championship contenders.

Other than the [Utah Jazz](#) (5-19) and the Kings (6-14) every team in the West is at least one game under .500 or better on the season. Any mix of 13 teams can make the playoffs at this juncture in the season.

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That is why games against the Kings and other lower level teams are important.

This season the Suns are 6-4 against teams with winning records today and 6-5 against teams that are below .500 on the year. Compare that to the 8th Seed in the West last year, the [Houston Rockets](#), they went 22-10 against the teams under .500 and 26-14 against non-playoff teams.

Back to the Suns v. Kings.

It could be the season debut for Rudy Gay in a Kings uniform after being traded five days ago. After he was traded the team introduced him to the fans by having them come down through the crowd The Shield style, through the crowd, and with the comments that advanced stats do not mean everything for a player. They don't.

At the very least the Kings are going to be interesting, athletic, and potentially exciting. DeMarcus Cousins has seemed to make the leap this year playing like a big man, Isaiah Thomas is finally starting, Ben McLemore has been good in spurts, and insert Rudy Gay.

He does not have a lot of fans in the sports community because of his inefficient shooting and style of play, I am certainly not a fan myself, but he can be a 15-20 point scorer night to night for a team that already has a No.1 in Cousins and a No. 2 in Thomas.

The Kings may not have a great record and are trending towards the lottery, but they pose a lot of unique challenges for the Suns every time they square. More on those challenges...

(Recent) History Lesson

0-2 Against the Kings (110.0-105.0 PPG)

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It is a tale of free-throws, energy, and learning that you cannot turn it off and on in this league unless you have elite, top tier talent. The Suns do not have that type of talent and found out the hard way as the cellar dweller Kings took full advantage of the Suns lack of drive against them in a home-and-home series. It will take focus to dispatch a young, hungry team with nothing to lose.

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

Suns: 103.69 PPG (6 wins)

Kings: 102.15 PPG (7 wins)

As of late the Kings have dominated the series winning four straight games taking control of the series as of late. In all four wins the Kings are have scored 107+ points in every game scoring at will on the Suns. Even with the Kings in the cellar of the NBA they have the Suns number over the past two seasons...

Starting Line-Ups

PG - [Eric Bledsoe](#) v. [Isaiah Thomas](#)

SG - [Goran Dragic](#) v. [Ben McLemore](#)

SF - [P.J. Tucker](#) v. [Rudy Gay](#)

PF - [Channing Frye](#) v. [Jason Thompson](#)

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C - [Miles Plumlee](#) v. [DeMarcus Cousins](#)

Potential Suns Inactives: [Alex Len](#) (Left Ankle, Game-to-Game) and [Emeka Okafor](#) (Neck, Out Indefinitely)

Potential Kings Inactives: [Carl Landry](#) (Left Hip, Out)

Key Match-Up

[Marcus Morris](#) vs. [Derrick Williams](#)

"Drafted by the wrong team," is a phrase and concept thrown around here-and-there, but in the case of Derrick Williams it is proving to be very true. In 155 games with the [Minnesota Timberwolves](#) (10.1 PPG 4.9 RPG 42.0 FG%) blended into the bench and made no impact. He is making an impact now. During his time in Sacramento, seven games, Williams is averaging 12.9 PPG 5.4 RPG shooting 53.1% from the field.

For Marcus Morris, a player of similar skill and impact, he is finding a home here in Phoenix off the bench as a scorer. Those two will be called upon to score for their respective teams inside-and-out. This season Morris is averaging 11.0 PPG and 4.9 RPG this year for the Suns in a more defined role.

Interesting Stat: 15.0 Free-Throws Per Game

For his career DeMarcus Cousins averages 5.6 FTA per game (239 games) for his career, 5.5 FTA against every team except the Suns (227 games), and 7.8 FTA against the Suns (12 games) through four seasons. This season he has taken his game to the next level averaging 15.0 FTA per game against the Suns with a new-found consistency playing in the paint.

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Meaningless Stat: 22.5 PPG 7.0 RPG 6.5 APG 2.0 SPG

Are the Kings going to miss the production of [Greivis Vasquez](#) , [Patrick Patterson](#) , and [Chuk Hayes](#)

? Unlikely, but this is the overall production from the three against the Suns this year in two games. If Gay, Gray, and Acy play they had an overall impact of 17 points 10 rebounds 3 assists 2 steals (all Gay) in a loss just last week.