

Final Score: Phoenix Suns lose to San Antonio Spurs, 108-101 in typical Suns/Spurs fashion

Written by
Wednesday, 18 December 2013 22:29 -



The Phoenix Suns tried hard, but the efficiency of the San Antonio Spurs just overtook the Suns at the end of the game. The Spurs finished on a 15-6 run after the Suns had taken a 95-93 lead with 5 minutes left.

The San Antonio Spurs came into the game with a 10-3 road record, slightly better than the Suns' 9-3 home record, so a win in the Valley wasn't going to be easy.

Even if you discount the Spurs chances without their All-Star Tony Parker in the lineup, they are still THE SPURS who just were in the Finals AGAIN a few months ago. For those keeping score, that's 5 Finals over 14 seasons for Tim Duncan.

In fact, Tim Duncan entered the game having played 17 more minutes than the ENTIRE ACTIVE SUNS ROSTER for this game. Holy sheesh.

The game was close from end to end, but the Spurs eventually pulled away in typical Spurs fashion. The Suns came back on emotion and energy to take a late lead (95-93) but then the consistent Spurs closed on a 15-6 run.

I guess you can be encouraged that the game so resembled Suns/Spurs of old.

Or, you can stay up all night, unable to fall asleep, wondering why the fuck the Suns just can't get over that gaw-damm hump.

Spurs 108, Suns 101

The game started off with the Suns not taking any shit stuff from the Spurs and getting a few

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steals on hot dogging (Duncan) and lazy entry passes (backups starting at guard). The Suns lead was quickly up to 11-6 before Gregg Popovich finally called a timeout.

The first points were from Frye's two quick-shot threes. The last points were on a pretty fast break led by Bledsoe where he fed Frye to an open jam.

The Spurs ran their offense through Tiago Splitter, while the Suns ran theirs through Frye. A classic "who blinks first" move by both coaches because neither could defend the other. Within 6 minutes, Frye had 12 while Splitter had 5.

Pop blinked. He brought Diaw in for Splitter at the 19-12 timeout.

With Parker out, the Spurs didn't play their best lineup until Manu Ginobili entered at the 5 minute mark, joining Diaw, Duncan and Leonard along with Patty Mills for PG support. The Spurs briefly played well before the Suns continued to overwhelm them with effort and really good execution.

The Suns were on fire in this game to start, especially Frye. Frye started with 15 points in the first quarter alone, 6-6 from the field including 3 threes. Wow.

The Bledsoe plus/minus reared its head again, though. After leading 21-13 with Dragic and Bledsoe in together, the Suns were outscored 16-13 the rest of the quarter.

At the end of 1, 34-29 Suns.

The second quarter started slow, with the Spurs still boasting Ginobili, Danny Green and Diaw in the lineup while the Suns had Dragic and a few chuckers (Green, Morris, Morris). The Morrii forgot that the fallaway 20-footer is NOT the best shot on the court. Green forgot that a contested off balance three is NOT the best either.

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The Spurs closed the lead to 1 right away and kept within 1-5 points through the first seven minutes of the Q while Archie Goodwin played with Dragic. Goodwin got to the rim on four straight drives, only finishing once and drawing free throws another time. The dude has so many skills, but man is that kid a 19 year old. He's a boy among those men out there.

The Spurs finally tied it with 4:50 in the second and then took the lead with 4 minutes left after Duncan returned while Ginobili took a rest.

Finally, Hornacek went back to the Slash Brothers along with Goodwin on a fast wing set. Goodwin quickly got a breakaway dunk off a steal, and then Bledsoe led a late-breaking break to Plumlee for the lead. The game seesawed back and forth after that, with the half ending at 59-58 Spurs lead. (was tied at 58, but a Leonard two was later ruled a three)

After getting torched by Frye in the first 7 minutes (12 points on 5-5 shooting), Splitter never returned. And Frye took only two more shots in 8 more game minutes, missing one. The Spurs adjusted.

Rookie Archie Goodwin played the entire second quarter in place of P.J. Tucker because he was hustling like crazy out there. He made two steal/breakaway shots and drove to the basket several other times with mixed results. At the end of the second, defending Manu Ginobili became a teacher/student thing where Manu got two clean step-back looks off great drive-fakes, but missed one.

The Spurs took a page out of the Suns' book, making 6 of 11 threes in the first half - a major reason they were able to take the lead. Many of the threes were open, off bad Suns rotations (Marcus Morris, to name one), so making them wasn't much of a challenge. The Suns really need to tighten their second half defense.

The Suns made 5 of 7 threes themselves in the half, 57% of their shots overall and had 5 steals. But they also had 10 turnovers and were out-rebounded and out-assisted by the Spurs missing Tony Parker. It helped to have Manu Ginobili play most of the first half, and running out a rotation that's played together for years and just went to the Finals a few months ago.

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Still, replacing Tony Parker with Patty Mills and Corey Joseph just isn't the sizzle on the steak. Yet Mills had 8 points (3-4 from the field, 2-2 on three) and 2 assists in 15 first half minutes, a plus-10 for the half. Not bad.

Here we go, second half! First team that plays defense wins.

The Spurs started the half with a 3/4-court press and an aggressive drive to the basket by Tiago Splitter to get another foul on Frye. Frye committed an offensive foul on the next possession, and he was quickly at 3.

And the Suns were quickly down 5. But then Frye made a three, and Bledsoe made a runner and the game was tied again.

Seesaw battle here. While the Suns are closing better than earlier this season, I wouldn't want to rely on closing this one against the Evil Empire if it came down to final possessions. That's how the Spurs won the first game against the Suns. Why not again?

The Spurs took the lead a few minutes later, ballooning up to 9 before the Suns came back with a three and a layup. It could have gotten a lot closer but the Suns missed a number of bunnies and the Spurs made an and-1 and a layup to get back to 9.

Only a Dragic three-point play (aided by the Spurs) cut it to 6 at the end of three.

The Spurs held the lead in the fourth with good execution on offense and defense, outplaying the Suns effort whenever the Suns tried to get close.

It helped the Suns, though, that Markieff Morris finally started playing toward the basket instead of leaning away from it. Morris made a thunderous dunk (that was almost stopped by the rim) and then a few drives to the hoop that scored or drew fouls. Those moves kept the Suns in the game while they otherwise floundered against the Spurs pressure.

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For the last seven minutes, the Spurs brought back Tim Duncan and Manu Ginobili to a loud round of boos. I'll take this moment to give great credit to the crowd tonight - they were THERE for one thing, and they were loud.

These fans were ready to cheer on a Suns win, which really helped the Suns momentum in the 4th. And a young team needs that kind of help.

And with that energy, the Suns finally retook the lead with 5 minutes left, at 95-93. The crowd was LOUD, and the Suns were riding that high, if missing too many shots to take control.

Tie game at 95 with 4 minutes left on a Manu putback after a missed breakaway contested by Bledsoe.

But then the Spurs did some Spurs things. They defended the Suns tightly, while Bledsoe lost a bit of energy after playing so hard all game.

The Spurs took a 5-point lead with 2:26 left and never looked back. The Suns discombobulated while Manu became the Manu of old and made all the right plays from a few minutes.

The Suns just didn't have it at the end.