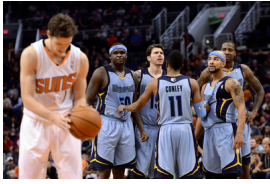


Written by

Monday, 06 January 2014 11:24 -



Goran Dragic has had to shoulder the load before without Eric Bledsoe, but he needs his teammates to start stepping up for this to work again...

Another 2-1 week for the [Phoenix Suns](#) (20-12) a float in the Western Conference Standings despite playing two games without emerging star [Eric Bledsoe](#)

. This is not the first time the team has been without Bledsoe in the line-up due to injury and have tread water in those games going 4-4 overall.

Game Recaps

@ [Los Angeles Clippers](#) - W (107-88) [Full Recap](#)

vs. [Memphis Grizzlies](#) - L (91-99) [Full Recap](#)

vs. [Milwaukee Bucks](#) - W (116-100) [Full Recap](#)

This week Head Coach Jeff Hornacek had to create a last minute gameplan against the scrappy Grizzlies which resulted in a tough loss at home, but with a few days to prepare they were able to knock off the underachieving Bucks despite being shorthanded.

The highlight of the season so far came with a knockout blow type victory over the "rival" Clippers who lead the Pacific Division.

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Getting a resume win like that with the style points that go along with it is important for a young team trying to wave waves. The wins against the Blazers earlier in the season were great, but this was a statement win. [Chris Paul](#) described the loss to the Suns as the "worst loss" he has had in a Clippers uniform. That says a lot because the Suns roughed them up. They played tough and took the flashy and fun Clippers out of their element. Sounds a bit familiar, right Suns fans?

Key Stat

Point Distribution

With Eric Bledsoe out the team is missing 18.0 points and 5.8 assists per game. Not going to deep into advanced stats, shooting numbers, and overall impact on the game. He impacts the game in ways that stats cannot describe for this team. Here is a look at the scoring distribution for the eight games that Bledsoe has not played in this season:

[Gerald Green](#) : 16.8 points 2.1 assists per game (+4.6 points w/o Bledsoe)

[Channing Frye](#) : 16.0 points 1.2 assists per game (+6.2 points w/o Bledsoe)

[Marcus Morris](#) : 11.6 points 1.0 assists per game (+1.7 points w/o Bledsoe)

[Markieff Morris](#) : 10.3 points 1.5 assists per game (-2.5 points w/o Bledsoe)

[P.J. Tucker](#) : 9.0 points 2.0 assists per game (-0.2 points w/o Bledsoe)

[Miles Plumlee](#) : 8.3 points 0.25 assists per game (-2.1 points w/o Bledsoe)

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In total, without Bledsoe the role players have accounted for +12.5 points and are nearly dead even, +0.205, in assists per game. The team is leaving 5.5 points and 5.6 assists per game on the bench in a suit making life for [Goran Dragic](#) that much tougher. Having a consistent secondary scorer or multiple role players step up and score 4-5 points more per game helps relieve the pressure...

Quote of the Week

We need everyone to play well for us to win. We do not have that guy that we can go to and say, "Hey, carry us tonight," -- Coach Jeff Hornacek on getting secondary scoring without Bledsoe in the line-up

2014 NBA Draft Update

Surrogate Watch continues and the Suns have three first round picks with the current projections, none of which are in the lottery. A slight change of pace from pre-season projections. Here is the update on how the three picks look right now:

[Minnesota Timberwolves](#) (16-17) -- No. 13 Overall (Pick stays in Minnesota based on Protections) [James Young](#), Freshman Wing Kentucky -- Very good lefty shooter that has drawn comparisons to a young [Michael Redd](#) with athleticism.

[Washington Wizards](#) (14-17) -- No. 18 Overall (Pick goes to Phoenix based on Protections) [A dreian Payne](#), Senior F/C Michigan State -- Dynamic stretch-four that has show the ability to score inside, score outside, and defend the interior as well.

Phoenix Suns (20-12) -- No. 22 Overall (Pick stays in Phoenix based on Protections) [Sam Dekker](#),

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Sophomore Forward Wisconsin -- Skilled prospect that can play the three in a traditional line-up and small-ball four as well with his shooting and ball-handling/play-making ability.

[Indiana Pacers](#) (27-6) -- No. 30 Overall (Pick goes to Phoenix based on Protections) [Troy Williams](#)

Freshman Forward Indiana -- Raw young athlete that is starting to gain more responsibility as a ball-handler, but overall is an elite athlete, quality defender, and rebounds his position well.

Keep [following along here](#) to get updates and information on the 2014 NBA Draft Class and more.

News & Notes

- Eric Bledsoe will miss up to a week (or longer) with a sprained right knee...
- [Leandro Barbosa](#) was signed to a 10-day contract...
- Goran Dragic notched his career-high with 33 points against the Memphis Grizzlies...

Suns History Lesson

This week in Suns History: January 9th, 1972: In a loss to the Baltimore Bullets at College Park the NBA's 2,000,000 point was scored. By who? Who knows? Connie Hawkins and Dick Van Arsdale led the way with 22 points each in the loss.

Previewing the Week Ahead:

Center of the Sun: The Phoenix Suns get a major resume win while losing Eric Bledsoe for the next 4-5 ga

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Tuesday, January 7th @ [Chicago Bulls](#) (14-18)

Wednesday, January 8th @ Minnesota Timberwolves (16-17)

Friday, January 10th @ Memphis Grizzlies (15-18)

Saturday, January 11th @ [Detroit Pistons](#) (14-20)

It feels like every week is a test for the team that has crashed the party, but proven that they belong there with everyone else who came with bells on. Their invitation was three years in the making and they decided to show up early, like a freshman at the senior dance.

Here is another opportunity for the Suns as they hit the road for five games in seven nights with four of them this week. The Bulls and Pistons are playoff teams in the Eastern Conference, but would be slotted No. 11 and No. 9 respectively if they were in the Western Conference. While the Bulls are struggling, they are feisty, like the Grizzlies which will be another stop on this trip. Without Bledsoe with for all these games it is not expected that the team will sweep through a road trip like these even with teams that are struggling. Getting back home with a 2-2 week would be acceptable while a 3-1 week would be admirable.