

## Game Preview: Phoenix Suns @ Chicago Bulls

Written by

Tuesday, 07 January 2014 09:31 -

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The Suns brave an Arctic cyclone to face a Chicago Bulls team that just traded their best offensive weapon (Luol Deng) and may be without their second leading scorer (Carlos Boozer). Can the Suns take care of business... and can the Bulls score 80?

**When:** Tuesday January 7, 2014, 6:00 PM local time (8:00 EST)

**Where:** WGN America United Center, Chicago, Illinois

**Watch/Listen:** TV: Fox Sports AZ Radio: 620 KTAR

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### Last Meeting:

This is the first meeting this season. The Chicago Bulls lead the all-time series 64-63. A Suns win would knot things up.

The teams last met in Chicago on January 12, 2013. The Suns took a 66-56 lead in the third quarter and the Bulls never pulled back within single digits. The gap reached a fairly chasmic 19 points in the fourth quarter of a 97-81 rout. Luis Scola led the Suns with 22 points and seven rebounds, while former fan favorite Michael Beasley scored 20 points in 21 minutes. Goran Dragic scored seven points on 2-8 shooting. Joakim Noah (10 points/13 rebounds) and Carlos Boozer (15 points/10 rebounds) both recorded double-doubles in the loss.

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### Team Bios:

#### Chicago Bulls: 14-18

Points per game: 91.3 (30)    Points allowed: 92.2 (2)

ORtg: 99.4 (29)    DRtg: 100.3 (2)

[Full team statistics.](#)

The Bulls come into this game winners of five of their last seven. During this stretch they have held six of those seven opponents to 91 points or less. Despite their parsimonious defense, the Bulls have struggled to a record four games below .500 due to a lack of offensive punch. The team has muddled along to shoot a meager 42.2% from the field this season and now they will be without leading scorer Luol Deng, [who was traded to the Cleveland Cavaliers last night.](#) The team is also dealing with an injury to their second leading scorer Carlos Boozer. [Boozer is questionable for tonight's game with a sore right knee which might sideline him until the Bulls next game Friday night.](#)

Injuries and offense aside, the Bulls still hold the sixth position in the standings of the mighty Eastern Conference. With their recent play they have even climbed to within 2.5 games of the third place Atlanta Hawks. Their last game was a 91-84 victory against that Hawks team as three starters recorded double-doubles in points and rebounds and Mike Dunleavy scored 20 off the bench. Boozer did not play in the game.

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### Phoenix Suns: 20-12

Points per game: 103.7 (8)    Points allowed: 100.5 (15)

ORtg: 108.1 (9)    DRtg: 104.7 (11)

[Full team statistics.](#)

The Suns have won three of four, six of eight, and 11 of 14. A scalding offense has scored 100+ points in 11 of the last 13 games and the team has won by double digits in each of their past five victories. Things have been going rather swimmingly. But (there's always a but with me) not everything is butterflies and bumblebees. The Suns two recent losses have come against a team last in the league in pace (the Memphis Grizzlies at 90.0) and a team that you may be surprised to hear is fourth in the NBA in DRtg (the Golden St. Warriors at 101.0). The Bulls are like a marriage of these two teams as they have the third lowest pace (90.8) and second best DRtg. Chicago is the peanut butter and chocolate of slow and stingy.

The Suns are dealing with their own injured player, Eric Bledsoe, [who may be unavailable for the team's five game road trip with a sprained right knee.](#)

Bledsoe will be reevaluated as early as Thursday or Friday. Leandro Barbosa may provide some unexpected relief as he was just inked to a 10 day contract... or the Suns may just want to have an oh sh&^ button handy (just in case). Phoenix won their last game, a scrimmage against the Milwaukee Bucks, 116-100 behind the pyrotechnics of Channing Frye and Gerald Green, who combined for 46 points and 10 three pointers. Ish Smith recorded eight assists (and a thunderous dunk which is now his screensaver) off the bench in Bledsoe's absence.

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### What To Watch For:

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**The Dragon** - Goran has averaged 21.3 points and 8.2 assists in the eight games that Bledsoe has missed. On the season he is posting 18.8 points and 5.9 assists. Kirk Hinrich is averaging 7.8 points and 4.7 assists per game. The Suns should win this matchup, right? The Suns have to win this matchup, right? Well, I guess the Suns did blow out the Bulls with Dragic scoring seven last season... Still, capitalizing on a lopsided mismatch couldn't hurt.

**Pace** - The Suns are 8th in the league in possessions per game (95.6) while the Bulls are 28th (90.8). The uglier this game gets the more likely the Bulls win. The Suns' goal should be to get this baby to Lawler's Law. They need to force the tempo, especially since they have bogged down in their halfcourt offense at times. It will really be a battle of teams with antipodean styles.

**Travel Plans** - The Suns were initially supposed to leave for Chicago yesterday afternoon, but a polar vortex in the midwest (that just sounds colder than a hell made of ice) prevented the team from flying. They should be boarding a plane around the same time I'm posting this (8:30 AM local time). They will still get there in plenty of time for the game, but people are creatures of habit and this deviates from regular travel plans.

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### For What it's Worth:

The Chicago Bulls have only had a player score 30+ points in a game twice this season (Boozer [injured] and Deng [traded] once each). Goran Dragic has scored 30+ points four times.

The Bulls are 0-6 this season when their opponent scores 100 points.

### The Final Word(s):

The Suns really need to get off on the right foot (or maybe the left foot if it's one of those Euro steps) on this roadie. They will potentially be road weary and fatigued on the back end of this

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five game, seven day adventure so picking up W's while they are fresh is imperative. Now that I've went to lengths to disparage the Bulls offense they'll probably drop a buck ten.

Also, screw all these damn injuries. Rose vs. Bledsoe would have been awesome.