

## Chicago plays Bulls ball in 92-87 win over the Phoenix Suns

Written by

Tuesday, 07 January 2014 22:06 -

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The Suns flight to Chicago was delayed by a polar vortex. Then the Bulls hit the Suns like a frigid twister. The final score of 92-87 in the Bulls win should give you a pretty clear picture of how the game was played.

### Recap:

First and foremost, Goran Dragic was sporting a new hairdo. Of course it's in the cover art, silly. The Bulls started the game by going at Channing Frye with Taj Gibson and Frye picked up two quick fouls, sending him to the bench early. Gibson would continue to be a catalyst for the Bulls offense the remainder of the period, scoring nine in the quarter. Despite the Bulls usual grinding pace the scoring was brisk early as both teams hit 16 points before the 6:00 mark.

Then, Great Odin's Ravens! An Alex Len sighting - though it took him just 34 seconds to pick up a foul... but then a put back follow. Stay thirsty my friend. That put back did quash a 9-2 run by the Bulls that saw them push their lead to five (23-18). The Suns went ahead moments later (24-23) on a jumper by Markieff Morris but Chicago closed the quarter strong to retake the lead. The scoring was where the Suns would like it but the feeling of the game was a little bit off.

### First Quarter Score: Bulls 27, Suns 25

Basketball is ever entertaining and the Bulls brought the mirth early in the second quarter. Nazr Mohammed made a hilarious "pass" that was intercepted by Miles Plumlee. Mohammed stared him down, then hesitated, took another dribble, hesitated again, stared him down some more

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and eventually threw a slow lob pass about a foot over Plumlee's head. Plumlee miraculously snatched it out of the air. That might have been one of the easiest steals I've ever seen.

What wasn't quite as jocular was the Bulls moving well in transition and getting easy shots. That's right, I just used the words Bulls, transition and move in the same sentence. Chicago used a 15-6 run powered by D.J. Augustin to pull ahead 38-30. Miles stayed in the mix by denying Joakim Noah's futile attempt at a driving left hand layup and then finishing on a reverse layup of his own on the other end. The Suns pulled ahead once again (42-41) after Green hit a three (one of only two for the Suns in the first half) and Ish Smith put a teardrop in off the glass, but the Bulls ended up seesawing back into the lead going into halftime as the Suns surrendered some easy looks.

### Halftime Score: Bulls 49, Suns 46

The Suns looked like they spent halftime in the parking lot. They were stuck in a circumpolar whirl. Adding to the Bulls litany of issues, Mike Dunleavy left the game early in the period after sustaining an injury in a collision with a photographer. Finally Frye snapped the cold spell with the Suns first field goal (and scoring) exactly four minutes into the quarter. Chicago continued to muck up the game and it started to appear more and more like the morass the Bulls thrived in. Ugly ball is beautiful to the Bulls.

Dragic sensed the urgency of the moment and began to put his mark on the game. After a couple of layups, one of the circus variety, Dragic hit a three to give him nine points for the quarter. It was nine of the team's 13, with less than three minutes to go in the period. Alas, the three by Goran was the only one of the period, giving the Suns just three for the game, and the Suns only managed 17 points in the quarter on 6-20 shooting. All in all a pretty damn horrible quarter of basketball.

### Third Quarter Score: Bulls 70, Suns 63

The Suns shook off a putrid third quarter by dashing out of the gate in the fourth. Nah. I'm just playin'. That didn't happen. It would have been nice, but it didn't. Instead Tony Snell nailed two straight threes, just one less than the Suns had hit all night, and the Bulls were up 13 in a heartbeat. Speaking of heartbeats, I was wondering if the Suns had one...

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The Suns still kept a tenuous grip on the game in spite of their ineptitude, and chipped away at the lead until they found themselves down by just four (84-80) after a layup high off the glass by Goran with 3:56 left. The Suns were still in it even on a night which it would be a euphemism to call "off". The teams traded a free throw each before Kirk Hinrich sunk a dagger from deep to make it 88-81 Bulls with 1:55 left. The Suns cut it to five on a shot by Smith, but squandered an opportunity to pull closer when a pass from Gerald Green slipped out of bounds. Miles Plumlee fumbled a ball underneath the rim on the following offensive possession and the Bulls made enough free throws to ice the game in the closing seconds.

**Final Score: Bulls 92, Suns 87**

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### Player of the Game:

Joakim Noah had 14 points, 16 rebounds and six assists and was the lead tormentor in Chicago's harassing style of play. Comparatively, the Suns leaders in rebounds and assists had seven and three, respectively. The fact that he shot poorly seems insignificant, since that's probably part of the secret formula.

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### Comments of the Game:

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### **Chicago's playing hard**

Considering players and coaches must feel like they just got a middle finger from their front office, bot surprised they came to play

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### **Len looked like an anteater on that rebound**

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### **The East are like button mashers in fighting games.**

They have no idea what they are doing but are somehow hard to deal with.

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### **Dragon!**

It seems like Dragic against the entire Bulls team. Someone else give him help!

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### **This is a pretty pathetic performance.**

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Go ahead and talk about travel and Bledsoe or whatever but this has been pretty damn pathetic.

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**I got home late so I've only seen the last few minutes. Who invited the 2012 squad back for an encore?**

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**Oh well, just one game**

Tomorrow this will all be a Blur.

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### **The Good:**

It was good to see Mike Dunleavy return to the game after a nasty spill. I'm just about at my stabby rage threshold for injuries this season.

As repugnant as that game was... and as noisome as the Suns looked... they still only lost by

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five and were in it right to the end. I'm trying.

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### **The Bad:**

The Suns shot a dismal 6-23 from three point range. Against a team like Chicago that's especially pernicious because the Suns can be dreadful in their halfcourt offense. Chicago also took away the Suns other arena for easy scores by limiting them to 10 points off of fastbreaks. That's the blueprint for beating the Suns.

The Bulls outrebounded Phoenix 50-41 overall and were +5 on the offensive glass. My memory may betray me, but it seemed like the Bulls were winning a lot of the 50/50 battles.

The Suns had 12 assists and 12 turnovers. Ism Smith led the team in assists with three. Dragic has to find a way to create more shots for his teammates.

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### **The Ugly:**

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The whole game? This was Bulls basketball, not Suns basketball. Chicago imposed their will and style of play. Phoenix was lured in by the siren.

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### **Final Thoughts:**

That was not the right foot the Suns were supposed to get off on to start this five game road trip. Not even Goran's new haircut can soothe the sting of this loss...