

Written by

Monday, 13 January 2014 11:02 -



A Gerald Green jumper with 4.0 to go goes down smooth, like water. The Suns had a glass of that. On the other hand a Josh Smith lay-up with 1.0 to go is like a glass of five day old milk sitting outside on a hot summer day. The Suns had a big glass of that as well...

As the [Phoenix Suns](#) (21-15) found out this past week, there are two sides to every NBA coin with no exceptions. The elation and excitement of a game-winner on the road is there is always tails, which is a devastating and lung sucking feeling of being the victim of a game-winner. This past week the Suns were culprits and casualties to game winners.

Game Recaps

@ [Chicago Bulls](#) - L (87-92) [Full Recap](#)

@ [Minnesota Timberwolves](#) - W (104-103) [Full Recap](#)

@ [Memphis Grizzlies](#) - L (99-104) [Full Recap](#)

@ [Detroit Pistons](#) - L (108-110) [Full Recap](#)

I couldn't tell or remember the last time a team had a single week where they won a game with a game winner and then lost on a game winner like the Suns did this, but I am sure it has

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happened. Probably a lot.

That does not take away the fact that the Suns ended this week 1-3, their second worst stretch this season, and might have plateaued without [Eric Bledsoe](#) in the line-up.

Before Bledsoe went down this time the team was 3-4 without him and struggled to make up for his production. [Channing Frye](#) , [Marcus Morris](#) , and [Gerald Green](#) step up noticeable in most cases, but not enough to give the Suns the type of impact they need to win games. The impact of Bledsoe is not simply measured by numbers and stats, but his ability to create offense, take pressure off [Goran Dragic](#) , and create offense in tough, time sensitive situations.

Now they are without him "indefinitely" which could be mean months or longer. They are 5-7 without him now and could play as many as 22-46 games sans Bledsoe making the playoff chase that much more difficult.

Key Stat

Closing Quarter

In this four game trip the Suns knew that closing quarter was going to be very important to their success. Even before they jumped on a plane Head Coach Jeff Hornacek discussed a trend in the teams lack of urgency late in quarters. For this trip in the 16 quarters played the Suns closed out the final five minutes of 10 by out-scoring opponents, tied one, and were out-scored in five. Not bad.

The problem was the rest of the quarter giving up big runs to the Grizzlies to allow them to comeback, digging a large hole against the Pistons, and just not being ready for the Bulls to start the trip.

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That is a improvement in the overall quarter closing category out-scoring opponents on average 44.75-41.75 in the final five minutes of games collectively.

Quote of the Week

"Those were two tough shots that Josh (Smith) made," Suns coach Jeff Hornacek said. "We let him get to the basket at the end, but he was going in the wrong direction and still knocked that down. Before that, we play great defense, they lose the ball and they manage to bat it out to him and he hits the 3. That's just a bad break for us."

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 (18-19) -- No. 13 Overall (Pick stays in Minnesota based on Protections) James Young, freshman wing Kentucky

[Washington Wizards](#) (16-19) -- No. 17 Overall (Pick goes to Phoenix based on Protections) Dario Saric, Croatian forward -- Saric has bounced around from No. 1 Overall Pick option a few years ago to fringe lottery pick. That means the talent has never left, but rather adjusted from elite to very high potential. Good point-forward for the Suns to progress.

Phoenix Suns (21-15) -- No. 22 Overall (Pick stays in Phoenix based on Protections) Zach LaVine, freshman guard UCLA -- After a flash of his overall potential against ASU this weekend the intrigue for LaVine is back to "lottery talent."

[Indiana Pacers](#) (29-7) -- No. 30 Overall (Pick goes to Phoenix based on Protections) Troy

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Williams, freshman forward Indiana -- There has been a lot said about over the past few months. In conference play (3-games) Williams has tailed off averaging 6.6 points 4 rebounds, and shooting 42.1% from the field.

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

News & Notes

- Eric Bledsoe had successful knee surgery to remove his meniscus in the right knee, could return this season
- [Leandro Barbosa](#) signed a 10-Contract on January 5th, expires on January 10th
- Both Kevin Love and [Joakim Noah](#) were traded to the Suns in fake internet reports this past week. Nice front-court

Previewing the Week Ahead:

Monday, January 13th @ [New York Knicks](#) (13-22)

Wednesday, January 15th vs. [Los Angeles Lakers](#) (14-22)

Friday, January 17th vs. [Dallas Mavericks](#) (20-16)

Sunday, January 19th vs. [Denver Nuggets](#) (18-17)

Center of the Sun: The Phoenix Suns were culprits and casualties, learning there are two sides to every N

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Despite the NBA season being a marathon, unlike the every moment importance of the NFL season sprint, it seems like every single week has importance for the Suns for different reasons. One week it is a test with tough playoff caliber teams. The next is a challenge with lottery teams that are easy to sleep on. After that is a road trip sans a star guard, which leads to this week.

The first two games come against teams that have struggled on the season as a whole, but have played well as of late (Knicks, 5-6) while the Lakers are still struggling losing 11/12 recently.

This weeks challenge is the rear view mirror.

With the Dallas Mavericks only 1.0 games back and the Nuggets 2.5 games back the heat behind them is palpable. A saving grace is that they are at home for a long stretch after this rough road trip ends in New York tonight. Having the home crowd (last in the NBA in attendance) behind them has helped the Suns this season. They are small in numbers, but loud when it counts. Right now the Suns are 12-5 at home (9-10 on the road) showing the advantage they have in the friendly confines of U.S. Airways Center.

Dropping games to the Mavericks and Nuggets effect the playoff race, the direction for the remainder of the season, and the high that was a chase for the Pacific Division, which was in full swing just two weeks ago.