Suns, Blazers still have hope; too bad Magic doesn't

oints to ponder about the 1993 NBA playoffs: The Setting Suns: Obviously most of the talk about the first weekend of the playoffs is the disappearing act of the Phoenix Suns. If the Los Angeles Lakers can win one more game from the Suns, the Western Conference playoff race will be as wide open as ever, with five teams having legitimate shots at the NBA Finals.



As for the Suns, don't dare count them out yet. They will not go down to the Lakers without a fight, and considering they swept the Lakers 5-0 in the regular season, they still have a chance to advance to the sec-

ond round. If they escape their series against LA with three straight wins, there will be no stopping them throughout the rest of the Western Conference

Personally, I would take great joy in seeing the Lakers knock off the Suns. It would be great for the league, which has taken a lot of criticism for inviting so many teams to the postseason party, if a No. 8 seed finally came through in the playoffs.

In addition, I would shed no tears if Charles Barkley,

If the Blazers did make the finals. they would ... find themselves being considered among teams like the Denver Broncos and Buffalo Bills, who cannot win the big game.

Kevin Johnson and the rest of the Suns went home without a crown. Barkley, one of the biggest whiners in the league, has rubbed off a lot on Johnson, who has gone from one of the most popular and talented point guards in the country to one of the dirtiest.

Cocky Sonics: Another team that deserves an early exit from the playoffs is the Seattle SuperSonics. In only their first season as a Western Conference power, they have become prematurely cocky. Although this group of players has never proven anything in the playoffs, they have anointed themselves as the next power in the confer-

George Karl called his team the "new kids on the block" and then messed with his chemistry by benching Shawn Kemp and Gary Payton late in the season. Karl

thinks he made a point by proving everyone must fight for a starting job, but all he succeeded in doing was causing trouble at the wrong time of the season. When most teams are rounding into playoff shape, the Sonics are preparing for an early playoff exit.

No Magic: If anyone is interested in selling an NBA team, please offer it to Magic Johnson so he can leave the microphone for a professional announcer. Johnson is usually impossible to understand, and his attempts to tell the audience what a player is saying are stupid. It is a shame to see someone who thrilled audiences for a decade with his spectacular plays annoy them now with his senseless babble.

Eastern Power: The Eastern Conference has proven this season to be the most top-heavy of the two NBA conferences. New York, Chicago and Cleveland are three of the top four teams in the league, and if Phoenix loses to the Lakers, whichever of the three teams escapes the East should have little problem disposing of their Western

It should be fun to watch these teams battle it out, starting with a probable Chicago-Cleveland series in the second round. Chicago has frustrated the Cavaliers for years in the playoffs, but Cleveland has one of their deepest teams ever and should give the Bulls a tough

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