

Now we will see what the Nashville Predators are made of.

They find themselves on the short end of a 2-0 deficit in the best-of-seven series with Phoenix.

Losing the first two games of the series wasn't easy for the Preds. They just made it look that way.

They managed to lose the first game in overtime after outplaying the Coyotes all over the stat sheet. In a must-win Game 2, the Preds left their defense at the team hotel as they allowed Phoenix to score five goals in a series in which hockey analysts predicted would be a low-scoring affair due to outstanding credentials of both teams' goalies.

Are the Preds suffering from a Red Wings hangover? Are they still living off ousting their big brothers from the playoffs?

The hole they dug for themselves is deep, leaving no margin of error for the next two games at the Big House on Broad. The only way they climb back in the series is by protecting home ice the next two games.

That would even the series and create some doubt in the minds of the Coyotes.

All along we were told the Coyotes could not hold late game leads. They must have found a Medicine Man in the desert that cured their ills because such has not been the case against the Predators.

The Predators have been chasing the Coyotes since the first puck dropped. It was especially true in Game 2, where Phoenix took advantage of a sloppy defensive effort to eventually take a two-goal lead that would hold up and put the Predators behind the 8-ball.

Preds Coach Barry Trotz has his work cut out for him before Game 3. This is a time that the normally mild-mannered, soft-spoken Trotz needs to expand his vocal chords.

He has to snap his team out of this funk they seemed to have fallen into while in the Valley of the Sun.

This team is good enough to go deeper in the playoffs. But Predators goalie Pekka Rinne can't do it all by himself. He is human and would welcome any help his teammates could extend, especially from those whose job it is to keep the puck out of the Preds zone.

Such was not the case in Game 2. The Coyotes double-parked in front of the Predators goal and Rinne came away shell-shocked by the onslaught of 39 pucks.

Five of them found the mark, more than enough to put the Preds in dire straits. Rinne has given up nine goals in two games against Phoenix. He surrendered five in five games in the Detroit series.

Strangely enough, it was some of the Predators top players who were clearly off their game in the 5-3 loss.

Shae Weber, Martin Erat, Ryan Suter and David Legwand were all out of sorts in Game 2. And, what was that move Legwand made when he gloved the puck behind the Preds net and, in a brain cramp move, tossed it off the net into the crease where Phoenix scored.

All is not lost. Yet. The men who play in Smashville know the math. They have to even the series and make it a best two-of-three.

Phoenix did it. Is Nashville capable? Sure. But not playing the way they did in Phoenix.

## **Predators need to show their mettle tonight**

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Phoenix is showing the Predators what blue-collar hockey is all about. And rubbing their noses in it.

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