



It's the Sunday before Thanksgiving, and your beloved NBA and NFL teams are both playing at a .200 clip. When it comes to things we can all be grateful for, winning sports teams are clearly not among them. Tonight, it was the Cavaliers (2-8) keeping pace with the miserable Browns, as Kyrie Irving's worst outing of the young season sent them stumbling to an 86-79 loss in Philly.

The schedule makers are not doing the young Cavs a ton of favors. Following a brutal six game road trip that sent them to both coasts, Cleveland had to follow a home loss last night to the Mavericks with an immediate turn-around game-- on the road again-- against a young, athletic 76ers squad. The Sixers (6-4) have been inconsistent out of the gate, still awaiting the debut of their big offseason acquisition Andrew Bynum—who apparently suffered a bowling-related setback in his rehab last week (can't make this stuff up). Anyway, Philadelphia came into the game ranked 29th in the league in scoring, so the fact they only managed 86 points is no surprise. Unfortunately, Cleveland's final tally fell about 20 points below their own season average, resulting in a sixth consecutive loss.

As mentioned, Irving—whose been putting up 24 points per night—just never found his stroke against the similarly flashy young point guard Jrue Holiday. In the battle of Uncle Drew vs. Uncle Jrue, it was Holiday (6-14, 14 pts, 9 assts, 4 rbs, 2 turnovers) outperforming Irving (4-14, 9 pts, 4 assts, 4 rbs, 5 turnovers), who may have been hindered by a bruised index finger suffered the night before against Dallas.

With their star struggling, the Cavs could have used a bounce-back game from Kyrie's unpredictable backcourt mate Dion Waiters. But that wasn't to be either. Neon Dion had a

horrific night in just about every category, connecting on 2-of-13 shots (1-6 from three) and tossing up bagels in both assists and rebounds.

When your starting guards shoot a combined 6-of-27, winning is going to be unlikely. And yet, there were the Cavs, hanging around as they tend to do, trailing by just a digit at the halfway point, 43-42. In the second quarter, they got surprising pick-me-ups from a trio of snake-bitten bench players, as C.J. Miles, Jeremy Pargo, and Omri Casspi each connected on deep three-pointers in the span of a few minutes. With Boobie Gibson held out with a sore elbow, Byron Scott needed these dead weights to contribute, and for the briefest of brief moments, it looked like they might actually be something better than worthless.

In the third period, it was the frontcourt muscle that kept the game interesting, as Tristan Thompson (14 pts, 13 rbs, 8 offensive boards), Anderson Varejao (14 pts, 15 rbs), Alonzo Gee (17 pts, 4 rbs), and the masked man Tyler Zeller (6 pts, 7 rbs) all got active on the glass against the undersized Sixers, giving Cleveland a lot of second chance points and keeping the margin razor thin—62-57 heading into the fourth.

The Cavs outrebounded Philadelphia 48-41 on the night, but in an all-too-familiar tune, it was the awful shooting (36% this time around) that did them in.

If not for Omri Casspi still being on the roster, C.J. Miles would clearly be the leading candidate for the 2012/13 “Omri Casspi Award for Underachievement.” During his seven years with Utah, Miles was a 42% shooter, 32% from downtown. This year, he has only seen 11-of-47 shots find the bucket (23%!!!!), and his long-range aim is a touch worse than that (5-23, 22%). You may recall I mentioned C.J. splashing a three-pointer in the second quarter tonight. Well, that was his lone field goal in yet another abysmal evening (1-for-8, 3 points). For his part, Casspi also failed to make another shot (1-for-3, 5 pts). This bench crew is KILLING the Cavaliers right now.

On the 76ers' end, the tide turned late in the fourth quarter thanks to a rather unlikely source—backup center Spencer Hawes. While Holiday, Evan Turner (game-high 19 points and 9 assists), and Jason Richardson (12 pts, 9 rbs) all did their parts, it was Hawes (14 pts, 9 rbs) connecting on all the key daggers down the stretch, including a deep three from the corner that put Philly up 82-75 with two minutes to go.

If you need a silver lining in the midst of a six-game losing streak early in another playoffs-free campaign, let's go ahead and make it Tristan Thompson. The second-year man may never be a star in this league, but he is certainly a serviceable player showing signs of improvement at age 21. He's averaging 9 points and 8 rebounds while learning the finer points of "scrappin" from the Wild Thing. In an ideal world, he'd be a real nice 6th or 7th man on this squad in the years ahead. For now, that role belongs to a rotating arrangement of players destined for European League obscurity.

Next up: the home-and-home series wraps up as the Sixers come to the Q on Wednesday. Start your Thanksgiving early by seeing if your Cavaliers can scoot ahead of the Brownies with loss #9!