

## Cavs/Knicks: The Good, The Bad, & The Summary

Written by {ga=diminishingskills}

Wednesday, November 29 2006 7:00 PM -

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Another loss to a bad team. Ack. The Cavs let the Knicks shoot 53% from the floor, and settled for jumpers all night on the offensive end, blowing an eight point lead with ten minutes left. John Hnat is here to tell you about it.



### THE SUMMARY:

The New York Knicks came into The Q tonight sporting a 5-11 record. That tells you all you need to know. Playing down yet again to the level of one of the league's lesser teams, the Cavs dropped a 101-98 contest to Isiah Thomas's bunch. Six Cavs scored in double digits; LeBron James led the way with 27 points. Indeed, for the first time this season, all five of the Cavs' starters scored in double figures ... but it wasn't enough. New York's Quentin Richardson matched LeBron's 27 points, and Eddy Curry added 24.

### WHAT I LIKED ABOUT THE GAME:

**Youthquake:** First-round pick Shannon Brown saw his most meaningful action of the season, scoring 10 points (on only 6 shots) and coming up with a couple of steals. He looked very skittish on his first shot of the game (it was a lovely 22 foot jumper; alas, he was 24 feet from the hoop at the time), but otherwise looked like he belonged. He drained a three pointer and also had a nice drive to the hoop off an Eric Snow feed (he was fouled on the play and hit the resulting free throw as well).

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**I Can't Bash Him Tonight:** Frequent target Eric Snow actually had a very good game – 12 points, 9 assists, and even 6 rebounds. He still had his usual teeth-rattling rim knockers from outside, but he also drove the ball early and often, something he has done far too seldom. When he plays like he did tonight – with a level of abandon and a willingness to make things happen, instead of making nothing but safe outlet passes – he helps the team. E-Snow, please view the tapes of this game over and over, and be that guy again and again.

**The Human Bruise:** Anderson Varejao took three more charges tonight (plus another one that went uncalled because of a simultaneous 24 second violation). The guy has got to be the team's most frequent user of ice packs after each game. (And what's with him hitting a hook shot?)

**Getting The Big Guy Involved:** The Cavs are making more of a conscious effort to get Zydrunas Ilgauskas involved on offense, particularly in the early going. Z responded with another double-double, scoring 12 points and pulling down an equal number of rebounds (and as I write this, I do believe that none of them were off his own missed shots). When the Cavs have an offensive presence down low, their offense does quite well. When they get away from that ... well, I'm getting ahead of myself. More on that in a moment.

**At Least It Wasn't The Usual Suspects:** If you absolutely have to lose, at least make it interesting, right? Don't let the usual foes beat you; mix it up a little. The last time the two teams played, Nate Robinson and Jamal Crawford almost single-handedly (or would that be double-handedly?) led the Knicks to a win. Tonight, the Cavs held those two in check; they combined for a modest 16 points. (Actually, Robinson kept himself in check as well. One memorable play: about to drive for an uncontested dunk, he took a huge, "And One"-style dribble to prepare for a major throwdown. Only problem: while that might work in the dunk competition, it's a travel and will be called every time. Oooops. Robinson had another bonehead play later, blocking a James layup attempt that had already hit the glass (i.e., automatic goaltending call), even though the shot had zero chance of going in.)

### WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE ABOUT THE GAME:

**Bricks Ahoy!:** The key reason the Cavs lost tonight (at least from an offensive perspective; it's hard to win many games when you let the opposition shoot at a 53% clip) is that they fell in love with the jump shot, especially the three pointer. Whenever they would develop some momentum, they would then be content to launch a barrage of bombs, few of which hit, and all of which shifted the game back to New York's favor.

Consider the most egregious example. The Cavs took their largest lead of the game at 82-74 with 11 minutes remaining. Here is a description of their next several shots:

- \* Sasha Pavlovic, missed three pointer (with 18 seconds remaining on the shot clock);
- \* James, missed long jumper (again, 18 seconds remaining on the shot clock);
- \* James, slam dunk;
- \* Varejao, missed jumper;
- \* Ilgauskas, missed jumper;
- \* James, missed jumper;
- \* James, missed jumper;
- \* Pavlovic, missed three pointer;
- \* Donyell Marshall, missed jumper.

Over this span of six minutes, the Knicks erased the Cavs' lead. My cat also developed sore ribs, though that may just be coincidental.

**He's Barely Scoring A Point Per Minute, He Must Suck:** As mentioned previously, Shannon Brown scored 10 points. He did it in only 12 minutes. He also provided pesky defense. Coach Mike Brown alertly decided to sit Shannon for the rest of the game. Yes, it's nice to keep giving minutes to the other players in the rotation, but maybe, just maybe, a little more room can be made for a guy scoring almost as many points as minutes played?

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**Hey Donyell, It's Okay To Cross That Arced Blue Line:** Marshall was especially brickilicious from three point range, going 1 of 4 (including a bad miss on what would have been the game-tying shot in the waning seconds). Marshall is falling back into the disturbing trend of treating the three point line like Kryptonite; he's refusing to cross it. He is most effective when (as we saw earlier in the season) he uses the threat of his three point shot to set up drives to the hoop and closer jumpers. He seems to have forgotten that part of his game. It's time for him to remember it.

**Hey LeBron, It's Okay To Stick To Your Man:** Whether by defensive design or by his own free-lancing, James often left his man to float towards the post whenever one of New York's big men had the ball down low. Unfortunately, LeBron was usually guarding Quentin Richardson ... and Richardson made him pay. Q (not to be confused with The Q) hit 10 of 15 shots, including 5 of 7 from long distance.

**Wasted Opportunities:** The Cavs now sit at 9-6 at the end of November. That's a .600 winning percentage, and the record still has them among the top teams in the Eastern Conference.

Problem is, that's not good enough.

The Scheduling Gods smiled upon the Cavs early in the season; the November schedule was filled with an assortment of the NBA's cupcakes, and most of those games were on the Cavs' home floor. (To be fair, the Cavs are 7-2 at home, even after tonight's loss.) Frankly, the Cavs should be into double digit wins right now. They have let too many chances slip away from them ... and the games in November count just as much as the ones in April when determining who gets into the playoffs and who gets home court advantage.

The road games and the tougher opponents are going to start appearing on the schedule now. Just look at the schedule through Christmas – the games include a home and away set with Eastern Conference leader Orlando, some tough away games at Houston, New Orleans/Oklahoma City and New Jersey, and home games against Indiana, Seattle, and Detroit. The Cavs would well find themselves in April saying “if only...” about their November

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### **WHAT LIES AHEAD:**

Uh-oh, another sub-.500 opponent. The Cavs travel to Atlanta to take on the Hawks this Friday night. They'll then travel to Houston and face the 10-4 Rockets the next night. In this crazy season, expect the team to pull a rock in the ATL, then rebound with a strong effort against Yao and McGrady. (Then again, I suggested the team would lose to Philly last Saturday, and they beat the Sixers handily. In other words, don't listen to my predictions.)