

Andy Who? Cavs Ground Hawks

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}
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The Cavaliers got some bad news early on Wednesday when it was revealed that Anderson Varejao's heretofore mysterious knee injury [is in fact a split muscle](#) ,



one that will require surgery and keep him out of the lineup for at least 6-8 weeks.

They also played a game Wednesday night. Usually that's also bad news. But not this time—sparked by a red-hot shooting night from Kyrie Irving, a crisp overall offensive effort and uncharacteristically tight defense, Cleveland punched out the slumping Atlanta Hawks in surprisingly decisive fashion, 99-83. The win snapped a six-game losing streak at Quicken Loans Arena and lifted the Cavaliers to a rootin'-tootin' 9-28 on the season. It was also their second win of the season over the Hawks, who dropped their fourth straight.

Leading the way, as usual, was Kyrie Irving. The super sophomore was on fire all night, dropping in 33 points on 11-of-15 from the field, 5-of-6 from downtown and 6-of-6 from the line. Included in the assault were two buzzer-beating three-pointers to end quarters. 18 of those points came in the third period, as Cleveland turned a 51-51 tie into an insurmountable 14-point

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bulge going into the final twelve minutes.

The youngster got some help along the way. Three other Cavaliers tallied in double-figures. Alonzo Gee dropped in four first-quarter three-pointers on the way to 15 points to go with 6 rebounds and 3 assists, while Tristan Thompson and Tyler Zeller each put up double-double lines with 11 points and 14 rebounds and 11 points and 12 rebounds, respectively. It was a total team effort offensively, as Cleveland shot 45.7 percent, hit 12-of-23 from downtown and put together a neatly efficient 25-assist, 10-turnover performance.

(As someone who never misses a chance to point out Tristan Thompson's shortcomings, I have to admit he's looked halfway decent lately. He isn't trying to dunk everything, isn't getting his shot blocked every two seconds; he's playing with some confidence and finding ways to get the ball into the basket with skill instead of fortune. Maybe he isn't the poor man's Stromile Swift after all.)

The Cavaliers also showed some mental fortitude. After seeing a nine-point halftime lead dissolve into a tie in the first three minutes of the second half, Cleveland jumped right back into the lead for good on a clutch three-pointer by Dion Waiters (9 points, all in the second half.) When Atlanta cut a 16-point deficit to nine early in the fourth period, the Cavaliers kept their cool and responded with a 15-6 run to make it 96-78 with 2:37 left.

Taking leads hasn't been a problem for the Cavaliers; maintaining them has. They had no such problems Wednesday night against an Atlanta team that was fresh off a loss in Minnesota the night before. The Hawks looked sluggish and disjointed all night, playing minimal defense and lazily chucking up outside shots against Cleveland's normally generous defense. It was, to be blunt, a piss-poor effort against a bad team that should have been rocked by the news that its most inspirational player will be on the shelf until March.

So for the Cavaliers it was a bad-news, good-news sort of day. Then again, injuries to Anderson Varejao are expected; victories are not.

Next: Friday night at 9:00 when the Cavaliers begin a five-game western swing in Denver against the Nuggets.