

One Last Night in Sac-Town: Cavs Fall to Kings

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}

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The Cavaliers played perhaps their final game in Sacramento on Tuesday night, and they were generous guests. The Kings, who defeated the Cavaliers in the Q



two weeks ago, finished the season sweep with a high-powered 124-118 victory as Cleveland yielded a season high in points. The loss was the third in a row for the Cavaliers, who dropped to 9-31 on the season. Sacramento snapped a four-game losing streak and improved to 14-24.

The Kings, who have teetered on the brink of relocation for years, [look to be on their way to Seattle for the 2013-14 season](#)

(where they will presumably revive the old SuperSonics name and colors.) Even before the team's fortunes rose in the late '90s Sacramento was a leading NBA town, where crowds jammed the Arco Arena on a nightly basis to cheer on a team that more often than not couldn't get out of its own way.

Those days are long gone. But for at least one night the Kings rang the echoes of the good old days of the millennium, when screaming, cowbell-ringing crowds supported one of the most exciting teams in basketball. Sacramento hit on 51.2 percent from the field in reaching its second-highest point total of the season, setting the tone with a 69-point first half. They took the lead for good with 1:39 left in the first period, led by as many as 13 late in the first half, and although the Cavaliers mounted several second-half rallies, getting as close as three in the final period, the Kings never lost the lead or essential control of the contest.

Sacramento's talented-but-temperamental DeMarcus Cousins led the way to victory with 26 points on 7-of-14 shooting and 12-of-12 from the line to go with 14 points and 6 assists. Cousins

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also displayed his surly side, picking up a technical foul and a flagrant foul for twice poleaxing Tyler Zeller in a minute-and-a-half span midway through the third quarter. Tyreke Evans had himself a perfect shooting night, hitting 6-of-6 from the field, 2-of-2 from downtown and 4-of-4 from the line on the way to a 18-point performance.

The Kings also got a big night from their bench. The Sacramento reserves combined for 54 points, with most of the damage done by three men: Marcus Thornton (20 points, 8-of-14 shooting), Jimmer Fredette (16 points, 5-of-8, 3-of-4 from downtown) and the hustling rookie Thomas Robinson, who crashed and banged for 12 points and 7 rebounds.

Fortunately for the Cavaliers, they weren't the only team on the floor that couldn't guard anyone. Sacramento is one of the worst defensive teams in the Association and they looked it Monday. Despite playing on the second night of a back-to-back Cleveland shot a solid 47.8 percent, hit 8-of-16 from three-point range and scored a season-high 118 points.

Unfortunately, not enough of those points came courtesy of Kyrie Irving, who had one of his worst nights of the season. Bothered by Sacramento's aggressive double-teaming, Kyrie scored 15 points, hit just 6-of-19 from the field and committed six turnovers, including a couple of big miscues that helped abort a Cleveland rally in the final two minutes.

Picking up the slack in a big way was Dion Waiters, who had the best night of his young career. Taking dead aim on the defensively challenged Fredette, Dion slashed and shot his way to a season-high 33 on 12-of-18 from the field, 3-of-3 from downtown and 6-of-8 from the line to go with a team-high 5 assists. He avoided the chucking trap he's fallen into often, driving to the basket early and easing into the perimeter game later. It's too bad Dion can't do that every night. Then again, he isn't "guarded" by Jimmer Fredette every night.

Five other Cavaliers scored in double-figures, led by 17 apiece from Tristan Thompson (who also yanked down 15 rebounds) and C.J. Miles. Tyler Zeller withstood the physical pounding he took from Cousins to score 13, and former King Omri Casspi did well in his return to Sac-Town with 10 points on 4-of-5 shooting off the bench. Cleveland did plenty enough to win offensively. But as they've done so often this season, they couldn't hold the line defensively. For the third time in five games the Cavaliers gave up more than 110 points.

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So it went in what may be the last trip ever to Sacramento. It's a sad story. Certainly Seattle should have NBA basketball- they never should have lost the Sonics in the first place. But I can think of a handful of franchises- New Orleans, Charlotte, Memphis and the Clippers among others- that ought to be relocated ahead of the Kings. Sacramento was once a great NBA city and would be again with a team worthy of its support. The Kings are the only game in that town. And when they leave, that's it. Nobody will move in to replace them.

Sad story, indeed. Even more sad, perhaps, than the fact that we aren't quite at the midpoint of the season and the Cavaliers are already 22 games under .500

Next: Wednesday night at 10:00 when the Cavaliers visit the Rose Garden to take on the red-hot Portland Trail Blazers.