

For Cavaliers fans concerned that the recent run of quality basketball might damage the team's Draft Lottery position,



Tuesday night's 108-95 loss to the Warriors at the Q should serve as a bit of reassurance. Golden State was playing for the second night in a row and for the fourth time in five nights and was without four players, including leading scorer Stephen Curry and top bench players Carl Landry and rookie Harrison Barnes.

Yet the Warriors still gunned down the Cavaliers with relative ease, showing why, at 28-17, they're in line for their first playoff appearance since their Cinderella run in 2007. They shot the lights out at the Q, connecting on 53.6 percent of their attempts and nailing 11-of-16 from beyond the arc, including makes on their first nine attempts. Cleveland showed why, at 13-33, they're in line to gather a healthy number of ping pong balls for the Draft Lottery in May.

Chief gunslinger for G-State was Klay Thompson. The second-year swingman from Washington State was absolutely blistering from long range, scoring a career-high 32 points and hitting 6-of-8 from downtown, including makes on his first six attempts. All too many of the shots were uncontested and the Cavaliers didn't start running him off the three-point line until late in the

third quarter, by which time he already had 30 points and the Warriors had a commanding lead.

Thompson had plenty of help. Jarrett Jack stepped in for the injured Curry and was superb, with 26 points on 11-of-18 shooting (3-of-4 from downtown) to go with 12 of Golden State's 31 assists. Big David Lee chipped in with 20 points on 8-of-12 shooting along with 13 rebounds and 8 assists. Golden State's depleted bench contributed 25 points, 12 rebounds, 9 assists and 3 blocked shots. Although the scoring was a bit imbalanced, with three players combining for 78 points, this was still an impressive overall team effort from Mark Jackson's road-weary bunch.

Cleveland's effort was equally unimpressive. The Cavaliers shot 42.9 percent, hit 4-of-18 from three-point range and played right into Golden State's hands by continually settling for long jumpers against a zone defense that left the middle open all night. Only Dion Waiters (18 points on 6-of-13 shooting with 7 assists) and Marreese Speights (12 points on 4-of-8 shooting) attacked the middle of the Warrior zone. Tristan Thompson had a nice outing with 18 points and 11 rebounds and Tyler Zeller hit 6-of-9 on the way to 15 points, but neither provided much of a lift defensively.

Defensively was where the Cavaliers really fell down. The Warriors barely had to break a sweat in getting the shots they wanted. No one even tried to defend Klay Thompson until after he'd virtually shot Cleveland out of the game. Jarrett Jack routinely broke down the defense, got into the lane and either dropped in his own shot or found a wide-open teammate. Give credit to Golden State for playing damned good offense. But give the Cavaliers blame for making things awfully easy for them.

For a while it seemed as if Cleveland might make a game of it anyway. After falling behind by nine in the first quarter they forged a 23-23 tie at the end of the period and trailed by only two with seven minutes remaining in the first half. But a 12-2 Golden State run gave the Warriors a 46-34 lead with 3:18 left, and they cruised from there. Trailing by double digits for most of the second half, Cleveland pulled to within eight with 3:26 left in the fourth quarter. But a three-pointer and a floater in the lane by Jack made it 102-89 and put it away for good.

This was the night in which Kyrie Irving, on the heels of the best stretch of individual basketball we've seen since the days of LeBron James, proved he was human. Weakened by illness, the reigning Eastern Conference Player of the Week shot 5-of-17 from the field and was completely outplayed by his point-guard counterpart Jarrett Jack. Frustrated by the Golden State defense, Irving continually drove blindly into a lane packed with Warriors and either threw up bricks or

simply had his shots blocked. A tough night for Kyrie usually means a tough night for the Cavaliers, and Tuesday was no exception.

**Next:** Friday night at 7:30 when the Cavaliers head to Auburn Hills to take on the Detroit Pistons.