



The new era of Cavaliers basketball kicked off on Tuesday night against the Milwaukee Bucks and there were many positive signs. The Cavaliers got off to a big lead and never relented it. The Bucks maintained a 4-2 lead early in the first quarter which was the last time they were topping the Cavs in the scoreboard.

If there was any doubt that Mike Brown did indeed walk through that door, the Cavs held the Bucks to 37.7% shooting for the game. There was miscommunication and more open threes than Brown would probably care for, but the Cavs defense was swarming from the get-go. Luckily for the Cavs the Bucks were not able to take advantage of the open looks from beyond the three point arc.

Anthony Bennett's NBA debut left a lot to be desired, but it is way too early to panic. Bennett had surgery on his shoulder and did not participate in any basketball activity this summer. He visibly looked out of shape and struggled to get any elevation on his shots. Bennett had his shot blocked 3 times and only made 2-12 shots. Bennett was able to get to the line 8 times but only made 3 of the free throws. Again, Bennett was playing in the NBA for the first time in his life and is admittedly out of shape. We need to see what he looks like after his nerves calm down a bit and after he sheds a few pounds. NBA players do not cement their legacy after their first preseason game.

On the Bucks side of things, rookie forward Giannis Antetokounmpo was impressive. He led

Milwaukee with a +/- of +13 which is good given how much the Bucks trailed by for most of the game. In addition, he was drafted with the understanding that he is a work in progress. Antekounmpo was raw, but not to the extent that I expected.

Mike Brown made it his goal to play all 17 players that were healthy and that he did. The first three quarters of the game felt more like a real NBA matchup. Things got a little crazy in the 4th quarter when Brown emptied his bench and played DeSagana Diop, Jermaine Taylor, Elliot Williams, Michael Lee and Matthew Dellavedova. At one point during the 4th quarter, Khris Middleton goaltended a pass which was intended as an alley-oop.

Tristan Thompson looked great in 25 minutes of play. Thompson ended with 17 points, 8 rebounds, 3 assists, 1 blocked shot and he made 3-4 of his right-handed free throws.. It is painfully evident that Mike Brown is going to be a big fan of Thompson's. Anderson Varejao made his NBA debut after a very scary bout with a life-threatening blood clot that cost him all but 25 games of the previous season. Varejao only scored 4 points, but he pulled down 10 rebounds and was playing like the "Wild Thing" that endeared him to Cavs fans many years ago.

It is easy to get carried away after the first preseason game, but there are probably good reasons to be excited about this team. Bad defense will not be tolerated from Mike Brown. The young players have matured more and are playing better. Tristan Thompson and Dion Waiters played with a higher level of comfort than they did last year at this time. The Cavs got the blowout win and they didn't even have to rely too heavily on Kyrie Irving. The Bucks probably aren't going to be very good, but it's refreshing that the Cavs are finally not always the lesser opponent.

The Cavs continue their preseason on Friday night when they travel to Orlando to take on the Magic. Tipoff is at 7.