

Cavs/Hornets - The Good, The Bad, & The Summary

Written by {ga=diminishingskills}
Tuesday, February 27 2007 7:00 PM -

Kinda like the last girl left at the bar at closing time, last night's game wasn't pretty ... but it got the job done. The Cavs rallied late, behind an inspired LeBron James (who apparently has been reading Bill Simmons' columns) to knock off the New Orleans/Oklahoma City Hornets by a score of 97-89. The Cavs now will embark on a brutal stretch of their schedule, which starts tomorrow night in Dallas against the Mavericks. John Hnat checks in to opine on all of this.



THE SUMMARY:

Not pretty, but it got the job done. No, I'm not talking about a girl I used to date. That description fits the Cavs' 97-89 victory over the New Orleans/Oklahoma City Hornets. The victory (which pushed the Cavs' season record to 33-24, leaving them four games behind the division-leading Pistons) was most welcome for the Cavs, who had lost their past two games and are facing a rugged stretch of the schedule (we'll get to that later).

That said, they sure didn't make it easy on themselves. They surged to a 72-57 lead with two and a half minutes remaining in the third quarter, then watched the Hornets rally to tie the game at 83 apiece with just over four minutes remaining. Larry Hughes then picked a good time to make his only three-pointer of the game, and LeBron James had eight points down the stretch (including consecutive three-pointers from the top of the arc) to put the game away.

James led all scorers yet again with 35 points, and Daniel Gibson backed him up with a dozen (including three bombs from long distance). David West kept the Hornets in the game with his 25 points and 10 rebounds, and Tyson Chandler also notched a double-double with 14 and 10. Chris Paul, who figured to have a big game because (a) he's exactly the type of waterbug point guard who gives the Cavs fits and (b) he's really good, spent much of the night in foul trouble and finished with only seven points and five assists.

WHAT I LIKED ABOUT THE GAME:

Take That, Ankle-Biters: As fellow staff writer Gary Benz [pointed out yesterday](#), LeBron has taken a fair amount of criticism from people who, frankly, don't know what the hell they are talking about. LeBron has not only put up numbers that are superior to those by other players at the same age; he's done it without the benefit of a supporting cast, which separates him from Bird (who had one of the best front lines in NBA history), Magic (who had Jabbar and Worthy), Jordan (who got Scottie Pippen as a running mate in his second season), and the rest.

Last night's game ought to silence the critics for a minute or two. 35 points, 14-of-22 shooting from the field, five rebounds, eight assists, a couple of steals, and two daggers in the last minute that snuffed whatever embers of hope the Hornets still had burning. Can we stop looking for flaws in his game and simply enjoy the ride? Remember: *apres LeBron, le deluge.*

Hey, There Is A Better Offense Than "LeBron And Four Guys Waiting For A Bus": A funny thing happens when you move around on offense. Teammates find you with passes, and you get that many more easy shots. The Cavs had 23 assists en route to shooting 49% (40-of-82) for the game. Both of those numbers were well above any other game recently. They did have their moments of lapsing into the dribble-dribble-dribble-launch offense, but those times were much more sparse than in the previous two games (both losses).

Near And Dear To Coach Brown's Heart: As mentioned, Paul had a terrible game for the Hornets. Part of the reason was that the Cavs hounded him on defense. Gibson was in Paul's grill much of the time; Eric Snow came off the bench to provide some more D; even Hughes and LeBron took turns at stopping the Hornets' star point guard. Paul was the Sword of Damocles: Cavs fans watching the game (well, me) kept worrying if he was going to suddenly turn it on and take the game for NO/OC. But it never happened, and that's why we are talking about a Cavs' victory this morning.

Worth The Price Of Admission: 0.8 seconds left in the third quarter. The ball finds itself in Anderson Varejao's hands. Andy is twenty feet away from the hoop at the time. He launches the buzzer-beater. *Swish!* God, I love it when big guys hit jumpers that they have no business making. (*cue up mental image of Z hitting the three-pointer against Phoenix two seasons ago to send the game to overtime*)

)

WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE ABOUT THE GAME:

Name That Player!: I never met a shot that I didn't like. The earlier in the shot clock, the better! Unfortunately, I don't make too many of them. My last five games have looked like this:

- Last night against New Orleans: 5-of-16 from the field, 0-of-1 from the line;
- Sunday against Miami: 6-of-17 field, 0-of-1 free throws;
- Thursday against Chicago: 9-of-26 field, 2-of-4 FT;
- Last Wednesday at Toronto: 6-of-18 field, 2-of-4 FT;
- Two weeks ago at the Lakers: 5-of-18 field, 3-of-10 line.

For those of you who like basic math, that's a total of 31-of-95 (33%) from the field and 7-of-20 (35%) from the not-so-free throw line.

Who am I? (And more importantly, why am I still getting 40-plus minutes per game? Even if Damon Jones is still looking for his jump shot and Shannon Brown has been a human turnover?)

)

You're Six-Ten And 250 Pounds; Get In There And Mix It Up!: For the third straight game, Drew Gooden did not attempt a single free throw. He hasn't had more than five free throw attempts in a game in more than a month, and hasn't been in double digits since two games back in November (games in which he scored more than 20 points, mind you). Drew doesn't spend much time near the hoop these days, and the numbers are bearing it out. The real shame is that Gooden is one of the better free-throw shooters on the team (and not just damning by faint praise; he really *is* decent at it), so he's likely to cash out any freebies he gets.

Cavs/Hornets - The Good, The Bad, & The Summary

Written by {ga=diminishingskills}
Tuesday, February 27 2007 7:00 PM -

You Other Guys Are Also Six-Ten And 250 Pounds; Get In There And Mix It Up!: The Hornets mounted their fourth quarter comeback when they went to a very small lineup, featuring three point guards (Paul, Jannero Pargo, and Bobby Jackson) all on the floor simultaneously. The Cavs went with a large lineup, with Z, Varejao, and LeBron on the front line, and Hughes and Sasha Pavlovic (back in action after missing a couple of games with “flu-like symptoms”) in the backcourt. Sounds like a prime opportunity to pound the ball inside and/or drive it to the hoop, no?

Not to the Cavs, it didn't. Z did not touch the ball once in the post. I don't believe any of the Cavs did, now that I think of it. Instead, we saw missed jumper (Pavlovic) after missed jumper (Hughes) after missed jumper (Gibson, who entered the game after Sasha tweaked his ankle). Fortunately for the Cavs, they found their outside shooting in time to salvage the win. It should not have come to that.

DISCUSSION QUESTION (Department of Hairs Being Split): Why didn't they just call it “the flu” on the injury report? Is Dwyane Wade currently suffering from “separated shoulder-like symptoms”? Did Joe Theismann (hey, [Youtube has everything!](#)) suffer from “shattered leg-like symptoms”?

On The Plus Side, It Makes The Column That Much Longer: George Carlin used to joke about married women who hyphenate their last names. You know the type; “Hi, I'm Linda Blendershott-Kowalski”. *Hey*
lady, would you pick a fucking name, please?

My wife briefly flirted with the idea of hyphenating her name when we got married. Fortunately, she came to her senses and just kept her own last name. I don't blame her; my last name looks like somebody's hands got caught in a typewriter. Such is life when you have Eastern European roots in your family tree. Every time I have found myself in the cemetery where my departed family members are buried, I've amused myself by trying to find the headstone with the most consecutive consonants. I think the record is six. I would like to see just one Hawaiian buried there – a last name of *Halealea'akai* on the headstone might be enough to get the consonant-vowel ratio back into balance. (Although I sure hope we never see a *Halealea'akai-Hruschak*
combination.)

Anyway ... *would you pick a fucking city, please?* is my feeling about the New Orleans/Oklahoma City/Springfield/Pleasantville/Los Angeles Hornets of Anaheim. I understand that New Orleans had its ass kicked by Katrina in a way that no other major American city has ever suffered as a result of a natural disaster. (You could argue for the San Francisco earthquake/fires of 1906, but none of us were alive then, so it doesn't count.) I realize that of the billions of dollars promised to the region for rebuilding, approximately ten bucks of that amount has actually found its way into the hands of those who need it. I understand that the city does not need any more civic losses heaped onto its already slumped

Cavs/Hornets - The Good, The Bad, & The Summary

Written by {ga=diminishingskills}
Tuesday, February 27 2007 7:00 PM -

shoulders.

But dammit, if they don't play home games in your city, then your name doesn't deserve to be on the uniform. So until such time as the team moves back to New Orleans (allegedly next season), the team will be the Oklahoma City Hornets in this corner of the Internet.

WHAT LIES AHEAD:

Normally, I root for the Cavs to win. This Thursday, I'm merely hoping for them to maintain dignity. The Cavs travel to Dallas to take on the Mavericks, who currently sport a 48-9 record, including a 27-3 mark at home. After Dallas, Cleveland will then play Toronto, Houston, and Detroit, so it's time for the Wine and Gold to bring their "A" game.