

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

Written by {ga=diminishingskills}
Sunday, March 25 2007 7:00 PM -

If you want to be one of the elite teams in the league, you can't let .500 teams come into your house and beat you by double digits. By that definition, the Cavs have a ways to go before they will be an elite team. They lost to the Denver Nuggets, 105-93, last night at Quicken Loans Arena. LeBron James and Zydrunas Ilgauskas led the Cavs with 18 points apiece; Larry Hughes also scored 17. Carmelo Anthony led Denver with 27 points, and Allen Iverson added 18 points and 12 assists. John Hnat recaps last night's game.



THE SUMMARY:

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The game was rather close most of the way. As has been their recent trend, the Cavs got out of the gate quickly, taking a 9-4 lead early in the first quarter. That was about the largest lead that either team had until the beginning of the fourth quarter, when a J.R. Smith dunk capped a 10-2 run to give the Nuggets an 83-75 lead.

Give the Cavs credit: they quickly erased that lead. Hughes and Z each hit a pair of free throws, then Hughes scored two more on a slashing drive to the basket, and then Z tied the game at 83 with a layup of his own.

Give the Nuggets credit: they outscored the Cavs 22-10 the rest of the way. J.R. Smith scored eight of his ten points in the quarter, the Cavs forgot to put the ball in the hoop (an Ilgauskas jumper with 3:41 remaining would be Cleveland's last points of the evening), and the

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game was over.

The loss dropped Cleveland to 42-28 on the season, and they are now just one and a half games ahead of Chicago in the race for the second slot in the Eastern Conference. (First place is now 2.5 games away, as the Pistons won yesterday.)

WHAT I LIKED ABOUT THE GAME:

Maybe That LeBron Guy Really Is Holding Them Back: As you'll recall from earlier this season, the Cavs have done very well in games where LeBron is unavailable. Last night, LeBron went to the bench late in the third quarter after picking up his fourth foul. He remained on the bench for the first five minutes of the fourth quarter. During that time, the Cavs cut Denver's six-point lead to a single point (and tied the game at one juncture). As before, I'm not saying that the Cavs should kick LBJ to the curb; I'm simply praising them for playing well when their star is not on the floor.

The Big Guns: The Cavs' other front-court starters, Z and Gooden, showed up to play last night. Both players were on the friendly side of 50% shooting from the floor (although Gooden needs to realize that HE CANNOT HIT 20 FOOT JUMPERS), both were active on the boards (especially at the offensive end), and both even notched some assists. (One of Gooden's helpers came on a slick pass to Ilgauskas under the hoop, leading to an easy basket.)

That leads to the question that I am sure some of you are asking, which is "how many stolen tickets were used at last night's game?". I can report that the answer is "not as many as for Disney Princesses On Ice". That show, which came to The Q a couple of months ago (and to which I was obligated to take my children, or else the Disney Police would have arrested me and sent me to some prison where fairy prison guards would have forced me to make Cinderella dolls for the rest of my life), proved to be [the downfall for a local burglary ring](#). Turns out that among other things, the burglars stole tickets to the Disney show. And that the original owners reported the tickets stolen. And that the police checked the arena to see who was in those seats; and those people led police to the suspects.

If there is a God, then the judge in that trial will dress like Tinkerbell

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That story brings to mind a similar story from my own experience. Some years ago, a buddy of mine (his name is Joe McIntyre; I will call him "Joseph McIntyre" to protect his identity) and I traveled to Jacobs Field to see a key Indians-Red Sox matchup. Those were the days when the Indians sold out ten zillion games in a row, and tickets were harder to find than they are today. Joseph found an Independent Seat Transfer Specialist (sounds better than "scalper", no?) and bought two seats. (When he opened his mouth, the scalp ... er, ISTS revealed that he had as many as four of his teeth remaining. Perhaps that should have tipped us off that something was *not right*.)

We entered the stadium, made our way to our section and row ... and found people already sitting in our seats. When we protested that they were "our" seats, the current residents pointed out that their tickets had been stolen, and that they had to get replacement tickets, and perhaps

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they should call over an usher in case we had to resolve the situation? (Note: in real time, the conversation had many more “F”s in it.) Fortunately, there were plenty of other seats available (some thunderstorms in the area drove away a lot of the crowd), so we saw the game without any problems. But if we had been there to see Princess Jasmine, we may have met a much darker fate.

Ten minutes ago, I had a point to make about Drew Gooden. I've completely forgotten what it was.

The Other Foot Has A Shoe On It: Yes, it is very small to find joy in somebody else's troubles. That being said, I have to admit that it was fun to see another team struggle from the free throw line for a change. The Nuggets made only 14 of their 25 free throw attempts. (In fact, Denver actually shot better from the field (59.6%) than from the line (56.0%), which is something that you see, well, almost never.) Conversely, Cleveland made 80% of their free throws, which is pretty good generally speaking, and an absolutely Mark Price-level performance for them.

He's Only The World's Second-Richest Man; He Can't Afford The Real Shirt: I really like Warren Buffett, and I really, really like how he was sitting at courtside last night in what appeared to be a knock-off “Witness” shirt. (

Maybe the ISTS who sold me the Indians tickets sold him the shirt?

) It did not have the ever-present logo (we do not refer to that company by name here; we call them That Company With The Swoosh), and it looked like it had been washed about a thousand times. Somebody get that man a Cherry Coke!

WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE ABOUT THE GAME:

“Defense” Is A Four Letter Word: As mentioned previously, Denver shot 59.6% from the field last night. That's insane. It suggests that they were having an unusually good night ... but it also suggests that the Cavs did not play much defense. The most telling statistic: Denver had 24 assists (on 41 field goals made).

I'm willing to believe that it was just One Of Those Nights, one where the other team makes almost all of its open shots. Some times, you can do your job, but the other guy does his job, too. And it's a given that Iverson is a very difficult defensive assignment – he is terrific at driving and finding open teammates. But last night should not make any of us feel warm and/or fuzzy about the Cavs' defense. Quick point guards are and have been very difficult for the Cavs; last night was just another brick in that particular wall.

I'll Pass It To You, Even Though You Are A Tiny Speck In The Distance: Not sure if they keep records for this, but last night the Cavs had to set a record for “most long cross-court passes stolen”. LeBron and Z were particularly guilty of trying to throw lo-o-o-o-ng passes from one side of the court to the other, only to have a Denver defender intercept the ball like a defensive back.

Ira Creep: When did Ira Newble do anything to justify more than ten minutes of playing time?

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The only defensible explanation is that Coach Mike Brown was looking for someone, *anyone*

, to stop Denver from scoring at will. The more disturbing explanation is that we're seeing "Ira Creep". Ira had a couple of nice games in very limited duty a couple of weeks ago ... so now we are seeing him more and more. He is creeping into the rotation based on his reputation as a Defensive Stopper, his status as a Veteran...

...and his ridiculous contract. Hey, we'd all like to have a souped-up DeLorean that we can use to travel back to July 22, 2003, and prevent then-GM Jim Paxson from signing Newble. (If I had an extra 1.21 jiggawatts, I'd go back to the day when Paxson was hired.) And we can't blame Newble for taking the deal. I would have. You would have. Anybody else would have. But what we (in the form of Coach Brown) can do is not compound the problem by trying to justify the investment. It's a sunk cost at this point.

While it is not directly related to the increase in Ira's playing time, I will once again ask the question: when exactly did Shannon Brown piss in Coach Brown's Cheerios? Shannon had some very good games (recall the games against Dallas and Toronto earlier this month), but he has once again been chained to the bench.

It's The End Of The World As We Know It, And Even Worse, We Don't Have HDTV: Remember the movie

Independence Day

, in which the aliens who are about to attack Earth inadvertently disrupt television signals with their transmissions? (Of course, only Sooper Genius Cable Guy Jeff Goldblum realizes that the disruption means that we're about to be blasted into the Stone Age, but that's another story.) Based on ESPN's HDTV signals recently (both last night and last week in the Mavericks game), I'm thinking that huge spaceships will be appearing over our major cities any minute. The signal was unwatchable – lots of distortion and digital "junk" cluttering the screen. C'mon, ESPN, you're a multi-billion dollar company; fork out a few bucks to replace the ball of yarn with a real transmission cable.

WHAT LIES AHEAD:

The Cavs embark on a five game road trip tomorrow night in Indiana, where they will meet the struggling Pacers. They'll play the Knicks and the Bulls later in the week, then conclude the trip early next week with games at Minnesota and Boston.