

Have the playoffs even started yet? It almost seems as if they haven't. The Cavs were paired in the opening round with a depleted Wizards team that had no chance of challenging us and the series offered up little to no drama or memorable moments. In my latest ... I look back at the Wizards series, ahead to the next round, and at LeBron's supporting cast. It's time to get excited Cavs fans.



With their ho-hum 4-0 sweep of the injury riddled Washington Wizards now in the rear view mirror; it's time to buckle up for what has the potential to be a helluva ride if you're a Cavaliers fan.

Let's be honest, the opening round was underwhelming. The Cavs were matched against a team that had no chance of winning the series, a team circling the drain after losing two of their three best players to season ending injuries. I was at games one and two, and fans had to be coerced out of their seats and on to their feet, and didn't look happy doing it. There were large patches of empty seats in D.C. for games three and four as the Wizard faithful were resigned to defeat.

It almost feels as if the playoffs haven't started yet. Joe Fan has yet to emotionally invest. The [fan participation in message forums](#) and call in shows has been subdued. It feels like Cavs fans are saving themselves. And it's not like this a fan base that has been spoiled with repeated playoff appearances. This was the Cavs first playoff series sweep ever. And just the second time in franchise history that the team has won a playoff series in back to back seasons.

While the Cavs played well in sweeping the Wizards, they certainly weren't tested. Washington hardly resembled a playoff team without Gilbert Arenas and Caron Butler, and the Cavs controlled each of the four contests, with not one of them really in question in the final minutes. I think the Wizards' Antawn Jamison put it best when he said, "I don't want to say they were looking past us. But I think they did just enough to get the job done."

Dating back to the regular season, the Cavs have now won eight straight games as they await the winner of the still ongoing Raptors-Nets series. But it's all been against lackluster opposition. And the team will have about a week off before the start of their second round series. This Cavaliers team has had a penchant all season for turning it on and off, often times going into "coast mode" for weeks on end. Will they be able to elevate their play, on command, off a long break, and versus a much more formidable foe than anyone they've played in the last month?

While the above is somewhat concerning to this Cavs fan, the play of LeBron's supporting cast certainly hasn't been as of late. The trio of Larry Hughes, Drew Gooden, and Zydrunas Ilgauskas performed magnificently against Washington. Let's not forget, all three of these guys were largely ineffective for all of last year's post-season. Hughes was battling a finger injury and the loss of his kid brother. Gooden and Ilgauskas were riding the pine in the fourth quarter of every game in favor of Donyell Marshall and Anderson Varejao.

Here's a quick look at the statistics of LeBron's supporting cast versus the Wizards as compared to last post-season:

Larry Hughes

'07 Playoffs – 42 mpg, 19.0 ppg, 6.8 rpg, 2.8 apg, 44% FG

'06 Playoffs – 37 mpg, 11.1 ppg, 3.0 rpg, 4.0 apg, 32% FG

Drew Gooden

'07 Playoffs – 33 mpg, 14.5 ppg, 10.0 rpg, 2.8 apg, 61% FG

'06 Playoffs – 21 mpg, 8.2 ppg, 7.5 rpg, 0.6 apg, 53% FG

Zydrunas Ilgauskas

'07 Playoffs – 38 mpg, 19.0 ppg, 11.0 rpg, 0.8 apg, 60% FG

'06 Playoffs – 27 mpg, 10.4 ppg, 6.3 rpg, 0.8 apg, 45% FG

If the Cavs harbor any illusions of making it to the NBA Finals, they need to continue to get solid production from this trio. Sasha Pavlovic is in a funk. He and his backup Daniel Gibson lack playoff experience. And Eric Snow and Donyell Marshall are a year older, and saw their play drop off this season.

The chances appear strong that the Cavs next opponent will be the New Jersey Nets. Despite dropping game five last night up in Canada, the Nets will have two more chances to close out the series with a win. Hughes will be called on to check Jason Kidd, who has terrorized the Cavs in the past. And Gooden and Ilgauskas will continue to be looked to for offense against an overmatched Nets front line missing Nenad Krstic, and dependant on guys like Mikey Moore, Josh Boone, and Jason Collins.

This is where things start to really get fun for the Cavs and their fans. The Cavs will be solid favorites to advance to the Eastern Conference Finals, regardless of the foe. They fared well during the regular season against both New Jersey and Toronto, winning five of the seven games against the two teams. And they hold home court advantage, with games one, two, five, and potentially seven here in Cleveland ... where the Cavs are 32-11 on the season.

This is the most realistic opportunity for a Cleveland team to reach the championship game in their sport in almost a decade. I know I've got six more weeks of Cavs basketball in me. Hopefully the team does as well.