

While the Cavs got a favorable draw by securing the #2 seed, by no means are the Nets a feeble second round opponent. This is a Jersey team that has made it to the Eastern Semis in five of the last six years. And a team playing their best ball of the season. In his series preview, Erik Cassano gives us five reasons to be confident and five reasons to be wary about this series. And makes his prediction on how things will shake out.



Go figure. The Cavaliers entered the first round and did exactly what they were supposed to do: Sweep a wounded Wizards team. Not bad for a team that is predictably unpredictable.

We fans can argue the finer points of whether the sweep should have been more dominant, and there were definitely points where the Cavs kept jabbing when they should have gone for the haymaker. But the Cavs were dominant in the fourth quarter, when it counted. That's how good teams are supposed to win.

Now, the Cavs move on to the Nets, unquestionably the less-desirable of the two possible second-round opponents. We would have much rather seen the young Raptors wobble into the second round. Instead, we get a playoff-tough Nets team that has advanced to the second round for the fifth time in six seasons. They're also playing their best basketball of the season.

The Cavs have the Nets and their regular season-ending win over the Bulls to thank for the fact that they didn't have to run the Miami-Detroit gauntlet. But this is the other sharp end of the sword. The Nets are a smart, veteran underdog.

### **Five reasons to be confident:**

1. Those are some big boys.

The Cavs have the size advantage at almost every position. The only place where it gets dicey is matching Sasha Pavlovic against Richard Jefferson or Vince Carter. But even with that in mind, the Cavs should have another series' worth of nice, fat rebounding margins.

2. Pounding the paint.

With the size advantage in mind, Cleveland should try at every turn to dump the ball inside to Zydrunas Ilgauskas and Drew Gooden. If their shots are falling, the Nets will follow the Wizards as a team with no solution for the Cavs' inside game.

### 3. Tenacious D.

Jason Kidd had a field day against the Raptors, averaging a triple-double for the series – the second time he's done that in his career. The good news is the tandem of Larry Hughes and Eric Snow is far better defensively than anything Toronto threw at him. If they can clamp down on Kidd at the point, it will hinder the Nets' offense in a big way.

### 4. Amped LeBron = Good for Cavs.

A series against the Raptors would have been another "Taking care of business" series like against Washington. In other words, the "LeBron Letdown" early warning sirens would have been shrieking all over Northeast Ohio. But a Nets series? Facing off against Carter and Kidd? Jay-Z and Beyonce in the stands? Road games a freeway ride from Manhattan? I think LeBron's adrenaline glands will be working just fine for this one.

### 5. Game 7 is at home.

Yeah, it might be a cheap throw-in as a final reason. But maybe not. This has all the makings of a close series, and having the potential seventh game in your house is the ultimate trump card.

## Five reasons to be wary:

### 1. That pesky offense.

Not the Cavs' offense. The Nets. Golden State got all the pub for bombing their way into the second round from three-point land, but the Nets are stroking it from long range as well, including a red-hot 60 percent in the Game 6 clincher against Toronto. New Jersey already has the offensive upper hand headed into the series. If their talented wing players can make the majority of their three-pointers, the Cavs are going to be sent searching for answers, and fast.

### 2. The Kidd.

This series might very well be decided at the point. If Hughes and Snow can't contain Kidd's passing, the Cavs won't be able to contain New Jersey's offense.

### 3. Vinsanity.

For some reason, Carter seems to save his best for the Cavs. Cleveland can ill-afford to let Carter go off on 35-point or 40-point eruptions.

4. The experience factor.

It's something you can't underestimate. While this isn't the same Nets team that made it to back-to-back NBA Finals in 2002 and '03, Kidd and Jefferson were the cornerstones of those teams and they are both playing very well right now.

5. Beware Mikki.

Mikki Moore is the Nets' energy player, capable of sneaking in for some big plays when the other team is too busy concentrating on Kidd, Jefferson and Carter. The Cavs can't overlook him.

The X-factor: Hughes vs. Kidd

Who outplays whom in the starting point guard matchup, particularly defensively, will likely determine which team moves on.

**Postseason Fear Factor: 6**

**Prediction: Cavs in seven**