

## **Cavs Put On Defensive Clinic In Big Win Over Division Rival**

Cavaliers coach Mike Brown has been preaching defense all season to the team and the media, this his first as a head coach. And while it may have taken thirty nine games to come, last night's performance was the type of outing Brown was brought in to deliver.

The Cavaliers put on a defensive spectacle last night, which resulted in a thirty point rout of the division rival Pacers. The Cavs were especially dominant on the defensive end in the second half, where they held the Pacers to just twenty eight points, several of which came in garbage time in the games final minutes. The Cavs got out to a great start, highlighted by a beautiful no look pass by LeBron James to Drew Gooden, and then a scintillating James windmill dunk on a breakaway that had The Q rocking early.

However, they led just 42-38 at the half, and were torched for seventeen points by Pacers swingman Stephen Jackson, who didn't shut his trap the entire game. Jackson was constantly berating the officials with complaints, and also trying his hardest to get under the skin of James, running his mouth so much he made Damon Jones look like a mime in comparison.

The Cavs emerged from the locker room and played what was likely their best half of basketball all season, outscoring the Pacers 27-6 over the first ten minutes of the third quarter, effectively ending the game in the process. They held the Pacers to just 11-38 shooting in that second half, and 32.5% for the game as a whole. Jackson was held scoreless in the second half by a clearly inspired James, who turned in the best defensive performance of his career in the opinion of this writer. Jermaine O'Neal was also held scoreless in that second half, and was defended well all game by Drew Gooden and Zydrunas Ilgauskas. O'Neal was held to just seven points on 3-12 shooting before leaving the game with a groin injury with nine minutes remaining.

The game was marred by eight technical fouls, and was incredibly physical throughout, always teetering on the edge of a fracas. Things nearly came to blows twice, first between Jackson and Sasha Pavlovic, and then again between Gooden and Pacers center Jeff Foster.

James ended the night with 23 points, 7 rebounds, and 8 assists ... but his night was clearly defined by the lockdown defensive performance on Jackson in that third quarter. James once again donned spandex tights under his uniform, saying after the game that they helped keep his sore knee warm.

The game also featured a strong performance by Cavaliers swingman Sasha Pavlovic, who started his third game in a row replacing Larry Hughes at shooting guard. Pavlovic scored 16 points on 6-9 shooting from the floor and 4-5 shooting from the foul line. He also appeared more active without the ball offensively as well as on the defensive end. The Cavs big man trio of Ilgauskas, Gooden, and Donyell Marshall also played very well ... combining for 38 points and 26 rebounds, and did an excellent job defensively on the Pacers big men,

The win moved the Cavs to 22-17, and tightened their hold on the #4 seed in the East, and second place in the Central division. The Cavs boarded a plane after last night's game and traveled to Atlanta, where they will take on the Hawks tonight before heading to Indianapolis for another game with the Pacers on Friday.