

## Preview: Cavs/Celtics

Written by {ga=samamico}

Monday, November 26 2007 7:00 PM -

---

I'm not unlike most Cavs fans. I've had tonight's game between the Cavaliers and the Celtics circled on my calendar since the beginning of the season. Boston has the NBA's best record at 11-1 and is impaling foes by an average of over 13 points a night. Garnett, Allen, and Pierce versus The LeBrons. Last year's Eastern champs versus this year's favorites. It's Cavs/Celtics, tonight from The Q. Sam Amico previews this evening's heavily anticipated contest.



It's the tale of last year's Eastern Conference champions against this year's early favorites, Cleveland's LeBron James against Boston's Big Three.

Or more accurately, James' Big Three -- as in points, rebounds and assists -- against Boston's Kevin Garnett, Paul Pierce and Ray Allen.

There truly are two storylines entering this game: James and his four triple-doubles, and the Celtics and the fact they are looking a lot like a team of destiny. We'll know more by the end of the night, as the Cavaliers and Celtics meet for the first time this season in Cleveland (7 p.m.).

Let's start with James.

He's been doing his best Oscar Robertson impersonation by racking up huge

## Preview: Cavs/Celtics

Written by {ga=samamico}

Monday, November 26 2007 7:00 PM -

---

numbers nearly every game. He is averaging a Michael Jordan-like 31.3 points, 8.3 rebounds, and 8.1 assists per night. Not surprisingly, the Cavs have won four of their last five, and are finally showing signs of consistency. That's not easy to do when you consider the issues they've experienced in the first month -- from Anderson Varejao's holdout to injuries to key players such as Larry Hughes, Eric Snow, and Donyell Marshall.

The result has been a lack of the type of staunch defense that lifted them into the Finals last season. Instead, thanks to James, the Cavs have turned into a strong offensive club. Only once in the past five games have they scored less than 98 points (97 against Minnesota). In each of their previous two, they've scored 111.

The Cavs are especially on a roll from 3-point range, drilling 26 of 54 in their past two games.

"I just think that we're stepping into it with a lot of confidence," said Cavs guard Daniel Gibson, who is shooting a league-best 53.9 percent on 3-pointers. "LeBron is doing a great job of finding us when we're open."

Then there's the Celtics.

They may not have much of a bench, or a real starting point guard (although second-year man Rajon Rondo hasn't been too bad, either), but it's hard to argue with the results. They've lost just once in 12 games, to Orlando, by a basket.

They've won eight games by at least 10 points and four by 20 or more.

As for them being a team of destiny, or all the talk of the lucky Leprechaun being

## Preview: Cavs/Celtics

Written by {ga=samamico}

Monday, November 26 2007 7:00 PM -

---

back on their side ... well, just take their latest win as an example.

The other night in Charlotte, they trailed 95-93 with 4.7 seconds left, and the Bobcats HAD THE BALL. But when they tried to inbound it on Boston's side of the court, Celtics guard Eddie House batted it away. Pierce recovered it and, while stumbling between Bobcat defenders, spotted Allen planted outside of the 3-point arc. Somehow, Pierce got Allen the ball. Somehow, Allen (who was 3-of-14 from the floor) buried the shot at the buzzer.

The verdict: Celtics 96, Bobcats 95 and whole lot of people saying WOW about a team that finished with just 24 wins last season.

But that was before the summer makeover in which they traded for Garnett and Allen, reviving Pierce's spirits and the franchise's hopes.

Today, the Celtics are the only team in the league with less than two losses, and the only one with at least three players averaging 19 points. Pierce leads the way at 22.2 per game, followed by Garnett's 20.9 (and 12.7 rebounds), followed by Allen's 19.6.

James is likely to go head-to-head with Pierce, while Sasha Pavlovic will try to keep Allen occupied, and Drew Gooden will square off with Garnett. If there's one advantage the Cavs have, it's at center, where veteran Zydrunas Ilgauskas is having an All-Star-type season. He will be matched up with Boston youngster Kendrick Perkins, who has lively legs and a big heart.

But for the Cavs, it all comes down to James -- and he knows that as well as anyone.

## Preview: Cavs/Celtics

Written by {ga=samamico}

Monday, November 26 2007 7:00 PM -

---

&quot;We're playing some good basketball, and I'm the catalyst of that,&quot; he said after the Cavs' win over Indiana on Sunday.

That must continue if the Cavs are to show the Celtics who's really the king.

Sam Amico can be reached at [samico@hoopsworld.com](mailto:samico@hoopsworld.com) .