

## Cavs/Raptors - The Good, The Bad, & The Summary

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Well, the Cavs kept LeBron and his sprained finger in street clothes for last night's game against the Raptors. Encouragingly, Toronto did the same with Chris Bosh. But alas, it was not meant to be for the wine and gold last night as they were scorched for 50 points by Andrea Bargnani and Carlos Freaking Delfino in a 91-82 loss. Boobie had a big game for the good guys, but it was not enough. John gives us the good, the bad, and the summary from last night's affair.



### THE SUMMARY:

When I grow up, I want to be one of those pro sports public relations guys who provide statistics and trivia to the media. It would be cool to discover that Joe Shlabotnik is challenging the record for number of 12-hit shutouts, no?

It is in that vein that I want to see the following list: teams that had two - not one, two - players establish new career highs in points scored in the same game. (We would need some kind of filter that would skim out the early-season games when two rookies make their debuts and each score their first career baskets - let's make it for players who have been in the Association for at least one season.) I would guess that those teams have a winning percentage of approximately one thousand.

That winning percentage was only helped last night by the Toronto Raptors. Backed by new career highs by Andrea Bargnani (26 points) and Carlos Delfino (24) (*twenty-four? by Carlos Freaking Delfino??*), the Raptors cruised to a 91-82 win over the Cavs last night at the Air Canada Centre. The game was just as notable for the players on the sidelines (*uber*

-stars LeBron James and Chris Bosh sat the game out, James with his sprained finger, and Bosh with a strained groin muscle; based on those descriptions, I'd say LeBron got the better end of the deal).

The Cavs kept the game close in the first half: they held a 28-27 lead at the end of the first quarter (their last lead of the game, as luck would have it), and trailed by just five at the half thanks to a buzzer-beating three-pointer by Damon Jones. The Cavs were still within six (63-57) about halfway through the third quarter, but the Raptors then went on a 22-8 run that effectively ended the game. Thanks to five points each from Jones and Sasha Pavlovic, the Cavs cut the lead to ten, but they were unable to get much closer.

Daniel Gibson nearly set a career high of his own, leading the Cavs with 24 points (just two shy of the 26 he scored against Milwaukee last week; of course, his all-time career high is the 31 points he posted in the deciding game against Detroit last June).

### **WHAT I LIKED ABOUT THE GAME:**

**New Career Highs For Everybody!:** The Cavs were able to join in the new career high fun too, as Gooden set a career best

with five steals. Granted, it would have been more helpful if he would have set a new career best with 50 points, but greed will get us nowhere.

Gooden was one of the reasons the game was close, as he collected 15 points and 14 boards to go with those five thefts. I'll give the [INSERT SPONSOR HERE] Play Of The Game to him for his rebound/two handed slam of a Gibson miss in the first quarter. (If you did not see the play, just picture one of those dunks that he throws down after the whistle has blown, and then imagine that it happened during actual game time.) Later in the quarter, he showed his developing pump-fake, as he drew the Raptors' Rasho Nesterovic into the air, drawing a foul, and then sinking the continuation jumper to set up a three-point play.

Side note: am I the only one who wishes that Drew would talk to his hand more?

**Shoot, Boobie, Shoot!:** Gibson shot early and (somewhat) often, hitting seven of his 15 shots en route to his 24 points. It wasn't a superlative performance (although he did hit four-of-seven from three point range and also drilled all six of the free throws he attempted), but it was a very nice "hey, LeBron's not here, so one of us has to score"-level effort. Gibson is continuing to show that he can drive the ball past

opposing point guards and into the tall timber, drawing fouls. He has also learned that not every outside shot has to be a three-pointer, and that the pump-fake, followed by a dribble into an 18-footer, is a pretty valuable shot in its own right.

If it were my team, I'd fine Gibson every time he took fewer than 20 shots in a game. That kid should be shooting the ball more often than any player on the team not named LeBron.

**Pass, Boobie, Pass!:** Now that I look at the boxscore again, the *new career records* (note: I am trying to channel the *ne w league record* voice of the pitching coach in [Bull Durham](#)

) are just jumping off the page! Gibson set a career high with seven assists. Alas, he was the only Cavs who ... wait, I'm getting ahead of myself here. We need to switch gears...

## **WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE ABOUT THE GAME:**

**Don't Pass, Rest Of The Team, Don't Pass!:** Gibson's seven assists were more than half of the team total - the Cavs as a whole racked up only 13 assists. Without LeBron, the team had little offensive flow. Remember the

LeBron And Four Guys Waiting For A Bus offensive set, the only one in Coach Mike Brown's playbook last season? Imagine the Cavs running that play, repeatedly, without LeBron; and then you will have an accurate mental image of the Cavalier offense last night.

**Stop Me If I've Said This Before:** Let's look at the plus-minus numbers for some of our favorite players, shall we?

- \* Devin Brown: -24
- \* Ira Newble: -13
- \* Eric Snow: -10

These guys are *killing* the Cavs. Being without Anderson Varejao, Larry Hughes, and Donyell Marshall has not been much of a loss in its own right (well, not having Varejao hurts; the other two are Not Very Good at this stage of their careers). Why are they really missed? Because without them, the guys who should be the tenth through twelfth players on the roster - the Human Victory Cigars, as we like to call them - become the first players

off the bench.

**They Didn't Shoot Well:** The Cavs shot a brickilicious 39.0% (30-of-77) from the field. Ouch.

**And They Jogged Down The Court Afterward:** The Cavs are one of the best rebounding teams in the Association; the Raptors are close to the bottom in that category. And while Cleveland was without solid rebounder James, Toronto was without even more solid rebounder Bosh. The Cavs should have owned the boards, right?

Not so fast. The Raptors outrebounded the Cavs, 44-39, and the actual margin seemed much greater. They effectively took Cavs' big man Zydrunas Ilgauskas out of the game, limiting him to only six boards. They also effectively took Cavs' reserve power forward (no, that was not a misprint) Newble out of the game, although Ira being only six-foot-seven may have helped a bit.

**And So Much For THAT Ongoing Theme:** [Last time](#), I wrote about my disappointment at having the "who will be the last Cavalier to score?" contest over so early, as only Snow remained 0-for-the-season after the Pistons debacle. I suggested that we could at least follow Snow in his quest to score those elusive first points, a quest that I figured would take more than ... well, more than one game. With a pair of free throws, Snow now stands at two points (and a lofty 0.3 per-game average) for the season. Every Cavalier has now scored at somepoint during the season. Boy, is the universe ever conspiring against me in my quest to write three pages about relatively meaningless games in November.

*( Yes, I know that no game is truly meaningless; that every one of the 82 games counts equally, that a win now is one less win they will need to get later, blah blah blah. It's quite clear that the Cavs will win somewhere around 45 games, make it into the playoffs, and then hope that they can ride LeBron the way they rode him last spring. )*

**NOT THAT YOU ASKED, BUT...**

**Disappointment From All Sides:** After the game, I flipped over to one of the two shows I watch

regularly:

*Man*

*vs. Wild*

on Discovery. In case you've never seen it, the show features a man named Bear Grylls (

*really!*

), who gets dropped into various armpits of the earth

... wait, he hasn't been to Heinz Field as far as I

know, so let's back out of that sentence. He gets

dropped into the most challenging settings the

planet can offer - the Sahara desert, an Alaskan

wilderness, a remote mountain range, whatever.

Bear (I've watched the show enough to feel like I am

on a first-name basis with him) is the ultimate

survivor. He has eaten poisonous scorpions; he

has jumped into freezing rivers; he's thrown himself

into raging waters; he has even drunk his own piss

to stave off dehydration while in the desert. He's

the ultimate man's man, a throwback to our

cave-dwelling forbears, one of the rare examples of

a man who can truly survive on his own.

So it pained me beyond words when he revealed that *he loves pina coladas*. Bear, say it ain't so. That's like an Old West cowboy busting into a saloon, spurs jingling as he stomps his way to a stool, and then banging his fist on the bar as he orders ... *a Diet Pepsi*.

(Yes, I know that Diet Pepsi did not exist in the Old West; I am not going to let a little anachronism get in my way.) I am now expecting Bear to be "roughing it" with a pedicure and a facial during next week's show.

## **WHAT LIES AHEAD:**

It doesn't get any easier, as the Cavs head to Boston for a matinee against the Celtics this Sunday. With the Celtics having demolished the Knicks and Heat the last two nights ... and them seeking some revenge for the Cavs' victory this past Tuesday ... and with LeBron still a question mark with his injured finger ... well, I would not recommend allowing small

children to watch this one, as they'll just have nightmares for weeks afterward.