

Celtics Win UGLY Affair Over Depleted Cavs

Written by {ga=samamico}

Saturday, December 01 2007 7:00 PM -

I think Celtics coach Doc Rivers said it best: "There'll be no video on this game, hopefully. It was not a piece of art." The Cavs were missing LeBron James and shot 32.9% from the field. The Celtics didn't fare much better, making just 37% of their shots. Sam Amico recaps the contest, and also takes some time out to give his thoughts on the Danny Ferry era thus far as General Manager of the Cavaliers.



First of all, can we please end all the talk about the Cavalier's all-time record without LeBron James?

All that we should care about is this year -- and this year, the Cavs are 0-2 minus James (or 0-and-two-and-a-half if you include the Detroit debacle).

And more important than the actual record is the truth we saw in Sunday's 80-70 loss at Boston. The truth is, if the Cavs didn't have James, they would be just plain bad. If they didn't have James, you have to wonder how many fans would be calling for general manager Danny Ferry's job. And if they did, you couldn't really blame them.

That may sound harsh, but think about it. What has Ferry really done for this team? OK, he deserves credit for stealing Daniel Gibson in the second round.

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Then again, there's really no telling if Gibson will turn into a legitimate starter. He's a starter for this team right now, but right now, that doesn't really mean a whole lot. Not when the guards he's playing in front of are named Eric Snow and Devin Brown.

Or think about this: Gibson isn't nearly as much of a steal when you consider how Ferry botched the first-round pick two summers ago. That's when he selected Shannon Brown, a human turnover waiting to happen. Brown rarely plays and will be lucky to survive the season. If so, you can be sure he won't be back next year.

This isn't intended to rip on Ferry. It's much too early to do that. Besides, the Cavs DID reach the Finals for the first time in franchise history last season. So far, Ferry's record speaks for itself.

But while everyone was out making moves (read: Boston, Orlando, and even Detroit), Ferry did nothing. Granted, some things are out of his control -- things like Larry Hughes' brittle body, James sprained finger, and Anderson Varejao's insanity. Nor is Ferry entirely to blame for the fact the Cavs can't seem to shoot straight when James isn't on the floor (33 percent from the field against Boston).

You also have to agree with how Ferry has handled the Varejao situation, standing firm on the idea of not overpaying an everyday role player who can easily be replaced.

At the same time, Ferry must find someone besides James who can either a) set up shots for teammates, or b). set up and MAKE shots for himself. And Ferry needs to do it soon.

As we've seen in the recent non-LeBron tumble, even the Cavs' best players -- Zydrunas Ilgauskas, Drew Gooden -- aren't the type of guys who can create off the dribble. Instead, they have to wait to get the ball, usually from James.

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That's the ugly part of it (for now, anyway). The good part is Ferry is supposedly trying to do something, ANYTHING to fix this problem of what Plain Dealer columnist Terry Pluto has described as being "All LeBron, All the Time."

This will be Ferry's greatest challenge as GM and he needs to get started.

As for Sunday's actual game, Celtics coach Doc Rivers said it best: "There'll be no video on this game, hopefully. It was not a piece of art."

That statement was actually a credit to Cavs coach Mike Brown, who once again goaded his undermanned club to bend its knees, shuffle its feet and defend. Of course, that's not gonna do you much good when you're going against a team with the league's best record on its own home floor.

Especially when you're the Cavs, who are more of a one-man show than any team in pro basketball today. And that one man was on the bench in street clothes.

"When King James goes down, you feel like you have to carry the team by yourself offensively," Gooden said. "I think we are starting to get better at doing that, but then again that is not our identity. Our identity is having (James) make plays for us."

Forever and ever amen.

Ilgaukas led the Cavs with a team-high 12 points (gasp) and 13 rebounds. Gooden added 10 points and 11 boards, and Sasha Pavlovic had 11 points.

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The Cavs were a miserable 6-of-23 on 3-pointers -- as Gibson, Pavlovic and Damon Jones combined to make just 3 of 17.

Hopefully, the King will return in time for Tuesday's home game against New Jersey, because the Cavs' princes aren't about to get it done. Regardless of their overall (read: meaningless) record without him.