

## Cavs Drop Fourth Straight Without King James

Written by {ga=samamico}

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Ouch. This one was ugly. LeBron sat out again, and the Cavs were powerless to stop a dominant Richard Jefferson, who torched the wine and gold for 36 points in a 100-79 throttling. And if things weren't bad enough Cavs fans, Larry Hughes has started practicing and could be back missing dozens of line drive ill-advised "jump shots" as soon as next week. Sam recaps the Cavaliers fourth straight loss without their franchise player.



The New Jersey Nets don't have LeBron James, but right now, neither do the Cavaliers.

And right now, the poor Cavs need him more. They found that out for the third straight game, as their 100-79 loss to the visiting Nets on Tuesday amounted to little more than 48 minutes of garbage time.

Trying to watch the Cavs without James is like replacing Paul McCartney on center stage with a guy who bangs on a garbage can and belches. Or as one media member said of Tuesday's loss, "It should have been complimentary Visine night."

It's just been that bad for the Cavs since last week, when James sprained his index finger in a loss to Detroit. He's been a "game time decision" in

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every game since -- and the decision has yet to favor the Cavs. They haven't won since defeating conference-leading Boston in an overtime thriller eight days ago. In fact, they haven't really even been in a game since James went down.

In case all of that's not bad enough, James is expected to miss tonight's contest in Washington. Not because the Cavs have said anything, but because it doesn't seem like it would make much sense for James to sit last night and play tonight.

How bad was Tuesday's game? Bad enough that the Cavs allowed Nets forward Richard Jefferson to do his best Michael Jordan impersonation, scoring 36 points on 11-of-18 shooting from the field.

The offense wasn't much better, as the Cavs failed to move without the ball or find the open man, resulting in 35 percent shooting (28 of 81) as a team. They had just 16 assists, compared to 12 ugly turnovers. Meanwhile, the Nets finished with 26 and 10, respectively.

Perhaps the worst stat of them all was the fact center Zydrunas Ilgauskas took just six shots (making one). With James in the lineup, Ilgauskas has looked like the East's best center not named Dwight Howard. But without James, Big Z suddenly turned into the Big Forgotten, as it seems no one has a firm grasp of how to make an entry pass to the low post.

On and on it goes for the King-less Cavs, who look like they might beat a few good NBA D-League teams when at their best. When at their worst, well, it's just plain hard on the eyes -- not to mention their overall records, as the Cavs fell to 9-10.

BROWN 'HURT'

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Cavs coach Mike Brown walked briskly out of the locker room after the game in a white t-shirt and told reporters he wasn't necessarily disappointed with the final score.

"Yes, we want to win every game, but this one wasn't about winning and losing," Brown said. "Tonight, I felt we gave up as a team and it really hurts me."

The Cavs trailed just 47-43 at halftime, but allowed New Jersey to outscore them 27-16 in the third quarter.

"When it gets tough, I want to see us fight, and we didn't do that," Brown said. "I didn't see any toughness or any grit. I don't care if we score 20 points in a game. I want us to fight somebody back."

Brown wasn't finished.

"I thought we as a team felt sorry for ourselves," he said. "I know for a fact we've won without (James) before. Obviously, we want him in there every game, but if he's not, we have to at least fight. That's what we've done in the past and we really need to do it now."

## HUGHES TO PRACTICE

Larry Hughes is expected to practice Friday after missing the last few weeks with a deep bone bruise in his leg. Hughes was the Cavs' second-leading scorer last season, but has missed most of this year with various injuries.

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In six games, Hughes is averaging 6.8 points and shooting a miserable 29 percent from the field. No one word on how long it will be before he suits up again, although he could be ready as soon as the end of next week.