

"Right now, we're not a very good team"

Written by {ga=samamico}

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Those were the words of LeBron James last night after the Cavs 92-86 home loss to a Philadelphia 76ers team that will be lucky to win 35 games this season. And it's hard to argue with him. The wine and gold have lost eight of their last nine, are now 10-14 on the season, and look nothing like the basketball team that barnstormed to an Eastern Conference championship last season behind tough defense and efficient execution late in games. Sam recaps last night's loss.



At this rate, Cavaliers coach Mike Brown might want to consider bringing LeBron James back off the bench.

Not that James did anything wrong in the Cavs' 92-86 clunker of a loss to Philadelphia at Quicken Loans Arena on Saturday night. It's just that the Cavs hardly resemble anything close to the team that reached the Finals last season. So what gives?

"Right now, we're not a very good team," James said, and a hearty amen could be heard throughout the city.

It's not just that the Cavs lost at home to a team that isn't expected to make the playoffs, or that they've lost two straight after getting James and Anderson Varejao back. It's that everyone but James (and occasionally Zydrunas Ilgauskas and Drew Gooden) seems to have forgotten how to put the ball in the basket

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when it means the most -- namely, at the end of games. And Ilgauskas and Gooden aren't getting the ball enough in the fourth quarter for us to find out.

The Cavs have now won just one of their past nine games. Granted, James missed six of those with a sprained finger, but this goes beyond his injury. This is suddenly a team that doesn't understand the meaning of ball movement or moving without the ball -- or that when all else fails, taking the ball to the basket. In that regard, even the King is guilty, having shot just one free throw in the defeat.

There's also the matter of the backcourt. Daniel Gibson was out after taking an inadvertent shoulder to the jaw from New Jersey's Jason Kidd on Friday, leaving Eric Snow as the starting point guard. Snow actually shot better than the other guards, but when you consider he only took two shots (and made one), that ain't saying a whole lot. The rest -- Larry Hughes, Shannon Brown, Sasha Pavlovic and Damon Jones -- were a combined 7-of-31 from the floor.

While James said he'll never come off the bench again (as he did against Indiana), Hughes has said he's content with that role. And based on his past two games, it might not be a bad idea to keep him there. He made just one field goal in nine tries against the 76ers, and went 6 of 17 from the floor against the Nets. He scored nine points in each game after his 36-point eruption in the win over the Pacers.

Not to pick on Hughes, but at this point in his career, it shouldn't be too much for the Cavs to expect a little consistency. Especially from a guy who's moaned and groaned (and had former teammate Gilbert Arenas blog) about not wanting to play the point. Want to be a full-time shooting guard, Larry? Great. Starting SHOOTING the basketball. Actually, shooting it hasn't been the problem with Hughes. It's what has been happening when he releases the ball that's become a concern.

Prior to the Pacers game, Hughes was averaging around seven points per game

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on 29 percent shooting. Take out the Pacers game and guess what? Hughes is averaging around seven points per game on 29 percent shooting.

Again, Hughes is not alone. The entire offense is stagnant, as the Cavs have gone back to their nasty habit of standing and watching and waiting for James as he pounds the ball into oblivion. But when no one makes a move, what else can LeBron possibly be expected to do? Or how about this cold, dark truth: The Cavs made just two field goals in the game's final eight minutes.

James and Gooden each finished with 21 points, with Gooden deserving extra credit for hustling and acting like he really, really wanted to win (not to mention hitting 8 of 11 shots). Gooden also finished with 10 rebounds, and Ilgauskas had 12 points and nine boards.

Just like last season, the point guard spot is a serious concern. James spent too much time bringing the ball up the floor, and on top of everything else, he shouldn't be asked to do that too.

Meanwhile, former Cavs point guard Andre Miller scored 20 points for the Sixers and showed what it's like to have someone with an understanding of how to direct an offense. And man, would he look good in a Cavs uniform or what?

The Cavs should try to find out before it gets too late.