

## Cavs Rally Late To Knock Off Depleted Kings

Written by {ga=samamico}

Thursday, January 03 2008 7:00 PM -

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Missing three of their best players (Ron Artest, Kevin Martin, Mike Bibby), the Sacramento Kings made their one trip to Cleveland last night, showing real grit fighting all the way down to the final buzzer in a 97-93 loss to the Cavs. It wasn't always pretty for the Cavs, but the team has now won four of five games, and at 16-17, is improbably just one game out of the #4 seed in the Eastern Conference.



The Cavaliers weren't great but they weren't awful, either. And being just good was good enough against today's Sacramento Kings.

Especially when the Kings were without their three best players (Ron Artest, Mike Bibby, and Kevin Martin) and the Cavs were at home.

Add it up and it's easy to understand how the Cavs came away with a 97-93 win Friday night at Quicken Loans Arena to move within a game of .500 (16-17).

Granted, most teams coming off an Eastern Conference championship wouldn't celebrate being average (or a game below), but the Cavs aren't your typical defending conference champs. They've battled injuries and illness and a even little ineptitude in this season of inconsistency.

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Their up-and-down ways were on full display Friday, as they trailed most of the game before turning it on in the fourth quarter -- which they opened with an 18-2 run. Still, they led just 94-93 with 47 seconds left.

But Cavs reserve guard Daniel Gibson emerged as the hero, by burying a 3-pointer with 12 seconds left to provide the final margin. Of course, these wouldn't be the Cavs if they didn't sweat it out. Before Gibson's clutch jumper, LeBron James had missed a trey, which on most nights would give the opponent a final chance. Instead, Anderson Varejao tracked down the rebound to give the Cavs new life.

While Gibson saved the day, it was again James who gave his team a chance. He finished with 24 points and 10 assists, lifting the Cavs out of the basketball doldrums they seemed to be stuck in for the first three quarters.

Other than Gibson (13 points, including 10 in the fourth), the Cavs received a fine contribution off the bench from guard Devin Brown (also 13 points). Overall, the Cavs' bench outscored the Kings' by a 37-17 count -- and 23-0 in the fourth. While impressive, it should be noted that the Kings came to Cleveland looking like a minor-league team.

"A couple of times I looked down (the bench) and didn't have anybody to play," said Kings coach Reggie Theus.

That may be true, but the Kings' no-names outplayed the Cavs for most of the game. Then came the fourth quarter, when James, Brown and especially Gibson went to work.

"They were outworking us," Brown said. "So I just did everything I could to change things up."

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Another major factor was the Cavs' ability to take care of the basketball. They committed a season-low nine turnovers, compared to a whopping 22 for the Kings.

"I still thought we gave them a gift," Theus said. "We made turnovers against a team that didn't pressure us. I thought we gave the game away down the stretch."

Zydrunas Ilgauskas added 14 points and 15 boards for the Cavs. Thanks to efforts like those, the Cavs entered the game as the only team with three players averaging at least 8.0 rebounds per game -- Ilgauskas (9.8), Drew Gooden (9.0), and Varejao (8.2).

John Salmons paced the Kings with 22 points, and Brad Miller added 17.

As for James, he passed more than usual (which is usually a lot), but seemed to like the change of strategy. Or more accurately, he seemed to like not having to do everything himself.

"I was just taking what was there," he said. "Last game (against Atlanta) I had 19 in the fourth. Guys knocked down shots for us. It has been the other way around lately where I've let the first half come to me and then taken over."