

Cavs Stay Hot, Upend Spurs In San Antonio

Written by {ga=samamico}

Thursday, January 17 2008 7:00 PM -

The Cavs are on a roll in 2008. They've won 10 of their last 13, and last night, went into San Antonio and defeated the defending NBA Champion San Antonio Spurs by a 90-88 count. And last night, they looked more like the well-balanced team that upended Detroit in the Eastern Conference finals than the one that looked overmatched against the Spurs in the Finals. Sam Amico checks in with a recap of last night's big win.



More important than getting any sort of "revenge" win against the team that beat them in the Finals, the Cavaliers just won - period.

Granted, their 90-88 thriller over San Antonio Thursday wasn't just an everyday regular-season victory, but it's that much more meaningful when you consider the Cavs are playing their best basketball of the year RIGHT NOW.

They just keep winning and winning and winning. They're winning road games in which you figured they didn't stand a chance (San Antonio, Dallas), and close ones at home you figured they'd win easily (Charlotte).

Just like last season, you still don't know what to expect from this team from night to night. The difference is, while they may not always play well, they've somehow managed to come out on top.

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At least, that's been the case so far in 2008 - as the Cavs have won 10 of their past 13 games and are 21-18 overall.

As you know, the Cavs were swept by the Spurs 4-0 in last season's Finals. Today, both teams are relatively healthy and put pretty much the same lineups on the floor Thursday that finished last year.

So the Cavs' hard-fought road win is more proof that they are indeed maturing. On Thursday, they looked more like the well-balanced team that upended Detroit in the Eastern Conference finals than the one that looked overmatched against the Spurs in the next round.

And for all their struggles in November and December, the Cavs have now defeated San Antonio, Dallas and Boston - three of the top five or six teams in the league.

Once again, the Cavs can thank LeBron James, who looked especially determined against Spurs forward Bruce Bowen, a lockdown (and allegedly dirty) defender who gave the James fits in the Finals.

This time, James scored 27 points, grabbed nine rebounds and passed for seven assists. And as has been the case during this hot streak, the Cavs' Mr. Everything received plenty of help.

Again, it came mostly from the frontcourt and bench, primarily center Zydrnas Ilgauskas (17 points, 7-of-11 shooting), forward Anderson Varejao (12 points, 14 rebounds), and guard Daniel Gibson (11 points).

And again, it was Gibson who hit a backbreaking 3-pointer, turning an 86-85

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deficit into an 88-86 lead with 1:34 left to play.

Nor did it hurt the Cavs' cause that the man who destroyed them in the Finals, Spurs point guard Tony Parker, missed two free throws with 29.4 seconds left that would have tied it at 90.

Parker had 23 points, but they didn't come easily. Twice, James sent Parker's signature spring-right-by-you layups into next week. James was called for goaltending on the second one, but the message was clear.

Basically, the Cavs weren't about to let Parker beat them. Instead, they dared Spurs reserve Manu Ginobili to do it, and it nearly backfired. Ginobili scored a game-high 31 - but missed a jumper at the buzzer to send the game into overtime.

Tim Duncan added 20 points and 11 boards for the Spurs.

Meanwhile, the bottom line for the Cavs is they continue to learn and grow and believe in each other, and all the while, they keep on winning.

If this keeps up, everyone else may start taking them for real, too.