

## Hide The Women & Children

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Ouch! In what was the second biggest home loss of the LeBron James era, the Denver Nuggets came into chilly Cleveland last night and just laid the wood to the injury riddled Cavs by a 113-83 count. Last night's debacle represented the fifth straight win for Denver over the Cavs, and it was the worst home loss in nearly three years for the good guys. For those with strong stomachs, Nick Allburn checks in to recap last night's clunker.



Entering a January 27 match up with the Los Angeles Lakers, the Cavaliers weren't exactly streaking, but they had certainly donned their [flesh-tone body suits](#). Then the injury bug struck. With Sasha Pavlovic already sidelined, Anderson Varejao was shelved in that clash with the boys from LALA Land, Drew Gooden suffered a similar fate against the Celtics last Tuesday, and Daniel Gibson strained a hamstring in Houston last Thursday. Four Cleveland's seven best players were down for the count.

But then the Cavs responded with what has become their modus operandi over the last couple of seasons; they won a game in Atlanta that they had no business winning. The grit shown by the injury-plagued Cavaliers in their 100-95 Friday win over the Atlanta Hawks was quite stirring, but on Sunday night the Cavs simply didn't have the horses to run with the visiting Nuggets.

## ***Quarterly Analysis***

### First Quarter

The opening few minutes of the ballgame were ultimately the only time the Cavaliers were within shouting distance of the Nuggets. Drew Gooden was a late scratch, and combined with the injury to Anderson Varejao, the Cavs were extremely limited at center and at the four for the third straight game.

Allen Iverson remains the perfect storm for the Cavaliers' defense; a quick guard who can burn defenders off the dribble, score, and also distribute. Carmelo Anthony poured in 15 first quarter points and helped fuel a Denver team that clearly wanted to run the floor against the shorthanded Cavaliers. Denver came out swinging, throwing an early haymaker at the Cavs in the form of a 16-0 run from which Cleveland never was able to recover.

### Second Quarter

The Cavs hung around for much of the second quarter but eventually the numbers caught up with them, as the Nuggets were at one point out-shooting them 61-percent to 35-percent. Denver effectively exposed the Cavaliers' sore lack of depth behind Zydrunas Ilgauskas, having their way with the Cavs in the paint on both ends of the floor when the Lanky Lithuanian was riding the pine.

JR Smith canned three triples in the period, and combined with the Cavaliers' 10 first half turnovers the Nuggets were able to open up an 18-point lead by halftime.

### Third Quarter

The third stanza marked Cleveland's last chance to mount any semblance of a comeback. The closest that the Cavs ever came was when they whittled the lead back down to 15 following a few missed Denver layups, but with a bare cupboard Coach Brown's troops could never put together a full-fledged run.

Although the Cavs were able to find some decent shots, the long jumpers just weren't falling. Without any trace of effective outside shooting the Cavs could never climb back into the game. This game may have been significantly closer had Daniel Gibson been able to play.

### Fourth Quarter

With the Cavs set to play in Orlando on Monday, Mike Brown officially raised the white flag, resting LeBron James for most of the fourth quarter. That's when things really got ugly. The Nuggets nearly pushed their lead to forty in the final period, and a few late Cleveland buckets made this game look closer than it really was.

Following the team's example, the majority of the fans packed it in early, and by the end of the game The Q was almost as empty as The Meadowlands during the Browns' rainy victory over the Jets on December 9<sup>th</sup>.

### ***Quick Hits***

**Ageless Wonder:** Allen Iverson will turn 33 in June, but this guy is showing no signs of slowing down. You would think that a guy like AI, who relies heavily on his superior speed and quickness, would be far less effective when he started getting long in the tooth and lost a step or two; the thing is, Iverson hasn't lost a step. Iverson, who might be the

President of the Cavalier Killers, shot 50-percent from field on his way to scoring 25 points and dishing out 13 rebounds, all while taking care of the basketball by committing no turnovers.

**With the Second Pick in the 2003 NBA Draft:** The Detroit Pistons select Darko Milicic, walking punch line. Thank God they didn't take Carmelo Anthony. Can you imagine how tough the already rock solid Pistons would be with a 25-per-night guy like 'Melo, as well? Carmelo's 15-point first quarter eruption helped put the game out of reach very early on.

**Fantasy Freak:** Marcus Camby, frequently overlooked in fantasy drafts, stuffed the stat sheet with eight points, two assists, two blocks, three steals, and a Rodman-esque 17 boards. Although [he](#) [is not a fan of the NBA Dress Code](#), Camby took the Cavs to the cleaners.

**LeBron's Line:** 30 points, five rebounds, three assists, two steals, and five turnovers. LeBron was able to keep the Cavs within striking distance almost single-handedly until the Nuggets started to pull away in the second quarter. In all fairness, LeBron should have had more assists, but the lousy shooting by the rest of the Cavaliers (the team shot a noisome 34.4-percent, although LeBron was 11-for-23) meant that many of James' potential assists bounced harmlessly off of the rim. Also, several of LeBron's five turnovers were due to dropped passes by the King's supporting cast. Encouraging numbers: James was 2-for-5 (40-percent) from beyond the arc, and a perfect 6-for-6 on foul shots.

**DiGiorno Pizza® Austin Carr Quote of the Game:** [referring to Allen Iverson's injured left hand] &quot;You know what we'd do in the old days? As soon as he puts the ball on the floor with that left hand, come down on it right away. Let's see how hurt it is...&quot;

**Getting Hurt:** Damon Jones sprained his right ankle in the second half, and ESPN's sideline reporter called the injury &quot;day-to-day.&quot; Losing Jones for any extended period of time would seriously hinder the Cavs' long-range game, which is already limping with Daniel Gibson nursing a strained right hamstring.

**Getting Healthy:** While Anderson Varejao should be out until after the All-Star break, and Sasha Pavlovic won't be back until at least April, Drew Gooden was a late scratch last night. That means that there's a decent chance Gooden will play tonight in Orlando, which means there's a decent chance that we will see much less of Donyell Marshall, which means there's a decent chance that Marshall's ghastly missed jumpers won't make me punch another hole in my wall tonight. Also, Daniel Gibson is listed as day-to-day, so he will definitely return after the All-Star break, if not sooner.

**Speaking of Donyell Marshall:** Sunday wasn't his finest moment; on one third quarter possession he threw up a patented Donyell Marshall airball three, missing the rim literally by feet. Two possessions later he wasn't ready for a LeBron James pass under the basket, creating a Cleveland turnover. I'm not just trying to rag on Marshall, because although he's long passed his prime, he can still be a serviceable reserve power forward (don't go back, you read correctly). If Marshall is kept in the paint, his freakishly long arms make him a solid rebounder and give him a good chance to luck into a tip-in, Zydrunas

Ilgauskas-style. But when Donyell plants himself in his favorite spot on the court (corner baseline), what you get is a 34-year old chucker with a three-point shot that's flatter than a laser beam. You also get scads of fast break opportunities for the opposition when Marshall's missed treys go clanging off of the rim.

**Shannon Brown Sighting!** Danny Ferry's 2006 first round pick saw some minutes during garbage time and managed to hit a few shots, including a late three. Mike Brown's dissatisfaction with the former Michigan State Spartan is obvious, as Shannon Brown has made his way into the twilight zone of Mike Brown's rotation. Honestly, Brown probably spent more time on the court while filming that goofy McDonald's commercial from last season than he has during games. While Brown is obviously a raw talent, he might be the most athletic player on the team outside of the LeBron James. (That's like being the best golfer that isn't named Tiger Woods, but I digress...) If the Cavs let Brown walk after this season, which is being speculated, is there anyone who doesn't think this guy will catch on somewhere else and leave the Cavs kicking themselves yet again (think: Jason Kapon)? Shannon Brown deserves a longer look. For that matter, so does Cedric Simmons.

**Welcome to Ira's Newblehood:** For several seasons Cleveland fans have been making Ira Newble the butt of their jokes. It's not undeservedly so; Newble has been yet another free agent flop. That said, he's given the depleted Cavs some valuable minutes of late, playing out of position at power forward, and doing so with his face stitched up like Frankenstein compliments of a well-placed Zydrunas Ilgauskas elbow. Newble almost certainly will be gone when his contract expires at the end of the year, but after playing only 51 games during the last two seasons and having every right to be disgruntled, he

deserves some credit for answering Coach Brown's call to arms this season.

**'Melo Owns LeBron:** Not really, but the Nuggets own the Cavaliers. Denver has now downed the Cavaliers in five straight games, and we can safely put the Nuggets on the list of the Cavs' &quot;problem teams.&quot; In just two games this season, the Nuggets have beaten the Cavs by a combined 52 points. But outside of the unlikely circumstance that both teams end up in the NBA Finals, the Cavaliers thankfully won't see the Nuggets until next season.

**(What's left of) The Cleveland Cavaliers Will Return:** Tonight, when they travel to Amway Arena to butt heads with the Orlando Magic at 7:00. This is a significant game because the Cavaliers trail the Magic by only three games for third place in the Eastern Conference. Let's hope Drew Gooden is good to go so he can hit the floor and give his former team some payback.