

Cavs/Bucks - The Good, The Bad, & The Summary

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By golly is it nice to see this guys name on the front page once again. No ... not Michael Redd. John Hnat! The Anti-Branson! One of our best guys. Sadly, he's got a bumner to tell us about this morning, as Michael Redd buried the new look Cavs with a 28 foot long range bomb at the buzzer to give the Milwaukee Bucks a 105-102 win over the good guys. John recaps the game for us in his return to the front page.



THE SUMMARY:

Sunday's game against the Grizzlies was a great first date with a hot girl. She looks terrific, you have lots of laughs, everything clicks, and you're left happy at what just happened and impatient as hell for the next date.

Last night's game ... was a less-than-stellar future date with the same girl. Sure, she still looks great ... but she drones on and on about herself ... and she laughs like a hyena ... and what is the story with that weird clicking sound she makes when she chews her food?

We're now seeing that Larry Hughes, Drew Gooden, Donyell Marshall, Ira Newble, and a couple of busted picks from the 2006 draft are not going to fetch four perfect players in return. The new guys have their warts too. Just as Chicago fans are discovering that Hughes will take questionable jumpers with reckless abandon ... or that Gooden will drive you to pull every last hair from your head in frustration at his airheadedness ... so too do Ben Wallace, Wally ("My Last Name Gets You 140 Points In Scrabble") Szczerbiak, Joe Smith, and Delonte West have their shortcomings.

Take some of those negatives, add an unconscious night for Milwaukee guard Mo Williams, and throw in a dash of last-second heroics by Michael Redd, and you get a 105-102 loss to the Bucks. Williams led everybody (even that #23 fella who plays for the Cavs; you may have heard of him) with 37 points. That figure set a new season high for Williams, and was just one point away from tying his career best. Redd chipped in with 25 points, including a last-second, high-arcing three pointer from thirty feet. LeBron James paced the Cavs with 35 points; no other Cavalier scored more than 13 (that coming from Wally Alphabet).

The game was also notable for the return of Anderson Varejao (back in action after missing four weeks with a sprained ankle) and the absence of Zydrunas Ilgauskas (who was described as having an "upper respiratory infection"; that sounds like a "cold" to me, something that should be treated with "chicken soup").

WHAT I LIKED ABOUT THE GAME:

At Least The Date Started Well: The Cavs carried over their torrid pace from Sunday's game against Memphis, going on a 10-2 run to start the game. It did not last long -- the Bucks responded with a 10-2 run of their own to tie the game at 12 - but it was nice while it lasted.

Better To Be Lucky Than Good: About a minute into the game, Varejao received the ball in the post on the left side of the lane. He casually flipped the ball over his head in the general vicinity of West, who was cutting along the baseline. The ball was also in the general vicinity of the hoop, and fell through. Not sure if Andy has been working on that shot as part of his rehab (I suspect he could try it a hundred times and not hit it again), but it was a heck of a way to start the scoring.

No, Actually, It's Better To Be Good Than Lucky: LeBron's line from last night: 16-of-24 shooting from the field, 35 points, four rebounds, six assists, and a big blocked shot on Redd. He drove to the basket at will ... wait, how is this different from any other night? It wasn't, really. Have we gotten so used to LeBron that a 35 point night (on only 24 shots) is a ho-hum occurrence? As we have seen, the biggest change in James's games this season has been his increased focus on defense. Continuing his trend, he guarded the toughest player on the opposing team (Redd; yes, you could make a good case for Williams too) for much of the game, and flustered him into a 7-for-17 shooting performance.

Hey, They Got Jason Kidd After All!: West's line from last night: seven points on 3-of-8 shooting from the field, eight rebounds, and seven assists. You could hide that line score in the middle of Jason Kidd's season and never raise an eyebrow. West is still not looking comfortable shooting the ball (although he did hit his first three pointer as a Cavalier), but he appears to have a strong all-around game, and he gives the Cavs their first threat to push the ball upcourt since former point guard and [occasional vigilante](#) Terrell Brandon.

Career Revivals: Damon Jones made all four of his three point attempts, including a crucial bomb to draw the Cavs within a point with 16 seconds remaining. Yes, he has had his slumps; yes, he whines to the media a bit more often than one would like; yes, he needs to look in a mirror and see what he has done to his hair. And yes, if the NBA ever decides to use him in a sequel to the [Kevin Durant jersey commercial](#), it will be a feature-length film. But the man can shoot the ball from long distance.

Career Revivals, Part II: Several times during the broadcast, the Cavs' announcers reminded us that Smith is having his best month in six seasons. (Not sure exactly how they arrived at that conclusion, but I won't dispute them.) Smith is proving to be a very welcome addition to the Cavs. He provides the same medium-range jumper that Drew Gooden took with him to

Chicago, but minus the creative facial hair and hands of stone. And it appears that he has learned more of the offense in four days than Gooden did in almost four seasons.

Fear The Fro, Especially When He Is Fifteen Feet Away: Ben

Wallace made three of his four free throw attempts last night. I repeat:

Ben

Wallace made three of his four free throw attempts last night.

It was only the 4th

time in 25 games this year that his free throw percentage for a game was greater than fifty percent. Who said he can't make the other team pay from the line?

WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE ABOUT THE GAME:

Maybe HE Should Have Taken The #32 Jersey:

5-of-18 shooting from the field, 2-of-9 from three point range, 13 points scored, and a plus/minus of -4. No, it's not Larry Hughes's most recent game; it's what Szczerbiak put up last night. He received plenty of open looks, but could not make the shots. It's been only two games; nobody is calling for

www.heywallyszczyerbiakpleasestoptakingsomanybadshots.com

(however, after I'm done writing this column, I'm going to reserve that URL, just in case). But any time that the deadly accurate outside shooting version of Wally wants to show up is fine with me.

It's Not Enough To Win The Battle; We Want Domination: The Cavs outrebounded the Bucks 44-42, so maybe it is just a touch whiny to put this item in the "What I Didn't Like" column. But wasn't the idea of a Wallace/Varejao/LeBron front line to provide stellar rebounding? Especially against a Milwaukee front line of (cough) Andrew Bogut, Desmond Mason, and Charlie Villanueva? More troubling than the numbers was the type of rebounds Milwaukee was getting - they were regularly grabbing offensive rebounds close to the basket. It was a far cry from the "one and done" defense we saw during the Memphis game.

Speaking Of Breakdowns: It is probably the result of having several new guys who have not yet learned to play together, but the Cavs had many, many defensive breakdowns that led to easy Milwaukee baskets. One such play came at the end of the first half. The Bucks were already on an 11-2 run, having taken their first lead in about 15 minutes, when Szczerbiak missed a jumper with six seconds to go. Nobody bothered to cover the Bucks' Mason as he streaked downcourt, and Williams hit him with a long pass for a dunk with one second to go.

Speaking Of Things That Shouldn't Have Had The Opportunity To Happen: Some of you readers skimmed that last paragraph and said, "he must be making this up! Everybody knows that LeBron takes the last shot before the end of a quarter!" Not last night, as LeBron was on the bench for the final minute of the first half. Apparently Coach Mike Brown removed James to eliminate the possibility of him picking up his third foul. Fraidy-cat strategies like this one

rarely work (see Defense, Prevent), and that's how we ended up with (a) the Cavs missing their shot and (b) giving Milwaukee enough time to get another basket.

Department Of Just Sayin': Milwaukee attempted 37 free throws last night. Cleveland attempted 14. Draw your own conclusions about the officiating. (It reminds me of Charles Barkley once asking a referee, prior to a game, if he remembered to bring the Vaseline.)

Memo To The Woman Behind The Bench Who Waved To The Camera While On Her Cell Phone:

Yes, whoever you were talking to saw you. I saw you. Everybody watching the game saw you. Now that you have about 14 minutes and 50 seconds of fame remaining, would you please sit down and act like a normal human being? Thanks a bunch!

NOT THAT YOU ASKED, BUT:

Words We Never Thought We'd Hear

Department: I am certain that Cavs announcer Fred McLeod was just as surprised to utter them: "Defense for offense substitution, Anderson Varejao comes off." Yes, This Actually Happened with 16 seconds remaining in the game, as Varejao was removed for Ben Wallace. (Before you get too excited, realize that Milwaukee had the ball and a one-point lead, meaning that the Cavs had to foul; and Varejao already had five fouls.)

Because I Care: In case any of you have millions of extra dollars burning a hole in your pocket, Michael Jackson's Neverland Ranch in Los Olivos, CA is going to be

[up for auction](#)

. (See it

[here](#)

via the magic of Google Maps.) I don't think Michael really is unable to pay the bills; I think

he just lost interest in the ranch, what with it now being more than ten years old.

WHAT LIES AHEAD:

Now for the real test. Boston, at the Garden, on the second night of a back-to-back. After that game tonight, the Cavs will return home to bitchslap ...er, face the Timberwolves on Friday evening.