

Cavs Gored By Bulls

Written by {ga=mrburns}

Thursday, March 06 2008 7:00 PM -

The Cavaliers rolled into Chicago winners of three straight. Pitted against the struggling Bulls, the Cavs must have liked their chances to extend that winning streak to four. But the Cavaliers had to fly out of New York the previous evening, and back to back road games in the NBA are very difficult to win. Ultimately, the Cavs just couldn't hang with the Bulls and things unraveled in the second half. Nick Allburn recaps the loss.



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Quarter by Quarter

First Quarter

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The Chicago Bulls showed how rudderless they presently are right off the bat with a shot clock violation on the game's opening possession. The Cavs looked a little sluggish early, as getting out-hustled on the defensive glass, which doesn't happen often.

James hit a pair of impressive jumpers to tie the game at eight halfway through the quarter. Chicago opened a six point lead with hoops from Joakim Noah and Ben Gordon. Noah was very active early, and his game is reminiscent of the Cavaliers' Anderson Varejao. Speaking of Varjao, he looked slightly out of control in the opening period, putting the ball on the floor far too often.

LeBron nailed a deep three as the quarter expired, similar to the long three he hit last night in New York, which brought the Cavs within four. Both teams shot well until 30 percent in the quarter, but the Bulls' control of the boards gave them a four point advantage.

Second Quarter

Rebounding continued to be a problem for the Cavaliers, who were unable to dominate the defensive boards as they normally do. Strangely, the Cavs had no free throws midway through the second quarter.

Coach Brown was able to give LeBron James a long respite in the second quarter due to quality play from the second unit, who helped the Cavs keep pace with the Bulls. When LeBron reentered the game, he promptly completed a three-point play. Several possessions later, James torched Larry Hughes in the post.

James' return sparked a 9-0 Cleveland run which was finally stopped by a Joakim Noah one-handed jam. LeBron continued to amaze the Chicago crowd, draining a deep fade-away three, then weaving through the defense for an "and one" deuce.

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As if his buzzer-beating first quarter three wasn't enough, LeBron gave the crowd an encore with a runner off the glass to beat the first half buzzer and give Cleveland a four-point edge at the half. LBJ finished the half with 26 points on just 15 shots. Oh, and did I mention that he only played 18 minutes?

Third Quarter

Both clubs started slowly in the second half, but a 6-0 spurt put the Bulls ahead 55-53. LeBron seemed a little tentative, settling for threes after he was nearly tackled by Kirk Hinrich at half court on a breakaway, appearing to slightly hyperextend his elbow.

While the Cavs were mired in the doldrums of a one for 11 drought, the Bulls rattled off an impressive 17-0 run to build a 13-point lead, which was finally broken by a Wally Szczerbiak three.

All hell broke loose when Ben Gordon completed a three-point play and then drained a three on the next possession, pushing the Chicago lead to 17. LeBron James and Wally Szczerbiak hit two free throws apiece, and Luol Deng added one of his own to make the Chicago lead 14 points at the end of the third.

Fourth Quarter

Devin Brown opened the quarter with a three for Cavs, and LeBron made a layup look easy on the following possession, cutting the lead from 14 to 9 in a hurry. But the Bulls answered back with five straight, rebuilding their lead to 14.

LeBron James stroked a pair of free throws, and Damon Jones completed a four-point play by way of a made three and a rare three-pointer foul. But then the

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Bulls opened the floodgates following an Andres Nocioni three, building an 18-point lead, and essentially ending the game.

Mike Brown raised the white flag with a few minutes to go, pulling LeBron, and the Cavs fell by a final of 107-96. For the Bulls, this marked their first back to back wins of the 2008 calendar year.

Quick Hits

Get Well, Z: The Cavaliers sorely miss Zydrunas Ilgauskas. Z is a consistent scorer, and a huge rebounding presence on both ends of the floor. His game complements the skills of both Anderson Varejao and Ben Wallace, neither of whom are known for their offense.

Joe Knows Basketball: Regardless of how you feel about the big Cavs/Bulls/Sonics trade, you have to love Joe Smith. Prior to the Bulls game, Smith was shooting 59 percent as a Cavalier. He's a smart player, a solid rebounder, and a terrific jump shooter for a big man. With Zydrunas Ilgauskas on the shelf, it might not be a bad idea for Mike Brown to dial up Smith's minutes to give the Cavs a stronger inside scoring presence.

Finding a Rhythm: Devin Brown's jump shot appears to be improving as he logs more minutes with the starting five. With the injuries to Daniel Gibson and Sasha Pavlovic, Brown's really been a Godsend filling in at the two. Brown will continue to fly under the radar, but he's been a great addition for the Cavs this season.

LeBron's Line: 39 points (FG: 13-27, FT: 11-12) 3 boards, 1 assist, 1 steal, 3 blocks, 4 turnovers. A solid scoring night for King James, but he did most of his damage in the first half, scoring 26 points on just 15 shots. LeBron was only 3 of 12 in the second half for 13 points. Like the rest of the Cavs, LBJ ran out of gas in the third quarter.

He Should Have Left His Filthy Mustache in College: Of course I'm referring to Joakim Noah, who in addition to sporting that ridiculous excuse for a mustache remains as much a thorn in Ohio's side as he was at Florida. Noah had his best professional game against the Cavaliers, scoring 13 points and racking up 20 rebounds. Noah's the type of player that you hate to play against, but love to have your team, not unlike Anderson Varejao. While I don't like the guy, I respect his tremendous hustle, and he seems to be adjusting to the NBA game. Noah probably won't be an All-Star at this level, but he looks like he'll be a solid player for years to come.

Rough Night for AV: Anderson Varejao struggled mightily, particularly on offense. Although Wild Thing hauled in 10 rebounds, he scored only 4 points on 2 of 11 shooting. Furthermore, he wasn't exactly jacking up threes; most of his attempts came around the basket, where he was simply unable to finish. It's tough to start Varejao and Ben Wallace in the same frontcourt because there just isn't much scoring potential there.

Getting Better: Delonte West really appears to be getting comfortable running the point in Mike Brown's offense. It's still a little early to pass judgment, but it looks like West might vindicate Danny Ferry, who took some flak from critics who doubted West's abilities as a point guard.

¡Silencio! □ Raise your hand if you're getting sick of Doug Collins' longwinded explanations and mindless tangents. Call the game you're watching, Doug! The guy obviously knows his basketball, but he needs to focus on the game itself and stop telling me what a great sixth man Kevin McHale was, and how McHale coming off the bench for a championship Celtics squad in any way correlates to Ben Gordon coming off the bench for the bottom-feeding Bulls.

The Blues: On a random not, I really like the Cavs' blue uniforms. Each of the Cavs' new logo uniforms (home white, road wine, alternate blue) is outstanding, and the design deserves recognition as one of the league's best. That said, how abhorrent were the orange throwbacks the team wore far to frequently last season? I don't know how that day-glo orange didn't fry my retinas. I wouldn't mind seeing the gold throwbacks from a few seasons ago make a comeback. And if the Cavs are looking to sell more jerseys, and NBA franchises always are, they should consider resurrecting the checkered wine-colored jerseys from the '70s. Those babies were sharp. For a chronological history of the Cavaliers' uniforms, and to figure out what the hell I'm talking about, check out the team's [official site](#) .

The Cleveland Cavaliers Will Return: Saturday, when they make the trip to Indianapolis" Conseco Fieldhouse for a 1:00 divisional date with the Pacers.