

## Cavs/Wizards: The Good, The Bad, & The Summary

Written by {ga=diminishingskills}  
Thursday, March 13 2008 7:00 PM -

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TCF legend John &quot;The Anti-Branson&quot; Hnat is back once again on the front page of the site, always a welcome sight for our readers. Sadly, the game he's writing about this morning was about as fun to watch as C-SPAN. But that's what makes The Good, The Bad, & The Summary so great. The game doesn't even have to be good for the column to excel. John hits on the loss, the triumphant return of The Sasha Pavlovic Factor, and Elliot Spitzer dropping some serious cake on ho's in his latest.



### THE SUMMARY:

There's not much need for a new recap of last night's game. Just dial up the review of the Nets [game](#) from Wednesday night, substitute &quot;Wizards&quot; for &quot;Nets&quot;, and remove all the Jay-Z references, and *voila!* You will have an accurate description of last night's 101-99 loss to the Washington Hey, Aren't They The Bullets Anymore? in the nation's capital.

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Unlike Wednesday's game, the Cavs did not immediately fall behind by a double-digit margin. They actually held a lead of eight points (54-46) heading into the intermission, thanks to a 19-4 run to close out the first half. (Note that it should have been a 22-4 run, as Sasha Pavlovic was mugged by the Wizards' Caron Butler while attempting a last-second three-pointer.) (Well, maybe 20-4 or 21-4, as I'm not that confident that Sasha would have drained all three free throws. But you get the idea.)

Then came the second half. And there went the game. The Cavs actually shot well in the third quarter, making nine of their 16 attempts; but they turned the ball over early and often, and allowed the Wizards several easy baskets.

The fourth quarter wasn't much better. Trailing by one (80-79) at the outset, the Cavs made only two of the first 16 shots they took in the quarter. Eight minutes into the frame, they had scored all of four points (a rebound/dunk by Joe Smith and a LeBron James jumper). At that point, they trailed 92-83. The Cavs fought back, and closed the deficit to one point when Damon Jones made a three-pointer with eight seconds to go. On the ensuing inbounds play, the Cavs immediately fouled Washington's Antonio Daniels, who missed the first of his two free throws. He made the second one, to make it a 101-99 game with seven seconds to go.

That leads us to the game's final possession. Inbounds to ... care to guess? Anyone? Of course LeBron got the ball. He held the ball some 35 feet from the hoop ... and held it ... and held it ... and with three seconds to go, he dribbled to his left, then launched a deep three-pointer for the win. Alas for Cavs Nation, the shot clanged off the rim, and the buzzer sounded.

## WHAT I LIKED ABOUT THE GAME:

**Now THAT's How You Return:** After his uninspired return to action on Wednesday, Pavlovic had a much stronger game last night. He made his presence felt from the start, getting the Cavs their first two points on a nice drive to the hole. He also showed that you may not want to leave him alone at the three-point line; he sank five shots from long distance. His final line: 24 points, one rebound, one assist, one steal, and one semi-comprehensible halftime interview with TNT's Cheryl Miller. He did have one completely boneheaded turnover (a very ill-advised dribble behind his back into two defenders in the first quarter), so we can't let him off scot-free. But his strong overall game gives him an **S**

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of

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. (I don't believe that they actually make sunblock with that low of a number, but it's my column.) Welcome back, Sasha.

**Shooting It [Like It's A Sock](#)** : I admit it: I have a man-crush on Delonte West. By the numbers, he didn't have a terrific game last night -- 10 points, 3-of-6 shooting - but I think his game is great. He always seems to be in LeBron range with the assists and rebounds (he had seven helpers and five boards last night). And he has a knack for being around the ball and for hitting clutch shots (six of his points came on a pair

of crucial three-pointers). My only complaint is that he doesn't shoot the ball enough. In that regard, I am now calling him Delonte Gibson. (The alternative nickname, "Boobie West", is just a bit too much "appearing for one night only at Tiffany's!" for me.)

**Just Giving Thanks:** LeBron had what was widely considered to be a disappointing game last night: 25 points on 9-of-22 shooting from the field (including a Hughesian 1-of-9 from three-point range), seven rebounds, seven assists, and seven turnovers. Remember the games like this, folks. We'll be lucky to ever again see a player who can score 25 points, with nice rebound and assist totals ... and have it be an off night.

**Paragraphs We Never Thought We'd Write:** Not-So Big Ben Wallace (who returned to action last night after missing the New Jersey game with back pain) attempted five shots last night (three from the field, two from the stripe). He made all five of them. Granted, he had a little luck (one of the shots was a hook that was one of those unintentional bank shots, despite being attempted five feet from the hoop), but a perfect night is a perfect night. (He also had a huge block of a Jamison layup attempt with barely a minute and a half to go.)

## WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE ABOUT THE GAME:

**Halftime Adjustments (Or Lack Thereof):** Based on my research, which consists entirely of me making up numbers, the Cavs have been outscored *twenty jillion to six* in the opening minutes of third quarters this season. That number got even worse last night. As mentioned earlier, the Cavs went into the halftime break with momentum. They came out of the locker room to start the second half ... and quickly choked it away. In less than three minutes, that eight point lead was a distant memory (can a memory become &quot;distant&quot; in less than three minutes? But I digress).

**A Splash Of Cold Water To The Face:** It has now been three weeks since The Trade That Shook The Earth, the eleven-player swap that brought Wallace, West, Wally Szczerbiak, and Joe Smith to Cleveland. And the impact on the team has been ... negligible. Sure, it's great to not see Larry (&quot;I Don't Mind Losing If I Get My Points&quot;) Hughes bending rims all across the country, and my blood pressure has dropped a good ten points now that I no longer have to watch Drew Gooden's comedy of mental lapses.

But before the trade, teams routinely ignored the other Cavs and double-teamed LeBron with abandon. Now,

after the trade, they are ... routinely ignoring the other Cavs and double-teaming LeBron with abandon. The book on how to defend the Cavs has not changed - use plenty of zone defenses and dare the Wine and Gold to beat you from the outside; then in the fourth quarter, run two guys at LeBron every time he crosses halfcourt, and hope that he still doesn't find a way to beat you.

Very telling was that the Cavs had shot 12 of 22 from three point range in the first three quarters ... yet the Wizards still left Cavalier players open on the perimeter. The strategy worked, as Cleveland made only one of the ten three-pointers that they attempted in the final frame.

It is still barely three weeks since the trade, and it is admittedly difficult to integrate so many new players into the rotation midway through the season. But losing back-to-back games to the Nets and Wizards is really not what we had in mind.

**As Long As I'm In The Neighborhood:** Wally Szczerbiak, if you're reading this, feel free to start making

those outside shots any time you like. Those lines of six points on 2-of-9 shooting from the field (like last night's) are getting a little too common.

**Stop Me If You've Seen This Before:** As an energy guy off the bench, hustling for loose balls and scrapping for rebounds, Anderson Varejao is a wonderful, wonderful player. As a defender, Varejao is a key to a lot of what the Cavs do, because he knows how to rotate, how to pick up a guy cutting across the lane, and how to take a charge. As a guy with crazy hair, he gives fans an easily identifiable player to recognize. (Whenever she sees a close-up of Andy, my four-year-old daughter always asks, "Daddy, are they boys or girls?" I'm just thankful that the Cavs didn't acquire Mike Miller and his banana clip at the trading deadline. Some things are not easy to explain to a small child.)

As an offensive option, Anderson Varejao sucks rocks. Every Cavs fan reading this still has nightmares of Varejao's ill-advised drive/layup attempt in the final minute of Game Three against the Spurs. (Fortunately, searching for "Anderson Varejao layup" results in no hits. I'm sure the video was there at one

point, but was removed as objectionable content.)

I bring all this up not because I want to - believe me, that is one door in the memory hallway that I'd rather keep closed - but because I'm afraid that Andy is getting those delusions of grandeur again. Yes, he does have an improved jump shot this season. Yes, I would probably be taking more shots too, if I were angling for a big new contract. But how does this explain Varejao taking a turnaround jumper halfway through the fourth quarter ... after the Wizards had already opened an 89-83 lead, and the Cavs had scored only four points thus far in that quarter?

*(At this moment, let's bow our heads in silence for the number of televisions across Greater Cleveland that had their picture tubes smashed to bits in the moments after that shot.)*

**Hey Andy, That Was An Ugly Shirt You Put On After The Game Too:** As long as I'm picking on Andy, I have to point out another "what were you thinking?"

moment. Earlier in the second half, with the Cavs trailing 72-70, Andy received the ball in the post. He tried to pass back to LeBron on the wing - a weak, "please don't steal me" lob. Of course, the ball was stolen, and it led to a Washington layup at the other end.

### **Hey Andy, If It's Any Consolation, You Weren't Alone:**

The Cavs turned the ball over a total of 17 times last night (by contrast, Washington coughed up the ball only nine times). As mentioned earlier, LeBron led the way with seven turnovers, but it truly was a team effort. And I have to say, I applaud the Cavs' creativity and breadth in finding new ways to turn the ball over (Devin Brown, no need to drop the ball out of bounds) as well as sticking with their traditional moves (the Pavlovic dribble into traffic; the Szczerbiak dribble off his foot).

### **NOT THAT YOU ASKED, BUT...**

#### **The Word We're Looking For Is**

**"Bitchslap":** Dwayne Jones has been a Cavalier for almost two seasons now. Lance Allred was a Cavalier for about six hours as of last

night's opening tip. (In case you missed it, Allred is the Cavs' [latest 10-day signing](#) from the NBDL; he was inked yesterday as the contracts of Billy Thomas and Kaniel Dickens expired.) Allred was active for last night's game; Jones was not. As far as I can tell, Jones was not injured or otherwise unavailable. Ouch.

**Is It Just Me?:** The NBA's game recaps feature several tabs on the page: one for the boxscore, one for play-by-play, et cetera. There is now a tab for "Real Time Fantasy". For some reason, I find that label disturbing. I know that the term "fantasy" refers to "owning" your own virtual "team". However, when I see that label, I'm thinking that they'll show Eric Snow jumping out of a cake.

**Maybe They Meant 2009:** At halftime, there was an ad for a local Acura dealership. I wasn't paying

much attention at the time - I think they were offering some groundbreaking, once-in-a-lifetime deal that won't possibly be topped until next month's promotion - but did happen to look up at the end. And I noticed the rather large statement of "Offer Expires March 3";. Not "March 13"; (which wouldn't have been that great either - is anybody going to hop off the couch at 9 PM at night and high-tail it to the nearest Acura dealership?), but "March 3";.

I am blithely unaware of a lot of things in life. I have absolutely no idea of how much money it takes to get a 30 second local spot on a national cable channel. I do know that whatever that amount was, it was just wasted by an upscale auto dealer.

**Obviously There Were Better Ways To Spend The Money. Like Actual "Real Time Fantasies";:** Newly ex-New York Governor Eliot Spitzer has the right idea of how to blow his

money (and his career, and his reputation, and ...): spend it on high-class call girls! Unless you have been living in a cave for the past week, you already know about this story; no need to rehash it here. (Although the connection between a political sex scandal and a Cavs game review is just too obvious, right?)

As with any story, the media has really sunk its claws into this one. And I say: bravo. I think I speak for all men, and perhaps some alternative lifestyle women as well, when I say that *we need photographs of the girl*

. I guarantee that most men, upon hearing of the story, had the same initial reaction:

*\$4,300? She better be hot.*

Thankfully, various media outlets have [given us the information](#)

to reach our own conclusions. (My take: I don't know if she was worth \$4,300. I think we need more information on her flexibility and "I won't do THAT!" to get a better idea. I encourage the media to continue its research along those

lines.)

## **WHAT LIES AHEAD:**

The Cavs get a couple of days off today and tomorrow, and they will need them, as next week is that rarest of creatures: a five-game week. The Cavs will be home to face Charlotte on Sunday evening, travel to Orlando for a matchup with the Magic on Monday, return home to face the Pistons on Wednesday and the Raptors on Friday, and finish off the week at Milwaukee on Saturday.