

Not a pretty picture last night for the Cavs. From the opening tip to the final horn a revenge-minded Detroit squad absolutely dominated the Cavaliers, throttling the wine and gold in the Palace of Auburn Hills by a 85-71 count. The score, as bad as it was, was nowhere near indicative of how completely Detroit dominated the ballgame. Pecker gives us all the grisly details in his latest.



This column promises to be a short one.

In fact, if I were to put the same level of effort into this piece as the Cavs did against the Pistons Saturday night in Detroit the column would be ending right now.

Unfortunately we have more space to fill so I'll do what I can to describe what happened: The Cavs pretty much blew chunks. From the opening tip to the final horn a revenge-minded Detroit squad absolutely dominated the Cavaliers, throttling the wine and gold in the Palace of Auburn Hills by a 85-71 count. The score, as bad as it was, was nowhere near indicative of how completely Detroit dominated the ballgame. Detroit was embarrassed by the Cavs in Cleveland about 10 days ago. They weren't going to let that happen again.

Detroit took it to the Cavs early and often in running out to a big halftime lead. They coasted it home from there.

Starting PG Delonte West missed Saturday's game and was replaced in the starting lineup by Damon Jones. That didn't go so well. Billups got every look he wanted and didn't score 50 on Jones only because there were so many other open Pistons knocking down wide-open shots. But with Cleveland trailing by 16 at the half and needing a fast start after halftime to get back in the game, Billups posted up Jones on the Piston's first three offensive possessions, took 3 shots and hit them all plus a free throw for seven quick Piston points and a commanding choke hold on the ballgame.

## **The Good News**

- I bet the Pistons -7 ½ points. Let's move on.
- Wait. The Cavs did have all 12 members of their likely playoff roster on the bench and dressed. Now to the bad news.

## **The Bad News**

- The Cavs had their playoff roster dressed and on the bench but still got waffle-stomped by the Pistons. You do have to preface that by also stating that West did

not play due to a bad ankle. You might also want to mention that Ben Wallace was not expected to play but did get on the floor against his old mates Saturday night. And he stayed on the floor into the 2<sup>nd</sup> half and played fairly well until he re-injured his back. Then he lay down on the floor and had to be helped off.

At least Ben was injured when he lay down on the floor. The rest of the Cavs didn't wait for an injury to lie down. LeBron James and Zydrunas Ilgauskas were a combined 9 for 33 from the floor. James scored just 13 points and saw his consecutive games of 20 points or more snapped like the elastic on a fat man's pants. James had more turnovers (5) than assists (4) and also was assessed a technical foul after complaining about a

no-call in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter.

Damon Jones played 30 minutes and scored 2 points. Dwayne Jones played and that says all that needs to be said about the competitive nature of this one.

- Its time to start getting a bit concerned a couple of things. First and foremost, we're down to the wire on this injury wave that has plagued the Cavs all year. The Cavs have 8 games left to get everyone healthy and in sync for a playoff run. It's not

looking good. Wallace left the game in obvious pain and hasn't been able to shake or heal the back spasms that have cost him and his teammates valuable 'getting to know you' time. The way he was helped off the court doesn't seem to imply he'll be giving it a go Sunday at 'The Q' against Philadelphia.

Boobie Gibson did return Saturday night but his presence was offset by the absence of West. See the problem? This revolving door of players coming and going every night has this team spinning its wheels.

- Wally Szczerbiak is healthy but his shot is still extremely ill. Wally was 3 of 9 against the Pistons and many of his misses were on wide-open looks. Szczerbiak needs to regain his touch in order to add any value when the second season begins.

- Don't look now but Washington and Philadelphia are both breathing down the Cavs' neck for the 4<sup>th</sup> seed in the Eastern Conference. The Wizards have gone 8-2 in their last 10 games and the 76er's 7-3 while the Cavs are 4-6 over the same period. None of the three teams are particularly strong on the road and allowing either one or both of those

teams to overtake you for the 4<sup>th</sup>

seed spells a potentially more difficult 1<sup>st</sup>

round series and traveling for the first game of that 1<sup>st</sup>

round series regardless of whom it's against.

Best to avoid that perilous situation.

**Finally**

The Cavs get a shot at

redemption, getting back on the winning side and at the 76er's Sunday at 6pm. As mentioned above, the game is at 'The Q' and it's important enough considering the circumstances to call it a big game.