

It was a beatdown of epic proportions Monday night at The Q, as the Cavaliers and “overrated” star LeBron James laid the wood to the Washington Wizards by a 116-86 count. The game featured a bevy of hard fouls on both sides, and King James continued to make the Wizards pay, going for 30, 9, and 12 on a night that all the Wizards top scorers were held in check by a swarming Cavalier defense. Brian McPeck recaps the big win for the wine and gold.



I love playoff basketball. Maybe one day the fans of Washington will get to experience it.

The Cavaliers went out Monday night and simply laid the wood to the Washington Wizards. The Cavs dominated the game inside, outside and from a physical standpoint in handing the Wizards a 30-point beat down at 'The Q'. The 116-86 final was quite indicative of how big a mismatch this one was.

The overrated LeBron James led all players with 30 points in 39 minutes. James also led all players with 9 rebounds. And James also found the time to lead all players with 12 assists.

To put it in perspective, James alone outscored Antawn Jamison, Gilbert Arenas and DeShawn Stevenson in leading the Cavs to a 2-0 series lead. He also doubled that terrible trio's total of 6 assists. The King was 9-19 from the floor, 2-6 from deep and 10-17 from the free throw line on another night at 'The Q' that more resembled an Arena Football League game than anything else.

For those keeping score at home, and as a friendly reminder to the Wizards and their fans, that's now eight straight playoff victories for the Cavaliers over Washington.

So much for the Wizards strategy of mauling James whenever he ran to the rack. Yes, James was mauled on a couple of occasions. Unfortunately for the Wiz it resulted in James knocking down some early free throws and in Brendan Haywood picking up a couple early fouls. Without Haywood on the floor the Cavs got Zydrunas Ilgauskas going inside and out and then relied on 'Z' and LBJ to locate open shooters when what remained of the Wizards interior defense was forced to collapse down low.

And don't look now, but it was Wally Szczerbiak who answered the call of duty by hitting 6-9 shots (2-5 from three-point range) for 15 points. Things were going so smoothly for the Cavs that I swear I actually saw Wally ball fake a Wizard defender off the ground and actually take the ball to the rim and finger roll in a lay up.

The Cavs got help all over the floor Monday night. Ilgauskas went for 16 points and 9 boards, Daniel Gibson was 2-2 from three-point range and scored 13 points, Joe Smith added 9, Anderson Varejao and Devin Brown each scored 7 points and even Ben Wallace (yes, Ben Wallace) literally threw down 3 dunks and two free throws for 8 points.

The Wizards were 'led' by three players who scored 12 points apiece including Stevenson, Caron Butler and Darius Songaila.

The Wizards would be well served to alter their approach when the series heads to Washington on Thursday night. They should do so because this hard-ass approach isn't working and because they simply don't wear that approach very well. The Cavs may not be physically imposing or intimidating, but they're closer to both than Washington. Jamison and Gilbert Arenas are both softer than Charmin. It's laughable that Washington decided before the series that they were going to put on their big boy pants and take the Cavs lunch money.

On Monday Jamison 'swole up' to the increased intensity of the playoffs by scoring 9 points on 4-13 shooting while the awfully doughy looking Arenas filled up the box-score with 7 forgettable and meaningless points. Stevenson further showed what a Ricky Davis-like hack he is by finally hitting a three point shot to get the Wizards back to within about 40 points of the Cavs and then taunted the Cavs as he stumbled back down the court only to watch as a Cavalier went right by him for yet another lay up.

Even Damon Jones threw salt in the wound by draining a three in garbage time and then mimicked Stevenson's pose in front of the Wizard bench.

Good times. In fact, good enough times that Billy Thomas and Dwayne Jones each saw about 5 more minutes of playing time and 5 more points than most Cavs fans thought they would see all series.

The Wizards are talented enough to get back into this series and make it interesting. Especially in Washington. But they seem insistent in trying to be something they most definitely are not and this faux-tough guy act is working against them in a big way.

Etcetera

Looks like the Cavs have decided an eye for an eye will be their answer to the

Wizards thug tactics. After watching James absorb numerous blows Saturday in Game 1, Varejao set the tone early by hammering Andray Blatche on a drive to the hoop. Varejao could have easily been called for a Flagrant 2 foul and ejected but a Flagrant 1 was the call. AV got a fair amount of Blatche's head and no basketball with his swipe. Blatche dusted himself off and proceeded to clang a couple free throw attempts right before the Wizards threw away the free possession from the foul call.

A Flagrant 2 was assessed to Brendan Haywood who was ejected after attacking James on an LBJ drive to the basket. That's what happens when you try and be something you're not. Haywood was neither subtle nor effective in trying to deter James and his team was forced to go the rest of the way without him. Not to mention he now leaves his Game 3 status in the hands of the NBA who will review his play and determine whether it warrants a suspension.

Cavs fans have to be proud of the way their guys have handled the 'aggressive' tactics of the Wiz. The Cavs have been smart while not backing down. They've taken their shots, dished out some of their own and have done so without it coming back to bite them. This challenge the Wizards are laying down could help the Cavs down the road should they advance. Kind of like a boxer who takes a couple of fights with smaller, weaker wannabe's before getting in the ring with skilled fighters.

Next

As mentioned above, the series swings to Washington for two games starting Thursday night. The game is an 8pm tip and is being broadcast on TNT.