

## Cavs/Celtics Game Four: The Good, The Bad, & The Summary

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What a basketball game. And just like that Cavs fans, this series is deadlocked. King James and the bench bunch led the Cavaliers to a 88-77 game four win over the Celtics ... in a game much closer than the final score indicated. If you're a fan of defensive basketball, this one was enough to bring a tear to your eye last night, and predictably, John &quot;The Anti-Branson&quot; Hnat is seriously jacked up about this win. And he writes about it for us in his latest. Game five, Wednesday night in Beantown.



### **THE SUMMARY:**

Time for a show of hands.

After the Cavs got trounced by the Celtics in Boston last Thursday, how many of you really, truly thought that the series would be tied going back to Beantown? (Maybe some of you thought the series wouldn't go back to Beantown, period.)

That's where we find ourselves this morning, after a dramatic 88-77 win

by the Wine and Gold at Quicken Loans Arena last night. It's now a three-game series, in essence, as the two teams are tied at two games apiece.

The final score is somewhat deceiving; neither team led by more than a few points until the Cavs pulled away with an 11-4 run at game's end. (Just consider the scores after each quarter. After the first, the Cavs held a 23-21 lead; at the half, the Cavs' lead was still two points, at 45-43; and after three quarters, the Cavs had "extended" their lead to a whopping three points, at 68-65.)

Despite struggling from the floor yet again, LeBron James led all scorers with 21 points (and also 13 assists). The Celtics were paced by 15 points from each of three players - Kevin Garnett, Ray Allen, and Rajon Rondo.

If you're a Cavs fan - and I have a pretty good idea that you are (hey, it's not TheBostonFan.com, is it?) - then there was plenty to like about this game. Let's get to it.

### **WHAT I LIKED ABOUT THE GAME:**

**Some Love For The Guy In The Suit:** Listen to (okay, read) these four numbers: 76. 89. 84. 77.

No, those aren't test grades from my high school physics class. Don't be silly; I had the foresight to buddy up with the nerdiest kid in the room. I was only too happy to play Ringo to his rest of the Beatles. Hey, when you're trying to get into a good school, everything's fair game.

Anyway, those four numbers are the Celtics' point totals for the first four games of this series. That makes an average of 81.5 points per game. (By comparison, the Celts averaged just over 99 points per game in their first-round marathon with the Hawks.)

And that means it's time to give it up for the real hero, so far, of these playoffs: Coach Mike Brown. Yes, he can frustrate the hell out of fans with his schemes on offense; but the man knows defense like few others. And when you're playing games in the spring, defense tends to be just a bit more important than in the regular season.

Coach Brown has done a terrific job of covering the Celtics' big threats - their Big Three of Garnett, Ray Allen, and Paul Pierce - and basically daring the other Boston

players to beat them. That's a hallmark of great coaches - they take away what the offense wants to do the most. (Speaking of Boston, some coach named Belichick has done fairly well for himself by using that approach.)

Last night's game was perhaps the Cavs' best defensive performance yet. They held the Celtics to 39% shooting from the floor (and a Hughesian 21% from three-point range). They rarely allowed the Celts to have uncontested shots; and on the few occasions when that did occur, it was always a Rondo or Sam Cassell who was getting them. (To be fair to Rondo, he did make seven of his 14 shots from the floor - approximately seven more than he had made in the previous two games combined.)

These playoffs are teaching us (or re-teaching us) a lesson, people. Glamorous, offensive-minded team like the Suns and Mavericks are watching the playoffs from home. The defensive-oriented teams, such as the Pistons and Spurs, are alive and well. The Cleveland Cavaliers are built for the postseason. And while it would be nice to win 60 games in the regular season, isn't winning in April and May (and June) really what it's all

about?

**[This Space Available; Corporate Sponsors, Are You Listening?] Play Of The Game:** Yes, LeBron had another rough game from the floor, making only seven of his 20 shots. But he had the most significant shot of the game. With just under two minutes, and the Cavs leading 82-75, James had the ball at the top of the key (I know; try to imagine it). He dribbled to his right, drove past Pierce, got to the hole ahead of the Celts' James Posey, and threw down a thunderous dunk, with Garnett on the bottom half of the poster. That dunk, which could have reminded one of a young

[George McInnis](#)

, (a) effectively ended the game and (b) may have been the wakeup call that Bron has needed.

(James also drained two shots from three-point range, including one that pushed the Cavs' lead to 79-73 with just over three minutes remaining.)

**[We'll Whore Out This Space Too, For The Right Price] Play Of The Game:** James's dunk was preceded by perhaps the most impressive defensive

play of the game. Joe Smith grabbed a rebound of a missed shot in traffic, and refused to let go of the ball despite the entire city of Boston taking a swing at the ball. ( *Yes, we are prone to exaggeration, why do you ask?*

) That rebound, along with the James dunk that followed, was the dagger that ensured that the Celtics' team flight home would be a quiet one.

**Hey! He Made Other Plays Too!:** Do you ever watch a game, and see a player make several good plays - always seeming to be in the middle of the action - and then after the game, you look at the boxscore and see that Mr. Middle of the Action had so-so numbers? That's Joe Smith this morning. The boxscore will show that he had eight points and six rebounds in just under 25 minutes of run. Those eight points and six rebounds all came at the most important points of the game, or at least they seemed that way.

**But He May Not Have Even Been The Best Big Man Off The Bench:** In many ways, the 2007-08 season has been a lost year for Anderson Varejao. First there was that silly holdout, which cost him the first several weeks of the season. Once he did sign, he had to get back into game shape. He then had to battle some injury issues, with both an ankle sprain (which affected his movement) and brain tendinitis (which made him think he can put the ball on the floor) affecting him.

Last night, Varejao was the Andy of old. Twelve points, six rebounds, a lot of hassling of Garnett, and plenty of hustle. If THAT guy continues to show up ... this postseason will get even more

interesting.

**Nor Was He The Best Performer Of The New Cavs:** Wally Szczerbiak, who like Smith came to the Cavs in the big trade last February ( *yes, I know that you know this; I just need to make the tie-in to the section header* ), really showed up last night as well. Wally was brought in for one reason: his outside shooting. Last night, he delivered, making six of 11 shots (including two from long distance) for 14 points and at least two "WALL-Y!" chants from the home crowd. If THAT guy continues to show up ... we may have more than a couple of games remaining this season.

**You Asked For It....:** Last night was not Zydrunas Ilgauskas's greatest career moment. He scored just nine points. He played less than half of the game.

But he's here for one play. In the third quarter, with the Cavs nursing a two-point lead (54-52), he put a hard foul on Celtics point guard Rondo. Z went for the ball - it was not a dirty play - but he knocked Rondo to the deck. And while we can't prove it is a cause and effect, Rondo did miss both of the

resulting free throws.

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

I'm in too good of a mood to fill this section today. No, the Cavs did not play a perfect game. They quickly booted away an eight point lead, just before the half, after James was forced to sit down with three personal fouls.

Sasha Pavlovic (who appears to have followed the Gilbert Arenas rehab program in returning from his injured foot; he looks like he has gained a few pounds) watched Pierce drive by him on more than one occasion. But none of that matters right now. We'll save the ankle-biting for another day.

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

**Maybe She Can Call Mrs. Pierce To Complain About Her Son:** In the second quarter, LeBron was streaking to the rim when Pierce grabbed him. It wasn't a flagrant foul; it wasn't even a particularly hard foul. It was simply a bearhug, a "okay, you got by me, but you're gonna have to make two free throws if you want your points" move. But James's momentum carried the two players into the stands, right by the basket support.

Who usually sits in those seats at Cavs' games? You know it - it's the home of Gloria James, also known as LeBron's mom. And Gloria was having none of Paul Pierce beating up on her little (6'9" and 260 pound) boy - she got right in there with the at-least-ten-inches-taller players. Showing that Mother's Day was *so* yesterday, LeBron yelled at his mother to stay out of the

fray.

**Another Show Of Hands:**  
Cavs leading, 39-33, in the second quarter. Smith grabs a rebound of a missed shot, and catches Varejao with a bit of an elbow in the process. Did anybody else think that Andy was going to flop to the ground? I swear, he looked like he was about to, then

realized that the elbow came from a teammate.

## **Commercials I Don't Get:**

The general idea of advertising is to entice people to buy your product or service, right? If so, then I do not understand the Quizno's commercials with various characters stuffing five dollar bills in their

mouths. Yes, I get the idea - that it's better to spend that five dollars on a sandwich than to eat it - but those spots do not make me want to eat at Quizno's tomorrow. (And you have to love the lawyers-made-us-do-it disclaimer of "Dramatization. Do Not Attempt." as the woman chomps on the five-spot.)

Sudden thought: if the movie [\*White Men Can't Jump\*](#) were made today, and the *Jeopardy!* scene were reprised, corporate product placement would undoubtedly have "Quizno's" as one of the foods that start with the letter Q, right there with the quince and the

quahog.

## **WHAT LIES AHEAD:**

Only the most important  
game of the season.

Game Five will take place  
Wednesday night from

the TD Banknorth Center in Boston. What is it with "Banknorth", anyway? Can you create a new word simply by cramming two of them together? Seems kind of stupiddumb to me.

The series will definitely

return to Cleveland for  
Game Six on Friday night.  
If necessary, the  
deciding Game Seven will  
occur in Boston on  
Sunday.