

The Cavs



CLEVELAND - Random thoughts about the Cavaliers from their 90-71 preseason loss to the visiting Spurs:

- * Cavs fans shouldn't be worried about the team's 0-4 record. After all, the Cavs aren't concerned. The preseason is a time to experiment, to figure out different lineups, to see who will actually make the team. Cavs coach Mike Brown already has his rotation pretty much set. He's mostly using the preseason to find practice players.
- * As Cavs radio play-by-play man Joe Tait said of the Cavs' awful fourth quarter, "I guess their five guys at the end of the bench are better than our five guys at the end of the bench."
- * Or as LeBron James said, "None of our big guys are playing in the fourth quarter when it's closing time. Once we get to the last couple preseason games and start playing some more minutes, we'll try to get a win."
- * James played just 17 minutes, all in the first half, scoring six points.
- * Another sure sign it's the preseason -- Wally Szczerbiak sat out with "training camp soreness." That's like me saying I'm not writing today because my fingers ache. (Don't get your hopes up.)
- * Quicken Loans Arena was about half full, with maybe 10,000 in attendance. So

even Cavs fans are in preseason form.

- * Sure Sign It's the Preseason, Part II: Brown and Spurs star Tim Duncan were sharing a few laughs near the Cavs' bench right before opening tip-off, delaying the start of the game.
- * Meanwhile, Zydrunas Ilgauskas was the only Cavs starter who treated this as anything more than 48 minutes of garbage time. Big Z looked to be in top form by swishing his first two jumpers, both from about 17 feet. He finished with 10 points (5-of-10 shooting) and six rebounds in 22 minutes.
- * Cavs fans should be pleased with new point guard Mo Williams. He really forces the tempo and is always looking to penetrate and make something happen. You can tell most of the Cavs aren't used to it. A lot of them just stood around and watched Williams instead of moving to the ball or cutting to the basket. It's like watching ball-handling legend Curly Neal perform tricks while his Harlem Globetrotters teammates look on and clap.
- * LeBron finished with five assists -- and two of them were just plain awesome. The first was a no-look pass to Ben Wallace for an easy layup, the second was a no-look tap to a cutting J.J. Hickson for a powerful dunk.
- * By the way, raise your hand if you're happy Mike Brown has yet to use the phrase "hockey assist," like he did all of last preseason.
- * Spurs coach Gregg Popovich is now sporting a beard. I'm too afraid of him to tell him it doesn't look very good.
- * Needless to say, Cavs guard Eric Snow was nowhere to be found. Instead, he was serving as a guest analyst on NBA TV's season preview show when the game started. Snow is out for life with a bum knee, and looks to have gained 20 pounds since the end of last year. Unfortunately for the Cavs, he's still under contract for \$7.3 million this season.
- * Remember when Snow was in a training camp battle with Damon Jones for the Cavs' starting point guard spot? Now they're both sitting at home, as Jones never reported to Milwaukee after the trade involving Williams. And the Bucks are likely better for it.

* Hickson, the Cavs' rookie power forward, checked into the game with about four minutes left in the first quarter. His first assignment -- guard Tim Duncan. Thanks, coach.

* On offense, Hickson displayed good footwork around the basket and ran the floor well. He should be a solid player in this league for a long time. It's obvious Cavs GM Danny Ferry did his homework on this kid. The only problem with Hickson is his defense. He gambles too much and is out of position more often than not. But having a former defensive player of the year like Wallace playing in front of him will only help in that department.

* Speaking of Ferry's first-round draft picks, Shannon Brown is now trying to earn a roster spot with the Charlotte Bobcats. His chances appear to be about 50-50. Hard to believe Daniel Gibson was the Cavs' second-rounder the year they drafted Brown (2006).

* Well, I'm about to make myself sound old, probably even older than I really am ...

* But I would love it if EVERY game was like the preseason. There's very little in-arena hoopla, with no fire-breathing scoreboards or music blaring so loud you can't talk to the person next to you. It's all about basketball -- although there's enough entertainment for the folks who are there strictly for that reason. You can get the crowd pumped up without having to blast people's brains from their skulls, and the preseason is proof.

* And can we please lose the microphones on the opposing team's basket? It's outdated and was a bad concept to begin with.

* Cavs forward Anderson Varejao hit a baby hook shot for his first basket of the game. Uh, OK. I've seen it all.

* Sure Sign It's the Preseason, Part III: Spurs forward Kurt Thomas was called for traveling, then laughed and slapped whistleblowing referee Dick Bavetta on the butt.

* Free-agent signee Tarence Kinsey could turn into an underrated addition for the Cavs. He's an outstanding athlete and will provide a little relief for LeBron at the small forward spot. That may be more important than you think, because the Cavs

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plan to keep James' minutes to around 38 a game. Someone needs to play those other 10 minutes.

* LeBron was honored at halftime for his performance with Team USA in the summer Olympics, receiving a standing ovation from the crowd. Cleveland mayor Frank Jackson said a few congratulatory words, then presented James with the key to the city.

* What does receiving the key to the city do for a person? I mean, is the city ever really locked? And if so, is the person with the key responsible for unlocking it whenever someone wants in? Man, what a pain that would be.