

Well, it wasn't the third quarter woes that usually plague the Cavs that hurt them last night in New Orleans. Instead, it was a big fourth quarter from the Hornets that saw Chris Paul, David West, and James Posey make play after play to lead the Hornets to a 104-92 win at the New Orleans Arena. The game was tit for tat through three quarters, and the Cavaliers just got outexecuted down the stretch. Peeker recaps the loss for us.



New Orleans scares me.

Not the Hornets. They're a solid basketball team with some fine players but the city itself frightens me more. Every night is Halloween in New Orleans as the freaks and living dead congregate.

The pre game introductions alone featured what looked like the funeral scene of "Live and Let Die". Costumed jazz musicians, strange headdresses, elaborate hand shake rituals and pre game hugs that lingered just a little bit too long.

All a bit much to take.

As for the game itself, well, it was a good news/bad news deal for the Cavaliers. The good news is the Cavs, trailing 49-48 at the half, did not experience the typical third quarter meltdown that has come to define the Mike Brown era. No, the Cavs played the Hornets square in the third quarter to trail by just that one point heading into the fourth quarter.

And then they collapsed.

The Hornets outscored Cleveland 31-20 in a pivotal 4th quarter that saw Chris Paul, David West and James Posey take turns making big plays and big shots while the Cavs looked disjointed and rattled in a 104-92 loss at the New Orleans Arena.

There was no LeBron James bailout in the offing Saturday night in New Orleans as James struggled with his shot to the tune of 6-15 from the floor and 0-3 from the 3-point line for a very pedestrian 15 points on the night.

His newest running mate, Mo Williams, wasn't much help this night either as he shot just 5-15 from the floor himself. James and Williams, the two guys who will likely have the ball in their hands for the majority of offensive possessions for the Cavs this season, combined to commit 9 of the 17 Cavalier turnovers on the night.

New Orleans reached the 2nd round of the Western Conference playoffs last season and they are a strong and deep team. With the addition of Posey and former Cavalier Devin Brown they're a tough out for any club. And you can't suffer poor games from your two horses when you're looking to get out of there with a win.

LBJ and Williams stumbled far too often Saturday night. As a result the Cavs fell to 1-2 on the season.

Takeaways

- It's really early. The schedule has given the Cavaliers no favors in the early going. Games against Boston and New Orleans are not the easiest way to work in a new vital cog like Mo Williams. But you can see the value he'll ultimately bring to the table. He pushes the ball up the court, typically makes good decisions regarding whether to pass or shoot and shows no fear in taking some big shots. You can see the makings of a crisp, up tempo offense in the making. But right now it's in the formative stages with Williams still learning under game conditions against quality teams just where his running mates are going to be on the floor and where they like to receive the ball and go to work.

- Sasha Pavlovic played just 4 minutes Saturday night against the Hornets. That was about 6 minutes too many. Pavlovic just looks more and more like that sock in your drawer that has no match. There's nothing really wrong with it, but there's no just place for it in the wardrobe. Pavlovic did manage to not turn over the basketball in his 4 minutes. But if that's the best you can find to say about his effort you're probably best to leave him in the drawer and hope you find some team in another NBA city down the road looking for one sock.

- Good God. It was a stylist's worst nightmare early in the 2ⁿ
d quarter when fate brought Anderson Varejao into the ballgame and he was matched up with Marvin Ely. I haven't seen that much hair flying since the last Michael Vick 'Kennel of Doom Pit Bull Cage Match' tour. I thought Linc Hayes from the 'Mod Squad' was backing down a giant troll eraser you used to see on pencils.

Surreal. Although in New Orleans it didn't get a second look.

- Chris Paul is a dribbling, penetrating, passing and scoring nightmare for NBA defenses. Stop looking for the new poster boy for NBA point guards. Paul is the chosen one. Making him even more difficult to defend is the fact he's getting better. He came into the league with the ability to penetrate and break down a defender and to get to the rim. He has always been blessed with the ability to find the open man.

But on top of those already devastating abilities Paul has developed a very passable mid-range jump shot. The Cavs tried to play off Paul on numerous occasions Saturday night, fearful of his penetration and/or kick to an open shooter. But Paul consistently began to pull up in the lane and knock down 14-16 foot jumpers. He hit three

such shots in the 2nd half and forced the Cavs to alter their defensive approach when the ball was in hands.

Right about that time was when Paul consistently began to penetrate again, blowing by his defender and demanding the Cavs help defensively. And that often led to wide open looks for James Posey, David West or Rasual Butler. And more often than not those guys knocked down shots, as evidenced by Paul's 15 assists that accompanied his 24 points.

We Got Next

The Cavs will catch their breath on Sunday and head to Dallas where they take on the Mavericks Monday night at 830pm. The Mavs

will be coming off a 95-85 win over the Timberwolves that evens their record at 1-1. The sledding gets a bit easier with Chicago and Indiana showing up at 'The Q' next week.