

Cavs/Mavericks: The Good, The Bad, & The Summary

Written by {ga=diminishingskills}

Monday, November 03 2008 7:00 PM -

Brady Quinn announced the starting quarterback for the Browns Thursday night game against the Broncos. And the Cavs went into Big D and laid the smack down on the Mavs by a 100-81 count. Twas a great night for Cleveland sports fans on election eve, and it gets even better for our readers as John Hnat returns to the front page with The Good, The Bad, & The Summary of last night's Cavalier slaughter of the Mavericks.



THE SUMMARY:

It's Christmas for the Cleveland sports world this morning.

No, I'm not talking about "that other guy" becoming the Browns' starting quarterback, although that was a nice little stocking stuffer. Instead, Cleveland fans should be celebrating because the Cavs showed themselves to be a top-tier team last night, trouncing Dallas 100-81 in a game at I Forget The Corporate Sponsor (I Think It's American Airlines) Arena.

The Cavs never trailed in the game, and put the game away with a 21-3 spurt that turned the final minutes into Whole Lotta Tarence time.

Who led the Cavs in scoring? Say it with me, kids: LeBron James led everybody with 29 points. Zydrunas

Ilgaskas backed him up with 17 points and 11 boards, and the starting backcourt of Mo Williams and Delonte West each notched 14.

Dallas was led by Josh Howard's 18 points, and only two other Mavericks made it to double figures (Antoine Wright and Gerald Green each had 10).

It's the NBA. Where "Dude, that trade would have totally been rejected in my fantasy league" happens.

WHAT I LIKED ABOUT THE GAME:

Why Mike D'Antoni And Don Nelson Will Never Win A Title: I should not pick on those coaches.

They're both fine men (I presume), and they have both had a measure of success with various teams over the years.

Their teams play an exciting brand of basketball ...

... no they don't. Because to me, an "exciting" game is "one played in May, or preferably June". And those two coaches have exactly zero NBA titles (for that matter, exactly zero conference championships) on their resumes.

Why?

Because they do not emphasize defense

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I bring this up because defense won the game for the Cavs last night. They had a decent night on offense -- 100 points, 44% shooting from the field, 36% from three-point range - but that's not why they spanked one of the NBA's recently elite teams in their house.

Instead, it was because the Cavs played strong defense for about 40 of the game's 48 minutes.

They swarmed to the ball, rotated well, and gave up very few uncontested shots.

They played much of the game with playoff-level intensity.

The Mavs did not know how to respond; other than one third-quarter run when the Cavs allowed several fast breaks, Dallas could never get easy shots.

And that's why this normally high-powered offensive team scored all of 81 points.

Just Thought I'd Mention: Need another number that tells how well the Cavs dominated the game? Look at the number of rebounds. Cleveland had 52; Dallas, 35.

The Sound Of One Hand Clapping: Can you score zero points and still help your team win? It sounds like one of those riddles that cannot be answered, like wondering if a tree that falls in a forest makes a sound if nobody is there to hear it.

The tree landed with a huge THUD last night, as the Cavs' Ben Wallace had a huge impact on the game without scoring a single point. He had 13 rebounds in just over 21 minutes of work.

Eight of those boards came at the offensive end, and gave the Cavs many

additional chances to maintain their lead during the crucial third quarter.

He played lockdown defense on the Mavericks' Dirk Nowitzki, who scored only eight points and missed all but three of his 11 shots from the floor.

Yes, You Have To Score Too: I don't want to completely ignore the offense here. The Cavs got off to their typical fast start, jumping to a 15-7 lead midway through the first quarter, and leading by as many as 16 points (28-12) in the opening stanza.

After Dallas clawed its way back and tied the game at 63 apiece in the third quarter (

you know I will have some not-so-nice things to say about that), Cleveland responded with a 22-3 run that put the game away.

Some Love For The New Guy: That run was keyed by Williams, the Cavs' key acquisition this past offseason. Early in the fourth quarter, Williams was having a pedestrian game:

five points, four assists.

Then he took over with the following sequence:

- Pullup jump shot (Cavs lead, 74-66);
- Pullup jump shot (Cavs lead, 76-66);
- Pass to Wally Szczerbiak for a layup (Cavs lead, 78-66);
- Jump shot (Cavs lead, 80-66);
- Pass to Ilgauskas for a jump shot (Cavs lead, 82-66);
- Three-pointer from well beyond the arc (Cavs lead, 85-66).

The Cavs have not had that kind of threat (i.e., an offensive force who does not wear the number 23) since ... I don't think my memory goes back that far.

In Case You Were Wondering: That sequence of plays I just mentioned? They all came with LeBron on the bench.

The Cavs increased their lead from eight points to 16 while James was taking a breather.

(They also increased their lead during the first six minutes of the second quarter, when James was also resting.)

The Most Over-Quoted Cavs Statistic From Last Season
TM

was that the Cavs were 0-7 when James did not play.

This season is a different story:

the Cavs do not fold when their leader needs a rest, and in fact they are rising to the challenge and responding to the perception that they are a one-man team.

Some Love For The Somewhat-New Guy: Delonte West needs more than five shots per game. The guy is too good of a shooter.

He made all but one of his shots last night (including 3-of-4 from three-point range).

Fourteen points scored on five shots from the field ... I'd say that belongs in the [dictionary](#).

And he keyed the Cavs' first quarter surge with three steals, including one that he took coast-to-coast for a layup.

While I am still somewhat unsure about having the second-best point guard on the team as the starting two-guard, Delonte has earned the starter's minutes.

Expiring Contract Sighting!: In the second quarter, Szczerbeak drove the baseline and threw down a powerful right-handed dunk.

Yes, that is a misprint; the play actually occurred in the *third* quarter.

Uncle Austin: If you've watched more than five minutes of Cavs action the past few years, then you have heard Austin Carr, the former Cavs great who now handles color commentary duties for most of the team's games. And that means you have heard Austin Carr turn the English language into his own personal punching bag on occasion.

Not in a grammatical sense; AC can conjugate verbs with the best of them.

But he has a gift for mixing metaphors ("he's the straw that makes the drink go") or starting a second thought while he is still in the middle of talking about the first.

So it was last night, when AC dropped the gem "you have to keep them in a sporadic rhythm",. Uh, Austin, there is no such thing as a sporadic rhythm. If something is sporadic, then by definition it cannot be rhythmic, and vice -versa.

Later in the game, after Ilgauskas found Boobie Gibson with a cross-court pass, AC remarked, "when you're seven-three, you can see over the mountain and into the valley".

And with that, I have decided that we simply cannot allow life to continue without collecting these phrases. Someday, we are going to be telling our grandchildren about the fountain of words that is AC, and we'll need some examples for backup.

So that means "Uncle Austin" will be a regularly occurring feature here in GBS, I can't promise to catch them all, but I will promise to catch enough.

WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE ABOUT THE GAME:

Write This Section In Ink: The Cavs are a terrible third quarter team. They've been a terrible third quarter team the past couple of years, and they are looking like they will be a terrible third quarter team again this season.

The linescore from last night's game shows that the Cavs were outscored 24-21 in the third frame last night, but the margin was that small only because the Cavs scored nine of the last 12 points in the quarter.

They got away from their offensive sets and instead saw one player try to be Da Man (Williams with an ill-advised one-on-three layup attempt; LeBron channeling his inner Pavlovic and losing the ball while trying to dribble between two defenders).

Guys, I really don't want this to become a recurring feature in the "thumbs down" portion of the column, especially because I'd have to think of a somewhat catchy title for it. Maybe, in this age of Daylight Savings Time (note: as I write these words, I can see a clock that I have yet to turn back), we can use a similar idea to help the Cavs.

Call it Scoreboard Savings Time.

When the Cavs come out to start the third quarter, just have one of the clocks set to, say, 5:00 instead of 12:00.

That way, they'll think that they have already had their out-of-the-locker-room slump, and can return to playing solid ball.

Rejected!: While I sang Wallace's praises earlier, I have to say that the guy is the worst dunker I've ever seen, especially for an athletic 6'9" guy.

In the second quarter, Wallace rebounded a Cavs miss, drove uncontested to the hoop, and ... slammed the ball right into the rim.

(AC's take:

"that shows his back is in good shape!"

One presumes that Wallace would miss the rim entirely if his back were feeling a bit ouchy.)

NOT THAT YOU ASKED, BUT...

Can You Get A Technical Foul For Lying?: Late in the first quarter, Dallas's DeSagana Diop (yes, that would be former Cavalier DeSagana Diop) (yes, that would be former Cavalier DeSagana Diop, who the Cavs drafted while Joe Johnson was still on the board) (not that we are bitter) made a layup and was fouled on the play. As he completed the layup, he yelled "and one!", the universal phrase for "I was fouled!".

Diop is one of the game's worst free throw shooters; his .515 career percentage makes him one of the worst in the NBA
ever

Maybe "and zero!" would make more sense?

Public Service Message: Get out there and vote today, if you haven't already. And don't poke holes in the ballot so that it reads "METALLICA", Beavis and Butt-Head style.

If you don't know anything about the candidates or the issue, leave that one blank.

WHAT LIES AHEAD:

Now the Cavs will have the chance to make some hay. Five of their next six games are at Quicken Loans Arena, and most of those games are against very beatable teams. Exhibit

A: the

Cavs play the Chicago Bulls tomorrow night at The Q.

(And yes, we will have plenty to say about Drew Gooden's facial hair choices; please, Drew, in the name of the God of Column Inches, do not find a razor between now and then.)