

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

Written by {ga=diminishingskills}

Wednesday, November 05 2008 7:00 PM -

It was not the prettiest game of all time. It was not a particularly good game, at least by many of the players' established standards. Yet the Cavs still won. By double digits. LeBron had a big night, dumping 41 on the Bulls, which included a 15-16 performance from the charity stripe. John Hnat checks in this morning to fawn over LeBron and Delonte, talk about how glad he is to be rid of Drew Gooden, and also to give us The Good, The Bad, & The Summary of last night's win.



THE SUMMARY:

It was not the prettiest game of all time. It was not a particularly good game, at least by many of the players' established standards.

Yet the Cavs still won. By double digits.

Thanks to The Best Player On The Planet™, the Cavs took the lead midway through the first quarter and never looked back, cruising to a 107-93 victory over the Chicago Bulls last night at Quicken Loans Arena. TBPOTP, who also goes by the name "LeBron James", dropped 41 points on his friends from Chicago (and added nine rebounds, six assists, and four steals).

The Cavs led in double digits at halftime (57-45), maintained their lead through the normally problematic third quarter (the advantage remained at 12 points, at 83-71, at the end of the third), and finally put the Bulls away with an 11-2 run.

After that, Coach Mike Brown put in The Tarence Kinsey Brigade ("Now Featuring Sasha Pavlovic!"), the universal sign of Better Luck Next Time.

Delonte West and Zydrunas Ilgauskas backed up James with 16 and 15 points, respectively (Ilgauskas also tallied 10 rebounds, for his second consecutive double-double on the young season). Ben Wallace had his second consecutive game of zero points and double-digit

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rebounds (he had 14 boards). On the other side, the Bulls' Ben Gordon paced the Bulls with 31 points, and super-rookie Derrick Rose added 20 points and seven assists.

The victory improved the Cavs' record to 3-2 and dropped the Bulls to 2-3. The Cavs remain 1.5 games behind the division-leading Pistons, who also won last night.

It's the NBA. Where "four more months of a glorified exhibition season" happens.

WHAT I LIKED ABOUT THE GAME:

All Hail The King: It is always easy to forget LeBron when handing out the praise. We have gotten so used to his greatness that he can put up 25 points with a side helping of assists and rebounds, and we shrug our shoulders, even though it is a linescore that almost everybody else in the league would be hard pressed to match.

And then he goes and has a game like last night's. He always racks up the numbers against the Bulls, so his 41 points was not a huge surprise.

What does make the eyes pop a bit is how efficient he was - 13-of-23 from the field (most of those shots being layups), and 15-of-16 from the line.

He was his usual freight-train self on the break (including one time when the Bulls' Rose tried to defend him; James just shook him off and laid the ball in) and continued displaying increased energy on defense.

After the first four games, which saw James's scoring average down in the lower 20s, a few critics murmured that his numbers were down so far. Those critics aren't saying anything this morning.

He Can Even Beat You With One Foot Tied Behind His Back: In the first quarter, James came up hobbling after a layup (his left foot landed on Rose's foot, causing his ankle to twist).

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He was still hopping on one foot at the Cavs' end of the court when Wally Szczerbiak stole the ball.

Even though he was hopping on his one good foot, James motioned for the ball, which Wally delivered with a precise court-length pass, and put it in for an easy layup.

(For the record, Bron went to the bench moments later, and was shown several times rotating his ankle, stretching his foot with a resistance band, et cetera. He seemed to tweak the same ankle again late in the fourth quarter, with the game well in hand, prompting Cavs fans everywhere to yell at Coach Brown to TAKE HIM OUT OF THE GAME ALREADY DAMMIT!)

The Forgotten One: West is easy to overlook too, but for different reasons. He'll quietly play his game, not take too many shots, even pass up a few shots that most others would launch.

Then the game ends, and he has 16 points on 50% shooting, including several three-pointers.

Delonte's shot has been dropping thus far this season, and it was good to see him getting more shots last night.

Oh, he's now sporting cornrows. (We strive to bring you all of the critical information, as you can see.)

It's Not A Misprint: Scan the boxscore from the game, and you may notice that Ilgauskas was 1-of-1 from three point range. "Must have been a desperation heave at the end of a quarter," you might think to yourself.

Well, you would be wrong.

The big fella set up in the right corner just beyond the arc, received the ball from LeBron, and drilled the shot.

Z has always had that 18 foot range, but always seemed to struggle if he tried to extend it a touch. It appears that he has been working on his range, as he seems more comfortable (which is to say, more accurate) from that "one foot on the line" distance. If he can stretch his range to being able to hit three-pointers consistently ... let's just say that

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opposing centers are already groaning.

The Mo Williams Effect: Mo had a relatively quiet game last night - 13 points, four assists - but his presence is definitely being felt. The real value of Mo's acquisition is that he gives the Cavs Somebody Not Named LeBron who can create his own shot, and who can make you pay if you leave him open, and opposing defenses ignore that at their own peril.

It was never more apparent than the fourth quarter last night. James was in the post on the left side of the lane, and Mo was outside the three point arc.

For the last five seasons, whenever James has had the ball near the hoop, he has almost always been double-teamed.

Whoever is guarding on the perimeter will drop down and get in LeBron's face.

I do not know exactly how often James would have been double-teamed in this situation, but it was at least one hundred percent of the time.

But last night, with Mo Williams standing outside the three-point arc, the Bulls stayed in man coverage.

Mo's defender did not step towards LeBron.

Although James ended up missing his shot (a somewhat awkward left-handed hook), I rather like the odds of LeBron having the ball down low with one-on-one coverage.

That didn't happen until Mo came to town.

Pass The Cranberry Sauce: It's November. The month of Thanksgiving. A time to reflect on what we have in our lives, be it family, friends, good health, a good job, a dog that doesn't pee on the carpet, and anything else that makes you happy.

Personally, I am happy that Drew Gooden is no longer a Cavalier.

That stance has nothing to do with Gooden's personality (it's not like I know the guy), nor does it

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have anything to do with his graduation from the Scot Pollard Institute of Creative Facial Hair. (For those of you who missed last night's game, Gooden is currently sporting a long beard with several kinky braids.

He makes seven million dollars per year, and we can confidently say that he spends exactly zero of those dollars on mirrors.)

No, this has everything to do with Gooden's play on the court.

The guy just does not seem to get it.

If only we had one play that perfectly summarizes Gooden's airheadedness ... wait a minute, we have it! About halfway through the fourth quarter, the Bulls has trimmed the Cavs' lead to seven points (it had been 12 just moments prior), and had the opportunity to cut the lead further.

Gooden received the ball on the left baseline, near the three point line.

With plenty of time remaining on the shot clock.

And the Cavs' Ilgauskas in his face.

And he shot a jumper

.

He missed, the Cavs got the rebound, and Bulls coach Vinny Del Negro (who appears to be the answer to the question "what is Steve Perry, the lead singer of 80s music icons Journey, doing these days?"") popped a couple of blood vessels.

On the other sideline, Coach Brown had to be smiling to himself.

Had to be.

And The Stuffing Too: Lather, rinse, and repeat that previous section, using the name "Larry Hughes" this time. (Hughes missed last night's game because of a shoulder injury.

Try not to look surprised.)

WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE ABOUT THE GAME:

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We Grade On A Tough Curve: Look at Ilgauskas's line from last night's game, and you see what looks like a pretty solid game: 15 points and 10 rebounds in only 24 minutes of playing time. So why is he on this side of the tracks? Because he could have had more.

Especially in the first quarter, Z clanged jumper after jumper off the rim.

He really has to hit that shot consistently to be useful (and to his credit, he did later in the game).

I definitely do not expect perfection, but Z was not helping this team, at least in the earlier part of the game, no matter what the final boxscore may say.

Don't Shoot, Boobie! Don't Shoot! Boobie Gibson may have wondered why he rolled out of bed. He missed all six of his shots from the field, and even missed one of two from the free throw stripe, where he's usually very reliable.

(After the missed free throw, he yelled an expletive loud enough to be heard two states away.

Guess ESPN wasn't running the feed on a two-second delay.)

To my untrained eye, it appeared that Gibson was not following through on his shots - he sort of flipped the ball at the hoop, instead of continuing to bend his wrist through the entire release. Not being an Actual NBA Coach, I do not know if that's why Gibson was misfiring, but his form sure looked different (and not in a good way) last night.

And A New Statistic Is Born! Speaking of missing shots, Szczerbiak appears to be gunning for the league lead in "Ridiculously Wide Open Jumpers Missed".

On one first quarter play, James saw Wally all alone in the corner, and drilled him with a pass.

"All alone" does not do justice to the play:

Wally was about as open as one could be on a basketball court.

He caught the ball, set his feet, looked down to make sure they were behind the three-point arc, balanced his checkbook, and then launched a shot.

Which he missed.

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The next time the Cavs are in Seattle (which is to say never), they should divide up and comb the city's streets for Wally's jumper, because it sure seems he left it there.

A Shortage Of "Consequently"; Last night's game was televised on ESPN. That meant no Austin Carr!

We'll just have to pick up the pieces of our shattered lives and move on.

But we do have some AC business to discuss. In (*warning: gratuitous link to earlier column*) [my review](#) of Monday's game against Dallas, I introduced what should be a regular feature:

"Uncle Austin";

As we all know, our favorite Cavs announcer doesn't just take liberties with the English language; he wines it, dines it, and bends it over the hood of his car.

But perhaps not as much as I suggested.

In that column, I questioned AC's use of the phrase "sporadic rhythm", as it sounds inherently contradictory:

how can something be
rhythmic
if it is
sporadic
?

Alert reader Bill Schroeder wrote to say that the term does have a specific meaning in the medical world: it "is used to describe such heart rhythms as atrial fibrillation and ventricular fibrillation." (*Ventricular fibrillation*, in turn, derives from the Latin for "large mansions for cardiologists.")

To my knowledge, Austin has yet to get his M.D., but we'll give him the benefit of the doubt anyway.

He is our beloved Uncle Austin, after all.

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NOT THAT YOU ASKED, BUT...

At Least McCain Carried The Four-Year-Old Vote: I actually had this conversation with the Official Daughter of GBS last night:

ODGBS: Daddy, why didn't people vote for John McCain? He's going to die soon!

ME: That's not a nice thing to say, honey.

ODGBS: But he's *old*!

Sigh.

WHAT LIES AHEAD:

More home cooking! The Cavs will face the Indiana Pacers tomorrow night at The Q, then will head to Chicago the next night for a return engagement with Da Bulls. N
ext week brings three more home games against Milwaukee (Tuesday), Denver (Thursday), and Utah (Saturday).