

LeBron's 41 Lead Cavs Past Bulls

Written by {ga=mrburns}

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This was a game that the Cavs may not have won last season. It was the tail end of a home-away back-to-back, and those are games in which NBA teams typically struggle. But although the Cavs had their problems and allowed a few runs by Chicago, they rallied in the fourth quarter to put the Bulls away. And Nick Allburn tells our readers all about the win in his latest column.



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The game began with a short-lived Chicago lead in the opening minutes, which was quickly erased as the Cavaliers erupted to take a 24-10 lead. The Cavs probably could have ended the game in that first quarter, but the Bulls didn't roll over, and by the time the quarter closed the Bulls had pulled back within 5 points (32-27).

Ben Gordon led a second quarter charge for the home team, and the Bulls quickly tied the game at 34. Gordon would finish with 29 points. Chicago built a lead in the second quarter, and a pair of Andres Nocioni 3-pointers gave the Bulls a 51-42 lead. Fortunately the Cavs fought back, and LeBron capped the half with a thunderous dunk to whittle the lead down to 3 points (57-54).

It looked like the third quarter was going to give the Cavs problems again, as the Bulls, fueled by Derrick Rose, opened a 70-60 lead. But once again, the Cavs

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refused to fade, and a Daniel Gibson trey tied the game at 74 late in the third. The quarter ended with the Cavs trailing by the same 3-point deficit they faced at the quarter's commencement.

As much as the second quarter belonged to the Bulls, the fourth quarter belonged to the Wine & Gold. A LeBron James three gave the Cavs an 80-77 lead, which was their first lead since the second quarter. A 31-7 run built that lead to 12 points (89-77), but the Bulls fought back valiantly to cut the Cleveland lead to a mere 2 points (96-94) with just under 3:00 remaining. LeBron James took it from there.

James hit a three to increase the lead to five points, and then Ben Gordon made it a one-possession game with a pair of free throws. But LeBron, as if channeling [Jules Winnfield](#) (*"oh, well allow me to retort"*), buried another three to open a six-point lead (102-96), and essentially end the game. The final was 106-97.

Quick Hits

LeBron's Line: 13-29 for 41 points, 13 boards, 4 assists, 11-13 FT, 2 turnovers.

James has now dropped 41 points on the Bulls twice this season. Although LeBron was 4-of-7 from deep, I especially like how he's pounding the paint this season, and his improved free throw shooting might be the reason he seems so determined to do so. LeBron is now shooting 77.3 percent from the charity stripe, up more than 6 percentage points from last season. If he continues to hit the freebies at that clip, watch out. Teams may have to rethink any "Hack-A-Bron" strategies they employed in the past.

I like Mo Williams. A lot.

I was all for the Mo Williams trade. It seemed like a vintage "something for nothing" NBA trade. Granted, it wasn't the Pau Gasol deal, but considering that the Cavs were in desperate need of a scoring point guard, it got the job done. That said, I was a bit nervous that Williams would shoot too much or dominate the ball, which are two things you don't want to happen on a team that also features LeBron James. I know it's still early, but I love the way the offense looks with

Williams running the point.

There are ball handlers, and there are point guards. Larry Hughes was a ball handler. Mo Williams is a point guard. Williams isn't merely running the point because he's a savvy dribbler, he's playing the position because he's a good distributor. The difference between the Cavs' offense pre-Williams and post-Williams is almost night and day. Gone are the days when LeBron dribbled down the clock and threw up a dumb three. Gone are the days when everyone just stood around and watched LeBron. Mo Williams isn't going to win any assist titles in Cleveland because of the degree to which LeBron James handles the ball, but his abilities to distribute and also create his own shot are making the Cavaliers' offense less predictable, more consistent, and more difficult to defend.

JJ Hickson sighting.

Do you remember where you were when JJ Hickson was drafted? Do you remember which expletives you selected to describe Danny Ferry's choice? The Hickson pick was pretty unpopular at the time, and I'm guilty of trashing the decision myself, but my opinion has changed. The little I've seen of Hickson has left me wanting more.

If you haven't perused any of Hickson's college highlights, make a point of doing so. I was immediately impressed with his athleticism and post moves, and the Cavaliers are a team that desperately needs to develop or acquire a young post option. Mike Brown has been making an effort to give Hickson some minutes early in the season, and I hope JJ's playing time increases in the coming weeks.

Hickson's already a solid rebounder, and he had a great play against the Bulls when he stole a rebound away from Luol Deng and scored a layup. Fellow TCF writer Erik Cassano made an excellent point last week that Hickson may have trouble down the stretch, having never been through the rigors of an NBA season that lasts 82 games plus the playoffs. We'll have to keep a close eye on the rookie to see how he responds to the grind.

Win the easy ones.□

It sounds simple enough, but beating the teams that they should have been a real problem for the Cavs in the last few years. You got the feeling that the team was phoning in dozens of regular season games every year, and it probably cost them

a better playoff seed at least once.

We still need to see more of this team, but it looks like things might be different this time around. The Cavs are now 5-2, with their two losses coming on the road in competitive games against solid clubs in the Celtics and the Hornets. But the Cavaliers have also been very businesslike in dispatching lousy teams like the Bobcats, Bulls (twice), and Pacers, along with the mediocre Mavericks. If this trend continues, I like the Cavs to win the Central Division, and possibly give Boston a run for their money for the East's number one seed.

As the rotation turns.

Mike Brown is usually fairly creative in finding rotations that work, but one of his third quarter rotations left me scratching my head. On the floor at the same time were Daniel Gibson, LeBron James, Wally Szczerbiak, Ben Wallace, and Delonte West. That's basically three shooting guards, a small forward, and a center/forward who can't score. I don't have a problem with going small, but when you go small and you don't have a legitimate scorer at center or power forward, there's going to be trouble. Needless to say, that rotation was nixed pretty quickly.

Every Rose has its thorn.

Derrick Rose is going to be a very good pro. The guy is silky smooth, quick as hell, and unlike many rookies, doesn't appear to be in love with his jump shot. Rose seems to know that getting to the hoop is the easiest way to score, and he's going to be a star in this league. Michael Beasley may end up being a better player than Rose (purely a theoretical at this point), but nobody's going to second guess Chicago for pulling the trigger on their hometown boy.

Separated at birth.

Anderson Varejao and Joakim Noah could be twins. Not biologically, of course, but in their playing style. Noah and Varejao are both spark plugs for their respective teams coming off the bench, both guys are terrific rebounders and disruptive forces on defense, and both guys have a jump shot that's ugly as sin. Fortunately for the female Cavs fans out there, I think Varejao has Noah beat in the looks department, which isn't a real hard task when you take a look at [the dude](#).

DiGiorno Pizza® Austin Carr Quote of the Game.

After stating that he brought only six DiGiornos with him to Chicago because it was only a one-night trip, Carr stated, *"I got the diet pizza."*

If loving

AC is wrong, I don't want to be right.

Up Next: Milwaukee Bucks, 11/11, 7:00, Quicken Loans Arena