

This Just In: The Cavs Are Good

Written by {ga=samamico}

Monday, November 10 2008 7:00 PM -

The Cavs are 5-2, with their losses coming on the road to Boston and New Orleans. They swept their first back-to-back games of the season (Indiana on Friday, then at Chicago Saturday), and have displayed the camaraderie and killer instinct of champion a little more each game. The Cleveland Cavaliers are looking very good right now, folks. And Sam Amico examines their start to the season and the potential of this team in his latest.



The Cleveland Cavaliers are looking very good right now, folks.

And if you predicted before the season that LeBron James would average exactly 41 points per game against the Chicago Bulls, you'd be right. At least, you'd be right so far -- as James has now scorched the Bulls for 41 in both Cleveland and Chicago, and we're only two weeks into the season.

Like most superstars, James took some shots in Chicago that must have made Cavs coach Mike Brown shake his head. Not in disgust, but in amazement.

Odds are Brown doesn't have any plays drawn up that require a guy who had made just 1 of 19 three-pointers through the first six games to heave up 25-footers. But that's exactly what James did with the outcome in the balance, burying two long-range bombs and the Bulls' hopes of avenging their defeat earlier in the week.

LeBron was just as remarkable in a home win over Indiana one night earlier, soaring through the air (and underneath the backboard) before softly dropping in a Dr. J-esque reverse layup. And through the first two weeks, no one has thrown down as many highlight-stealing plays James. At this rate, ESPN will have to replace its nightly list of the "Top 10 Plays" with the "Top 10 from LeBron James."

This Just In: The Cavs Are Good

Written by {ga=samamico}

Monday, November 10 2008 7:00 PM -

Now that we've gotten the obligatory (and much-deserved) praise of LeBron out of the way, here is something you may not know -- the Cavs are more than LeBron.

I've never been able to type that sentence with a straight face, but this season, it's true. I repeat -- the Cavs can be great because of James, but even without him they'd still be pretty good. (Not that Brown or anyone in Northeast Ohio hopes the Cavs get the chance to prove it.)

Actually, I take that back. The Cavs ARE proving it by playing well and sometimes even going on mini-runs when James is on the bench. And because he spent the summer winning a gold medal with Team USA, his minutes have been reduced considerably. Never before has a healthy LeBron gotten so much rest. He may not like it now, but he certainly can't complain. The Cavs are winning, and he likely understands they'll need him when it matters most -- in May.

So how are the Cavs more than just James?

Well, you can start with new acquisition Mo Williams. The Cavs haven't had a point guard who runs the offense this efficiently since the days of Andre Miller. That was in Cleveland B.L. (Before LeBron). Williams is unquestionably the Cavs' best point man of the James era.

Williams is remarkably quick with the ball and has been fantastic when it comes to creating his own looks at the basket and hitting those dagger shots. He's never been much of a defender, but he has at least displayed some scrappiness under the defense-driven Brown.

With Williams, starting backcourt mate Delonte West, and reserves Daniel Gibson and Wally Szczerbiak, the Cavs are also deep in the backcourt. But they're only deep because each seems to understand what's expected of him -- with no less than Szczerbiak being the most consistent and productive in his new role coming off the bench. He insists he likes it, and it's hard not to believe him because he's playing his best basketball since his time as Kevin Garnett's wingman in Minnesota.

In fact, the Cavs' guard play is believed to be one reason Detroit traded for Allen Iverson. Pistons GM Joe Dumars figured he needed more firepower to keep pace. And when was the last time you could say that about a Cleveland backcourt?

This Just In: The Cavs Are Good

Written by {ga=samamico}

Monday, November 10 2008 7:00 PM -

Everyone figured the Cavs would be a little thin in the frontcourt, especially when it comes to the big guys. Well, that is true -- to a degree. Center Zydrunas Ilgauskas has improved his range, and even knocked down a three in a road win over Dallas. He has also been as effective as ever near the basket, using an array of pump fakes and spin moves to free himself for layups or draw fouls.

Also, Anderson Varejao obviously put in tons of work during the offseason, dropping 40 pounds and increasing an energy level that was already through the roof. Mostly, Varejao seems more comfortable with the ball than at any time in his career. Instead of looking like the first thing he wants to do is get rid of the doggone thing after receiving a pass, he has been displaying patience and some confidence in his shot.

That's not always a good thing, but you have to be impressed with how he's at least willing to face the basket, square up, and let it fly. In Indiana win, Varejao got the ball on the baseline, pumped to lift his defender in the air, then drove past for an easy layup. It caused most fans (and Varejao's teammates) to rub their eyes and take a second look, just to make sure it really was Varejao.

The Cavs are 5-2, with their losses coming on the road to Boston and New Orleans. They swept their first back-to-back games of the season (Indiana on Friday, then at Chicago Saturday), and have displayed the camaraderie and killer instinct of champion a little more each game.

The bottom line is the Cavs are suddenly a good all-around team that just happens to possess a superstar. In the NBA, that combination can carry you far.

Sam Amico is the editor of Pro Basketball News and a regular contributor to The Cleveland Fan and SportsTime Ohio.