

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

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Carlos Backstabber and the Utah Jazz paid a visit to CTown on Saturday night, and when it counted most, LeBron James was at his best, scoring 16 of his 38 points in the final stanza, propelling the Cavs to a 105-93 victory at Quicken Loans Arena. The win was the Cavs' seventh in a row and raised their record to 8-2 on the young season, tops in the Eastern Conference. John Hnat gives us The Good, The Bad, & The Summary on the Cavs latest win.



THE SUMMARY:

In his "Keys to the Game", Cavs announcer Austin Carr said that the Cavs needed to start strong and finish strong.

From his lips to LeBron James's ears.

A 25-14 start and a 14-3 run in the fourth quarter propelled the Cavs to a 105-93 victory last night over the Utah Jazz at Quicken Loans Arena. The win was the Cavs' seventh in a row and raised their record to 8-2

on the young season. (That's tops in the Central Division, in case you were wondering.)

Not too surprisingly, James led the way with 38 points (he tried to get to his new magic number of 41, but missed a three-point attempt with approximately one minute remaining); he also led the way with seven assists. Mo Williams and Zydrunas Ilgauskas added 20 and 16, respectively. Carlos Turncoat led the Jazz (who were short-handed, as they were without stars Deron Williams and Andrei Kirilenko) with 17.

WHAT I LIKED ABOUT THE GAME:

Santa Claus Came Early This Year: ☐ Hmm. I see that title, and it looks like it is right out of the Vivid Video 2008 Holiday catalog. But I'm referring to the Cavs' backcourt of Williams and Delonte West. We don't need any more presents after getting these guys in the wine and gold.

Frankly, their numbers last night were nice, but not overwhelming: 32 points, 12-of-29 from the field, 6-of-16 from three-point range. But the fact is, *it has been so long since the Cavs have seen production like that from their backcourt, it makes those guys seem like All-Stars.*

Mo and Delonte (now that he has had the opportunity to really become part of the offense) have turned the Cavs into a

different team.

Both of them also allow LeBron to play off the ball. Right off the bat, Williams threw a perfect bounce pass to a cutting LeBron for an easy dunk. Later, Williams drove into the lane, saw Bron cutting down the right baseline, hit him with another pass ... and another easy dunk. Delonte got his turn as well, throwing a perfect alley-oop pass for ... yet another dunk. I ask somewhat rhetorically: in two and a half years as a Cavalier, did Larry Hughes lead LeBron perfectly on three passes for dunks?

Even A General Is A Soldier: I could go on about Bron's array of dunks, or his three bombs from three-point range, or the way he charged so hard into Utah's Kyle Korver that Korver was left with a "32" imprinted in his chest (remember, the numbers would be reversed). Instead, I want to focus on a couple of plays that won't show up in the boxscore. The first one occurred in the first quarter, when James harassed the Jazz's C.J. Miles enough to force a shot clock violation. The other play came in the fourth quarter, in the middle of the Cavs' run. The Cavs were about to start yet another fast break, when the ball got away and was headed out of bounds. Bron dove on the floor and saved the ball to a teammate. He can throw an entire [Johnson & Johnson](#) factory into the air before each game, if he's going to continue playing with that kind of intensity.

Why Have A Boxscore Anyway?: I say that because Ben Wallace played a strong game last night, not that you'd know it from his one point and 10 rebounds. Wallace's real value came in the form of his defense on Carlos Backstabber. He served notice early in the game - with the Cavs leading 4-3, he blocked a dunk attempt by everybody's favorite former Cavalier. Boozer was held to 17 points on 5-of-12 shooting for the game, with Wallace being a major reason why.

Wallace is not a \$14 million player, nor is he the defensive presence he was during his heyday with Detroit. We can't compare him now to the player he was then. But he can still affect the flow of a game with his defense, in a way that no other Cavalier can.

Okay, The Boxscore Does Matter (Part I): The Cavs shot 85% (22-of-26) from the free-throw line. James was 9-of-11; apparently free throws are no longer a weak part of his game, as he is now shooting 77% from the line this season.

Okay, The Boxscore Does Matter (Part II): The Cavs had 21 assists on their 33 field goals.

Okay, The Boxscore Does Matter (Part III): While it was not

quite as impressive as a couple of their recent games, the Cavs turned the ball over only 12 times last night.

You Can't Blame Him; It *Was* The Only Way He'd Get On The Court:

After a Williams layup extended the Cavs' lead to 95-84, Lorenzen Wright was whistled for a technical foul. In his zeal to celebrate the basket, Wright stepped onto the court. Technically, that means there were six Cavs on the court; and technically, that's a technical foul. (In the spirit of Ball Don't Lie, Utah's Kyle Korver missed the resultant free throw.)

Incidentally: When Cavs announcer Fred McLeod uses the phrase such as "ball don't lie", that phrase has reached its expiration date. (I would have said that it "jumped the shark", but that phrase itself jumped the shark some time ago.)

WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE ABOUT THE GAME:

The Third Quarter Arrived Early: It was late in the first quarter. The Cavs had a 25-14 lead and were looking

like world-beaters. They were about to push the lead to 13 on what seemed to be their 40

th

fast break of the quarter ...

... and then Wally happened. No, not the [little droid](#) ; we're talking about Wally Szczerbiak. Wally attempted to get the ball to Daniel Gibson; the pass was stolen by Utah's Ronnie Brewer, leading to a dunk at the other end. Okay, these things happen. Nobody's perfect. Then Wally tried to inbound the ball after the basket. Another pass to Brewer (who, for the record, is Not A Cavalier), another easy hoop for the Jazz ... and a potential three-point play, as Wally fouled Brewer during the layup. To that point, the Cavs were running away with the game; those two baskets killed the Cavs' momentum, and ...

And It Stayed A While: ... began what would become a 26-7 run by the Jazz, extending well into the second quarter. Lackluster defense, no flow on offense ... it was approximately ten minutes of

basketball that I'd rather not discuss. So we won't.

Department of It May Have Been Better To Play Four On Five: Okay, just one more bit about that run by the Jazz. Somewhere in there, Cavs rookie J.J. Hickson played three minutes and 38 seconds. In those three minutes and 38 seconds, the Cavs were outscored by 18 points. A plus-minus of 18 is hard to accomplish at all, if you can't look down at your chest and see the word "Grizzlies" on it; it's damn near impossible to do in less than four minutes. Much as I like Hickson and appreciate his long-term potential, he just ain't there yet.

Department of It *Is* Better To Play Four On Five: Sasha Pavlovic got a few minutes of action, and not in the Tarence Kinsey Brigade sense (the only way in which it is acceptable). His plus-minus in four minutes of action was -10, which makes him an All-Star compared to Hickson, and a scrub

compared to the rest of the league.

WHAT LIES AHEAD:

Now it starts to get tougher. After traveling to New Jersey on Tuesday night for a game against the Nets (no, that's not the tough part), the Cavs will face the Pistons in Detroit on Wednesday (if they can beat the Pistons, in their house, on the second night of a back-to-back, I'll be seriously impressed), and then come home to face the Hawks on Saturday. Not saying that it will be a 1-2 week, but don't be surprised if it is ... and if so, don't go out on the ledge just yet.