

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

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The Cavs trounced the Knicks, 119-101, in a game that was not nearly as close as the final score would lead you to believe. The Cavs bolted to a 12-point lead by the end of the first quarter, led by as many as 34 points, and were still leading by 28 in the fourth quarter when Coach Mike Brown sent in The Tarence Kinsey Brigade. Seven Cavaliers scored in double digits, led by LeBron James's 26 points. John Hnat gives us The Good, The Bad, & The Summary of last night's beatdown at The Garden.



THE SUMMARY:

It was a close game. And then it started.

Seriously, I'm not sure how to express just how lopsided last night's game was. The Cavs trounced the Knicks, 119-101, in a game that was not nearly as close as the final score would lead you to believe. (Honestly. The Cavs bolted to a 12-point lead by the end of the first quarter, led by as many as 34 points, and were still leading by 28 in the fourth quarter when Coach Mike Brown sent in The Tarence Kinsey Brigade.)

The Knicks played only eight players last night, thanks to injuries

(Danilo Gallinari, Cuttino Mobley) and general suckitude (Jerome James, Malik Rose, Eddy Curry). Not that it is any excuse; had the Knicks been able to play all eight players *at the same time*, they still would have come up short.

Seven Cavaliers scored in double digits, led by LeBron James's 26 points. Seven Knicks also scored in double digits, led by Quentin Richardson's 22. (Condolences to those of you who bet the "under" last night.)

It's the NBA. Where "I know! We'll throw away the next two seasons!" happens.

WHAT I LIKED ABOUT THE GAME:

I Think He Knew Where He Was Playing: Barely two minutes into the game, New York's Chris Duhon tried to drive and loft a floating shot towards the hoop.

"Tried" was the key word in that sentence.

LeBron saw the play developing, checked his watch, nibbled at

a fingernail or two, and then swatted Duhon's shot ferociously. It's almost immaterial that the Cavs' Mo Williams recovered the loose ball and drove to the other end for a layup. Right from the start, the Cavs played tough defense, and really did not let up until they sent in the junior varsity for the last several minutes.

Not That They Needed Him: One of the most encouraging trends of this young season is how the Cavs have played when James has been resting on the bench. In past seasons, the only question was exactly how much ground the Cavs would lose while LeBron was taking a breather; the concept of holding the lead, or even *extending* it, seemed completely out of the question. This year, however, the Cavs have been routinely holding serve while James has been catching his breath.

That trend continued last night. The Cavs led by 12 at the end of the first quarter, when LeBron sat down ... and when he returned halfway through the second quarter, the reserves had doubled the lead to 24. The second unit of Anderson Varejao, Wally Szczerbiak, Daniel Gibson, and J.J. Hickson (along with starting point guard Williams) has been playing very well recently, and is allowing Coach Mike Brown to keep LeBron's workload lighter. (Last night, James logged just over 30 minutes.)

Play Of The Night: Cavs leading, 57-35, late in the first half. The Knicks' Wilson Chandler tried to dunk. Ben Wallace said (*using my best Austin Carr voice*) "get that weak stuff out of here, young man," as he blocked the shot. Richardson recovered the ball and tried to lay it in; Wallace again blocked the shot. Williams recovered the ball (seems to be a recurring theme here), and passed to Delonte West, who drove to the other end and dunked his way into (if I had to guess) one of the middle spots on ESPN's top ten plays of the day.

Don't Adjust Your Set, That Really Was Number Four:

Blocking shots was not all that Wallace did last night. In the first quarter, with the shot clock winding down, he hit a fadeaway jumper. According to my research, that jumper was the *jkh*
\$@%^jhfgd
th of Wallace's career (*note: I took my contact lenses out a few minutes ago*).
That was impressive enough, but the Fro was just getting warmed up - in the third quarter, Wallace *drove the ball from the key all the way to the hoop for a layup*. When Ben is making plays like that ... you're probably going to win by 18, because it is definitely Your Night.

Single Digits, Good: The Cavs had eight turnovers last night. Eight. By contrast, the Knicks had at least eight turnovers of

the "pass to somebody in the thousand-dollar courtside seats" variety.

Double Digits, Good: As mentioned, seven Cavaliers scored in double digits. Most of them were the usual suspects - James, West, Zydrunas Ilgauskas, Szczerbiak, Varejao, and Gibson. Joining them was Cavs rookie J.J. Hickson, who made it into double digits for the first time in his professional career with his 10 points. Make no mistake: Hickson is still very raw, to the point where his nickname really should be "Sushi". But he has some real moves in the post, and he can also dunk when the situation calls for it (as he did on a nice pass from Williams early in the fourth quarter).

The Boobie-Meter: It was actually a pretty rough night for Daniel "Boobie" Gibson. He did get to double digits with his 10 points, and he did notch seven assists ... but almost none of those came with the outcome of the game still in doubt. (True, the outcome was no longer in doubt by early in the second quarter.) Boobie is best known for his outside shot, but his season-long slump continued last night, as he shot 2-of-8 from long distance. (Hey, maybe HE should join the Knicks.) But the points, and the assists, and the nice hustle play he had in the third quarter (diving for a loose ball at midcourt, which led to a powerful James dunk) all have to count for something. So we'll rate his effort a [Kate Bosworth](#) - not much there, but what was there, was easy on the eyes.

Uncle Austin: On occasion, the Cavs announcers utter things that make one think they are watching the game from across the street, with a pair of binoculars and a box of donuts; they can be borderline (if unintentionally) perverted. Fred MacLeod set that standard a couple of years ago with his "rubber rim job" remark; that one will never be topped. But our beloved Uncle Austin Carr came close last night. After Cavs rookie Darnell Jackson scored his first professional points, the result of an offensive rebound and put-back, AC decreed that Jackson "likes to bump and grind around the basket". You know how the fine folks at Quicken Loans Arena will play a spot of music after a Cavalier scores, with each player having his own song? Looks like Darnell will be hearing Cinemax-style saxophone music after each basket.

WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE ABOUT THE GAME:

It's pretty hard to find much fault in an 18-point victory, no?

Oh Wait, Here's Something: As much as the Cavs tried, they could not completely resist being dragged into the quick-shooting style that the Knicks favor these days.

They launched a total of 33 shots from three-point range, which is probably about twice as many as they should.

This fact bothers me on two levels:

1. Teams should do what they do well, and dictate the pace of the game. Don't let the other team tell you how the game is going to be played; tell *them* how it will be.

2. The Knicks' game, which is based one hundred percent on outside shooting, is about the worst model a team can follow. Mike D'Antoni (Knicks coach) won absolutely nothing while playing this style of basketball in Phoenix, and that was with Steve Nash running the point and snipers like Raja Bell and Leandro Barbosa on the perimeter. When you replace Nash with Chris Duhon, and Bell and Barbosa with Tim Thomas and Quentin Richardson ... you get train wrecks like last night's. It is grenade basketball - don't hold it for more than a second, and launch it as quickly as possible - and it has never won a thing in the history of professional basketball. In other words, if you are going to let another team dictate the style of play, at least make it a *winning* style.

Oh, One Other Thing: Woody Allen has to buy a new hat. (Is it just me, or is it appropriate that Allen and Spike Lee, two directors who have not had a good movie in a *loooong* time, are two of the most visible fans of a team that has not had a good season in a *loooong* time?)

WHAT LIES AHEAD:

The bad news? The Cavs have the second half of a back-to-back tonight.

The good news? They'll play it at home, at Quicken Loans Arena.

The better news? Their opponent is the Oklahoma City Thunder. For years, the fans of Oklahoma have wanted a professional basketball team to call

their own. They're still waiting.

The Cavs will have Thanksgiving Day off, then will continue their four-games-in-five-nights stretch with games against Golden State and Milwaukee.

ONE FINAL NOTE:

Aside to Tom Oktavec: Told ya so. (For those readers who are not Tom Oktavec, he dared me to write this column without mentioning how a certain Cavaliers player could potentially be relocating to the New York metropolitan area in two years. Not that any other media picked up on that story either.

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