

Cavs Win 10th Straight; Deep-Six Sixers

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}

Wednesday, December 10 2008 7:00 PM -

One string ended for the Cavaliers on Wednesday night in Philadelphia. Another, more important streak kept right on going. The 101-93 victory over the Sixers at the Wachovia Center didn't feature the precision or the mercilessness of the previous nine wins before, all of which had ended in a Cavaliers victory by at least 12 points- an NBA record. It was a little bit sloppy, actually, with poor shots, questionable fouls (and officiating), injuries, a lapse into "Lelso" style offensive sets for Cleveland, and even one of those rarities- a fourth quarter Cavaliers fans had to sweat out to an extent.



One string ended for the Cavaliers on Wednesday night in Philadelphia. Another, more important streak kept right on going.

The 101-93 victory over the Sixers at the Wachovia Center didn't feature the precision or the mercilessness of the previous nine wins before, all of which had ended in a Cavaliers victory by at least 12 points- an NBA record. It was a little bit sloppy, actually, with poor shots, questionable fouls (and officiating), injuries, a lapse into "Lelso" style offensive sets for Cleveland, and even one of those rarities- a fourth quarter Cavaliers fans had to sweat out to an extent. But you can't be too tough on the road victory in the second night of a back-to-back. Winning these types of games- even in a fashion that won't get the game film sent to Springfield- is what championship-caliber teams do. And right now the Cavaliers, with a 19-3 record- second-best in the NBA- and a ten-game winning

Cavs Win 10th Straight; Deep-Six Sixers

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}
Wednesday, December 10 2008 7:00 PM -

streak, one off the franchise record set by the 1988-89 team, are looking quite a bit like that kind of group.

Third-Quarter Wipeout: Just as they had on Tuesday night against Toronto, the Cavaliers came out of the halftime locker room and proceeded to throw a heavy wool blanket of defense on their chafing opponent. Cleveland turned a 48-46 halftime lead into a 74-55 bulge by the 2:52 mark of the third, holding the 76ers to 2-of-15 shooting and forcing six Philadelphia turnovers in that roughly nine-minute span. The 26-9 run essentially won the game for the Cavaliers, as it built them a large enough lead to withstand a Philadelphia charge and their own mini-meltdown in the fourth quarter. Cleveland outscored the Sixers 36-19 for the period.

Speaking of that fourth quarter: Early on in the final period, it looked like another milk run for Cleveland's reserves, with the starters chilling on the bench wearing towels around their heads like turbans. The Cavaliers led 86-65 a minute into the period. Then Z got hurt and things unraveled a bit from there. From an 88-70 deficit with eight-and-a-half minutes to play, the 76ers embarked on a 9-0 run to slice Cleveland's lead in half, and were within a manageable six, at 95-89, at the two-minute mark.

It appeared that the Cavaliers went into their "prevent offense" a little early, as LeBron James pounded down the shot clock in iso sets, and the Cavaliers settled for jump shots that were retrieved and taken off with by the fast-breaking 76ers. Cleveland also showed rather poor clock-management skill; the Cavaliers were called for fouls 90 feet from the Philadelphia hoop at least twice, and allowed the 76ers to score a lot of their fourth-quarter points from the line, with the clock stopped.

It was exactly the kind of slapdash effort that got the Cavaliers beat by the Celtics and Pistons earlier in the season, and they're going to have to clean it up if they want to get by the elite teams on the road. But on Wednesday night, it was good enough for another victory.

Cavs Win 10th Straight; Deep-Six Sixers

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}

Wednesday, December 10 2008 7:00 PM -

A sign of dominance in a not-so-dominant effort: The Cavaliers never trailed after the 10:22 mark of the second period. They might not have looked all-world in victory on Wednesday night, but they led for the final 34 minutes of a 48-minute game, and despite some late struggles, they still held essential control of the contest for almost the entire way.

LeBron's Line: 29 points on 10-of-22 shooting, 2-of-6 from downtown, 7-of-8 from the line, with four rebounds, five assists, and two blocks. LBJ was in attack mode all night, with mostly positive results, obviously. He was a little three-happy-six is too many for him on a given night- but 45 percent shooting isn't bad, and most impressively, he kept knocking down his free throws. LeBron is now touching 80 percent from the stripe, as thus far he's largely eliminated one of the real flaws in his game- his inconsistency from the line. Or maybe he's in the throes of a hot streak and will be down to 73 percent before we know it. We'll see.

Mo Money, Mo Money, Mo Money: Mo Williams had perhaps his best night of the season on Wednesday, throwing in 27 points on 11-of-16 and adding four assists and six rebounds. Mo was at his trick-shot best on Wednesday, scoring on a variety of floaters, leaners, and rainbows over taller defenders, as he broke down Philadelphia's defense time and again, especially in the first half. Later in the game, it appeared Mo got a little frustrated with the officiating, committing a couple of silly fouls during the late Sixers run, and he also committed three of Cleveland's 12 turnovers on the night, but in terms of being the man whose scoring stroke takes pressure off LeBron, Mo filled that bill to a tee on Wednesday night.

Other Props: Anderson Varejao came off the bench to score 15 points with eight rebounds- a nice line, although he only finished with a -6 on the plus-minus to show for it. Other than LBJ, Mo and Andy, no Cavalier finished in double figures. Z had the by far the best plus-minus of the Cavaliers, with a chubby +23, despite his ordinary line (nine points and six boards on 4-of-12 shooting with five turnovers.) The big man is always a problem for Philadelphia's undersized front line, and his absence really hurt the Cavaliers down the stretch on Wednesday night.

Cavs Win 10th Straight; Deep-Six Sixers

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}
Wednesday, December 10 2008 7:00 PM -

Z Goes Down: After a month or so of totally smooth sailing on the injury front, things have gotten a little rough for the Cavaliers the last two games. On Tuesday night Boobie Gibson went down with a big toe injury, a malady that is expected to sideline him for the next couple of weeks. Wednesday was Big Z's turn to come up lame. Early in the fourth quarter, while charging out to contest a three-pointer by former Cavalier Donyell Marshall, the big fella landed on Marshall's foot, twisting the ankle that rests just above his surgically repaired left foot. There's no break in the limb, but preliminary reports have Z out for about two-to-three weeks. This could be an problem- not only is Zydrunas playing the best basketball of his career right now, but the Cavaliers have some latent issues with their frontcourt depth that might come to the forefront now that the big man is on the shelf.

There was also a near-disaster in the third quarter, when Wally Sczcerbiak, stumbling after a shot attempt on which he was fouled, nearly rolled over Delonte West's leg. Thankfully, both guys were fine, and continued playing.

Who? Lou Williams came into Wednesday's game averaging barely 10 points per off Philadelphia's bench. But the fourth-year guard from South Gwinnett High School in Georgia provided the answer to Austin Carr's proverbial question, asked in somewhat unhappier times, "Who are the Cavaliers going to make a superstar tonight?" Williams poured in 22 on Wednesday night, including eight points from the free-throw line, and led the late Philadelphia comeback with 11 fourth-quarter points. The 76ers love to run on opportunity, and the young Williams, one of the last men drafted into the NBA straight out of high school before that loophole was pinched off, was one of the prime beneficiaries of that tactic against the Cavaliers. The 22-year old even spent some time guarding LeBron, and did a credible job.

A more familiar nemesis, Andre Iguodala, led Philadelphia with 27, although he was largely stymied in the second half, scoring just six points in the final two periods. Andre Miller chipped in with 22 for the 76ers.

Play of the Night: Late fourth quarter, the 76ers have cut Cleveland's lead to

Cavs Win 10th Straight; Deep-Six Sixers

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}
Wednesday, December 10 2008 7:00 PM -

97-89, and the Cavaliers need a bucket to put the game on ice. With 1:09 to play, LeBron missed a short jumper. But Ben Wallace- who actually hit a jump shot earlier in the night- swooped in from the right side, grabbed the rebound, and hammered home the put-back with one hand, extending the lead back to ten and pretty much ending the competitive portion of the night's action.

The Wisdom of Mr. Cavalier? None in this recap. I don't want people to get the impression that I'm pointing and laughing scornfully at AC with these little blurbs. I like Mr. Carr, appreciate his enthusiasm and love for the Cavaliers as well as for our area, and he knows quite a little bit about basketball besides, at least as much as you can glean from his rather mangled syntax. He's a man of accomplishment- a Notre Dame graduate, a successful businessman, and a great, great player in his day- and by all accounts he's as friendly and gregarious in person as he appears on TV. So I'm not laughing at him- I'd like to think I'm laughing with him, joining in with the rusty cackle he displays so often on the air. Just want to be clear on that.

Now, with that disclaimer out of the way, we'll be back to the Wisdom of Mr. Cavalier in the next recap.

Next: Hopefully you're not tired of the 76ers, because you're going to be seeing more of them. Philadelphia comes to the Q for a Friday night match at 7:30 PM. After that, it's off on a four-game road trip, with stops in Atlanta (on Saturday night, another back-to-backer), Minnesota, Denver and Oklahoma City. A 13th consecutive win at home would be a nice segue into a trip with a couple of tough stops along the way.