

Mama said there'd be days like this. There'd be days like this my mama said. Mama also told me to be leery of a 20-3 team looking for a 12th straight win, heading out on the road for the 2nd game of a back-to-back set against a quality opponent, while playing their 4th game in five nights. Mama talks a lot of hoops. No excuses. The Hawks beat the Cavs Saturday night in Phillips Arena by a score of 97-92 in a hotly contested basketball game that went down to the wire. Peeks recaps the Cavs first loss in a month.



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No excuses. The Hawks beat the Cavs Saturday night in Phillips Arena by a score of 97-92 in a hotly contested basketball game that went down to the wire. But all those factors listed above certainly came into play as the Cavs looked a step slow at times and simply didn't hit some shots they usually convert.

The Hawks were the more aggressive team for most of the night and they went to the rim almost at will against the Cavs. That was evidenced by the fact the Hawks shot 39 free throws on the night compared to Cleveland's 23.

Mike Bibby led the Hawks with 24 points and he was backed by 19 from Marvin Williams and 17 from Joe Johnson who took over late.

LeBron James again led Cleveland with 33 points and 9 assists and Mo Williams scored 26 points in support. Delonte West and Anderson Varejao were the only other Cavs in double figures as each scored 11 points. Williams and West each missed on good looks at a 3-pointer in the final, frantic seconds that would have knotted the game at 95 and sent it to overtime.

Takeaways

- That was an exciting basketball game. Almost a playoff atmosphere in Atlanta Saturday night. Both teams got after each other and played hard. And while the Cavs ultimately fell they showed a ton of heart and a ton of guts in getting back into

a game that got away from them a bit in the 3rd quarter. It would have been easy and even understandable if they had called it a night and checked out rather than fighting their way back into the game. But they did get back into the game. Even in a loss we learned these guys are not satisfied with winning a few and losing a couple as they seemed to be last year.

- Okay. I'm going to give some credit to a guy I've been justifiably hard on over the last couple years. Sasha Pavlovic is working his way back into my (and more importantly into Mike Brown's) good graces. Pavlovic has always been blessed with enough athletic talent to succeed in the association. But the team concept always seemed to escape him and he wasn't ready to accept a role as a defender. Nor was he willing to pass up too many shots.

But Pavlovic has started to put it together over the last month and earn back some minutes he lost while in his "blew period". Against Atlanta Pavlovic did a serviceable job defensively, using his strength and length to his advantage, and he also made the right decisions with the basketball when he found it in his hands. Pavlovic hit a big 3-point shot from the corner and also crashed the offensive glass for a put back as part of his 7 points in 24 minutes of action Saturday night. More impressive were a couple passes he made (and has been making regularly of late) to open teammates.

I still wish he'd finish more drives to the rim with some strength and attitude because he is capable of it. Instead he often tries to reach into some bag of tricks that might get him on Euro-CNN. We Americans are a power-hungry nation Sasha. Show some on a few more drives to the rim.

- The Cavs missed Zydrunas Ilgauskas Saturday night. There were a lot of wasted offensive sets against the Hawks. Without Z drawing a big man out of the paint and out to about 15 feet where Ilgauskas likes to set up shop the Hawks were able to collapse in the paint and force the Cavs into some sets and shots that we haven't seen since the pre-historic offensive days of the 2007 season.

Varejao has improved his offensive repertoire and is a viable option on the pick and roll and occasionally from 12-15 feet. But with Varejao and Ben Wallace on the court at the same time teams only have to worry about three guys beating them most of the time. West, Williams and James got squeezed pretty good by a Hawks team smart enough and athletic enough to put the clamps on them. The Cavs did make adjustments to thwart the Hawks defensive efforts later in the game but a lot of trips down the court came up empty early on.

Hopefully Z is ready to go in 7-10 days. But if he isn't the Cavs are going to struggle against athletic teams with a desire to get stops.

They Got Next

The Cavs get, as former announcer Michael Reghi would say, a nice little respite over the next few days. They then hit the heartland with games Wednesday (at Minnesota, 8pm), Friday (at Denver, 1030pm) and Sunday (at Oklahoma City, 7pm) before coming back home a week from Tuesday for a match up with the Houston Rockets.