

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

Written by {ga=diminishingskills}
Tuesday, February 03 2009 7:00 PM -

23 games in a row. That's right -- the Cavs set a new team record last night by winning their 23rd consecutive home game, a 101-83 drubbing of the Toronto Raptors at Quicken Loans Arena. Paced by LeBron James's 33 points, the Cavs never trailed in the game, storming to a 22-point lead in the first quarter and then maintaining that lead the rest of the way. John Hnat recaps last night's action.



THE SUMMARY:

Another day, another record in this season of record-breaking.

With their 101-83 victory last night at Quicken Loans Arena, the Cavs posted their 23rd consecutive win on their home floor.

The 23 straight wins is a new team record, eclipsing the previous best of 22 wins set during the 1988-89 season.

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Real surprise there - if the new team record is 23 wins, it kind of stands to reason that the old one was 22.

The Cavs never trailed in this one, storming to a 37-15 lead in the first quarter, and then

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maintaining their advantage the rest of the way. The Raptors made it interesting in the second half, cutting the lead to seven points early in the fourth quarter.

But the Cavs responded with a 12-4 run, and the only remaining question among the home fans was whether they would receive their free chalupas.

(A dunk by J.J. Hickson in the game's final minute answered that question with a resounding "yes".)

LeBron James, as usual, led the way with 33 points. Daniel Gibson backed him up with 18 (his highest total since a 22-point outburst against Charlotte in early December).

Mo Williams added 16, and Wally Expiring Contract (who started at shooting guard in place of Sasha Pavlovic, who was under the weather with the flu) added 15.

The Raptors' duo of Chris Bosh (29 points) and Jermaine O'Neal (20) kept Toronto within striking distance.

It's the NBA. Where a 38-9 team that is still only second in the conference happens.

WHAT I LIKED ABOUT THE GAME:

Out Of The Gate: It was in the game summary above, but it bears repeating: the Cavs outscored the Raptors 37-15 in the first quarter.

Wally drilled a pair of three-pointers to immediately stake the Cavs to a 6-0 lead, and then James scored 14 straight points to push the lead to 26-12.

Play Of The Night, Part I: It came on the first two of those 14 points that LeBron notched during that first-quarter run. Wally missed a jumper, but Ben

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Wallace back-tapped the rebound to Mo Williams.

Williams drove to the right baseline, did a Steve Nash dribble (i.e., dribbling from one side of the hoop to the other along the baseline, with no intention of taking a shot) to the left side, and found a cutting James for an alley-oop dunk.

Play Of The Night, Part II: In the second half, Bosh powered to the hoop and flipped the ball towards the basket from close range. It never got there. With a swipe of his left hand, James knocked the ball away; of course, Cavs announcer Austin Carr was motivated to exult ... now say it with me, everybody ... "get that weak stuff out of here, young man!"

(And somewhere out there, the blood-alcohol level of those playing the Austin Carr Drinking Game went up a few points.)

Hey, speaking of AC ...

Uncle Austin: Time for a little multiple choice quiz, Cavs fans. Williams made a basket early in the third quarter. The comment by AC was "short jump shot ... hook shot".

Was the shot:

1. A short jump shot;
2. A hook shot;
3. A shot bearing no resemblance to a short jump shot or a hook shot?

(Mo's shot was a layup, so C would be the correct answer.)

The Head Of The Snake: Toronto point guard Jose Calderon is exactly the type of floor general who usually gives the Cavs fits: a quick, shifty ball-handler who can set up his teammates while also being able to put the ball in the basket.

Last night ... not so much.

Thanks in large part to Williams's defense, the Cavs held Calderon to two points (he missed all but one of the nine shots he attempted) and six assists.

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The Boobie Meter: Finally! Cavs guard "Boobie" Gibson showed up to play last night, scoring 18 points, hitting four of the five three-pointers he attempted, and even drawing one of his patented fouls (this one from Toronto's Jason Kapon) on a three-point attempt.

Perhaps his most impressive play came on defense. With the Cavs leading 90-75 in the fourth quarter, James missed a shot, and a back-tap by Wallace went straight to Toronto.

A fast break ensued, but Gibson, streaking back on defense, deflected a pass out of bounds.

After a steady stream of jutting collarbones, accentuated by the occasional male professional golfer, this column's male and alternatively-lifestyled female readers are starving for some curves. Now that Boobie has given us reason, let's celebrate with a [Marisa Miller](#).

Continuing The Theme: Speaking of sex appeal, it belongs in the same sentence as free throws. Only, however, if that sentence is "free throws have no sex appeal"; They may be boring, they may lack sizzle, but they sure are important. And the Cavs made most of theirs last night, sinking all but two of the 22 shots they attempted.

(LeBron led the way with a perfect 13-of-13 night from the stripe.)

Welcome To The Association: Prior to the game, the Cavs announced the signing of Tray Johnson, a guard from the NBDL. (He is not to be confused with Tre' Johnson, the former Browns guard/quote machine whose defining words were "smash for cash";) Johnson got into the game as part of the

Tarence Kinsey Brigade

(yes,

Tarence

may be on the shelf for a few weeks with his severely sprained ankle, but his spirit lives on) in the game's waning moments, and he got to attempt his first NBA shot.

(Unfortunately for him, it was a layup that hit the underside of his first NBA backboard.)

WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE ABOUT THE GAME:

I wasn't all that thrilled about the Cavs coughing away most of their 19-point lead in the third quarter (the Raptors outscored the Cavs 26-15 during the third frame). But when you get right down to it, the Cavs won by 18 and set a team record in the process.

Let's not get too picky, at least for one night.

NOT THAT YOU ASKED, BUT...

What's Good For The Goose: Some weeks ago, ESPN's Stephen A. Smith reported that LeBron was headed to New York when his contract expires in the summer of 2010.

He used a lot more capital letters and exclamation points than I just did, but the message was the same.

Smith's "news" received the warm reaction in Cleveland that one would expect: namely, the only question around here was which body part should be used to hang Smith from the highest tree.

His report was discredited, his motives were questioned, and his manhood was doubted.

Earlier this week, Smith "broke" another story, this time reporting that the Raptors' Bosh had told Toronto management that he would not re-sign with the team when his contract expires in 2010. The report created the predictable firestorm, complete with denials from both Bosh and the Raptors' management.

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In Cavs' land, the response was a bit different. The idea that Bosh might not want to return to Toronto fueled a pie-in-the-sky scenario that apparently is the dream of many Cavs' fans:

bringing in Bosh to play alongside LeBron.

The [TCF Cavs message board](#) went a bit haywire with the speculation.

Here's my question. Why would many of the same fans who blasted Smith for his report on James give him credence when he reported a story that could work in the Cavs' favor?

Shouldn't his reports be treated the same way across the board?

Or do we give him credence only when his scenarios could be good for the Cavs?

WHAT LIES AHEAD:

LeBron James is going to play in New York. It's inevitable.

Really, it is - the Cavs will be at Madison Square Garden tonight to take on the Knicks. The Cavs will then have three days off to prepare for their return engagement with the Lakers at The Q this coming Sunday.