

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

Written by {ga=diminishingskills}
Sunday, February 22 2009 7:00 PM -

He's baaaack. Returning to action after missing over five weeks with a broken wrist, Delonte West scored 25 points to lead the Cavs to an easy 99-78 win over the Pistons. The Cavs now stand at 43-11, which just happens to be the best record in the Eastern Conference. John Hnat provides ... guess what? ... the good, the bad, and the summary from last night's contest.



THE SUMMARY:

So THAT's what was missing.

Returning to action for the first time since breaking his wrist against the Chicago Bulls last month, Delonte West scored 25 points to lead the Cavs in a 99-78 *laugher* over the Detroit Pistons last night at Quicken Loans Arena. (Yes, *laugher* is the correct term. It was *side-splitti ng* while the varsity was in the game - the Cavs led by as many as 34, and held a 30-point lead through the first minutes of the fourth quarter - but the **Tarence Kinsey Brigade** gave some of those points back during garbage time.)

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The Cavs grabbed the Pistons by the throat at the opening tip and never let go. They led by 14 points (31-17) after one quarter and 33 (67-34) at the intermission.

Detroit did outscore the Cavs in the third (24-21) and fourth (20-11) quarters, but that mattered about as much as the guy who spoke before Lincoln gave the Gettysburg Address.

The win leaves the Cavs at 43-11 on the season, and they now hold a 17 game lead over the Pistons in the Central Division. (No, the divisional race does not matter at this point. It's just fun to write the "Cavs lead Detroit by ___ games" sentence time and again.)

In the more important race - that for the best record in the Eastern Conference, and the home court advantage in the playoffs that goes with it - the Cavs are still just a touch ahead of the Celtics (who stand at 45-12).

Besides West's game-high 25 points, the Cavs received strong performances from LeBron James (20 points, 9 assists), Zydrunas Ilgauskas (16 points), and Wally Contract That Will Expire With The Cavs (15 points). For their part, the Pistons had five players score in double figures, led by Allen Iverson's 14 and Walter Herrmann's 13.

(
Yes, that is the Walter Herrmann who has long been a GBS favorite.

And yes, he is still rocking the double-ponytail look.
)

It's the NBA. Where Brother Red happens.

WHAT I LIKED ABOUT THE GAME:

Take A Wild Guess About What Will Be First: Without Delonte, the Cavs were 12-5. Good, but not quite as good as the 30-6 they were with him.

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So it was a relief to see West back in the starting lineup last night.

He waited about all of two and a half minutes before showing that he was back from his injury. A three-pointer.

An aggressive layup attempt that drew a foul, resulting in two free throws.

Another three-pointer.

And then yet another three-pointer.
By the end of the first half, West had scored 20 points.

More than his scoring (which was impressive enough), West brought a sorely missing element back to the Cavs' offense. For the first time since ... well, since he broke his arm, the Cavs pounded their opponent in the first quarter, taking them out of the game almost before it had even begun. (That sounds deep. Maybe we should start calling Delonte "Sun Tzu" ;))

I've said it before, and I'll say it again. LeBron James is the face of the Cleveland Cavaliers. Delonte West is its heart.

Bombs Away!: Delonte's sharpshooter performance (8 of 11 from the field, 5 of 5 from three-point range) led the Cavs to shoot a respectable 46% (35 of 77) on their field goals and a strong 56% (10 of 18) from beyond the arc. (Interestingly, the only other Cav to shoot better than 50% from the field was Szczerbiak, who made six of the eight shots he attempted.)

The First Annual "That Ain't Right" Award: A few minutes into the game, James threw down a dunk with plenty of force.

Enough force to streak through the net and catch Iverson, who had conceded the dunk, in his face.

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Wait, We're Not Done With The Nominees: In the spirit of the Oscars, we have another contender for the humiliating play of the night. And
it was another play by LeBron against Iverson.

It came in the third quarter, with the Cavs up 70-41.

Iverson tried to drive past Mo Williams for a layup.

I say "tried" because LeBron came from the weak side to smack the shot into the stands.

I could keep describing it, or I could just let you
[see it for yourself](#)

Sunshine, Lollipops and Rainbows: With six minutes to go in the game, Darnell Jackson was hammered by Detroit's Amir Johnson on a layup attempt.

Jackson fell to the floor and remained there for a couple of minutes.

As soon as the Cavs called time out, the entire Cavs bench went to the other end of the court (where Jackson was laying) to check on him.

Just another thing to like about this extremely likable team.

The Boobie Meter: Speaking of likable, it's time for the Boobie Meter! This feature, in which we grade the performance of the Cavs' Daniel (Boobie) Gibson on ... well, a curve (*yes, that was bad; you have to admit that I had no choice*), has become the favorite of male and alternatively-lifestyled female fans everywhere.

Last night, Boobie ... really did not do anything. He hit one three-pointer, which had absolutely no effect on the outcome of the game. The
boxscore says he played 28 minutes, and we'll have to take its word for it, because none of those minutes were memorable.

But the Cavs as a whole played a great game, which lifts the entire curve (!) upward.

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And as I type this sentence,

[The Rock](#)

has appeared on one of the reliable cable channels (I think it is USATNTTBS).

So we'll go with the lovely

[Claire Forlani](#)

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WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE ABOUT THE GAME:

Department of Repetition and Redundancy: One complaint, and it has nothing to do with the Cavs' performance. I'm about to hit a favorite target: the Cavs' chalupa promotion. As you know, a certain fast food chain offers free chalupas to all fans in attendance if the Cavs score 100 points.

And as you probably deduced from the final score, the Cavs just missed that mark.

Well, the fans in attendance last night just about crapped their pants.

With 17 seconds remaining, the Cavs' J.J. Hickson collared a loose ball. The fans cheered as loudly as they had at any point in the game ... until moments later, when it became apparent that the Cavs were not going to attempt another shot (the right thing to do).

The noise wasn't exactly booing - winning a game by more than 20 points will tend to keep the boo-birds away - but it definitely had an edge to it.

I realize that promotions are set in advance, and that there is little that can be done in midseason. But I sure hope that this particular promotion dies a particularly ugly death by opening night next fall.

NOT THAT YOU ASKED, BUT...:

The End Of Uncle Austin?: No, not Austin himself; but rather the end of the "Uncle Austin" feature, in which we chronicle Austin Carr's adventures with the English language.

But it may be necessary in order for the Cavs to keep winning.

Allow me to explain. Last night's game was advertised on both ESPN and Fox Sports Ohio. I started the game with the ESPN feed, and the Cavs stormed to a 29-11 advantage.

Realizing that the broadcast felt naked without "the L-Train" or "deep in the Q!", I switched to FSO.

Detroit immediately rattled off six straight points, to get about as close as they were going to get the rest of the game.

Not wanting to mess with whatever cosmic forces were at work, I flipped back to ESPN ... in time to see a West layup, which kicked off another Cavs' run.

Sorry, gang, but I'm not about to upset whatever god is in charge of the NBA's broadcasts. Whenever there is an alternate, non-FSO feed available, I am going to have to watch it.

It really is my civic duty.

The Lion In Winter. A Long, Cold, Cleveland Winter: Once upon a time (say, last year), the Detroit Pistons were a quality basketball team.

You'd grimace a bit when you saw they were approaching on the schedule, because it was almost a guaranteed "L".

The starting five (or at least four of them):

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Chauncey Billups, Rip Hamilton, Tayshaun Prince, and Rasheed Wallace) were etched in stone.

You knew it would be a tough game against a cagey veteran team, one that was more than the sum of its parts.

Now? They're a shadow of their former selves. Billups is in Denver; he's been replaced by Iverson, who is not the same player he was five years ago, and whose relatively selfish game conflicts with the Pistons' team concept. Hamilton is now coming off the bench, in order to make room for Rodney Stuckey (a decent player, but not exactly a star, at least not yet).

Rasheed has lost his battle with the calendar; he is maybe two seasons away from appearing in a suit on a halftime show.

And the team is playing .500 ball and is in danger of dropping out of the playoff picture.

The torch was passed to the Cavs in 2007, when Cleveland prevailed in the Eastern Conference finals. But this is more than a torch. This is about the sun setting on one of the NBA's best franchises of the past ten years ... and knowing that it will take a few years and probably a couple of lottery picks before they rise to prominence again.

(Even longer, if they continue to blow those lottery picks on the Darko Milicics of the world.)

Idle Thought: Do you suppose Antonio McDyess (who spurned the Cavs earlier in the season so he could re-sign with the Pistons) ever wonders, "what the hell was I thinking?"

WHAT LIES AHEAD:

We're almost there. One more game at home - against Memphis tomorrow - and then the real fun begins. Seven games in 10 days, five of those on the road, and the first one of those coming at Houston on Thursday night.