

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

Written by {ga=diminishingskills}
Thursday, February 26 2009 7:00 PM -

Did you see last night's game between the Cavs and the Rockets? No? Good. Consider yourself lucky. John Hnat was not so lucky, and he reports on last night's carnage from the Toyota Center in Houston. WARNING: Not for the faint of heart.



THE SUMMARY:

If you're reading these words, then you obviously did not watch the game last night.

Because had you watched it, there would be no way in the world that you would want to relive that ugly train wreck.

The Cavs were trounced by the Houston Rockets, 93-74, last night at the Toyota Center. Pick your statistic, and chances are it was a season worst for the Wine and Gold:

- The 74 points scored by the Cavs were a season low;
- The 19 point loss was the Cavs' worst loss of the 2008-09 campaign;
- The Cavs shot a season-low 34% from the field.

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To put it in another perspective: LeBron James did not have a single assist last night. 446 times before, LeBron had played in an NBA game. 446 times before, he had registered at least one assist.

But not last night, for the first time in his career.

LeBron and Mo Williams each had 21 points to lead the Cavs, whose record now stands at 44-12. Houston's Yao Ming led everybody with 28 points, and Von Wafer (*Von Wafer?*) added 19 for the Rockets, who won their sixth game in a row.

Oh, by the way, Ben Wallace broke his right fibula, apparently the result of a collision with Yao in the second quarter. No word yet on whether Wallace will be able to return this season, but the Cavs probably should prepare to be without him for a while.

It's the NBA. Where nightmares you can't wake up from happen.

WHAT I LIKED ABOUT THE GAME:

Very little.

Book? What Book?: With just under five minutes remaining in the second quarter, James picked up an offensive foul, his third foul of the game. The "book" would say to sit LeBron down for the rest of the half, and put him back in to start the third quarter, in order to avoid collecting any additional fouls.

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Coach Mike Brown ignored "the book", keeping James on the floor for the rest of the quarter. Not only did LeBron not pick up any more fouls during the quarter, but he also scored nine points to bring the Cavs within five at the intermission.

The Reggie Miller Drinking Game?: Last night's telecast was on TNT, meaning that the beloved Austin Carr of Fox Sports Ohio had the night off.

But Austin was still there in spirit.

Early in the fourth quarter, with the Cavs trailing by 16, TNT's Reggie Miller decreed, "if the Cavs can somehow get this lead down to ten with six minutes left, they have a chance";

The arbitrary points/minutes measure is one of A.C.'s subtler catch phrases, but it is one of his go-to lines.

And here was ol' Reggie using it.

(I half expected him to have "the L-Train" "throw the hammer down";)

That's two good points to come out of this game, one of them having to do with the head coach, the other having to do with the announcer. Think about that for a minute.

WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE ABOUT THE GAME:

Futility, Individual Style: The best line of the night for the Cavs? Probably Lorenzen Wright, who pulled a DNP. Everybody else had a rough night.

Consider these lines:

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- LeBron: 7 of 21 from the floor, 21 points, one rebound, zero assists;
- Zydrunas Ilgauskas: 5 of 12 from the field;
- Delonte West: 2 of 8 shooting;
- Daniel Gibson: 1 of 5 overall, 0 of 2 from three-point range (relax, Boobie Meter fans, I am not going to torture you with another picture indicating how bad of a game he had)

(okay,
[maybe I will](#)

);

- Anderson Varejao: 0 of 4.

Futility, Team Style: Add up all those poor shooting lines, and you're probably not going to get strong team numbers, are you? And indeed, the Cavs did not. In the first quarter, they shot 3 of 17 from the field en route to a then-season-low 11 points for the quarter.

I say "then" because in the third quarter, they scored only 10 points, on 5 of 17 shooting.

Sometimes The Bear Gets You: In losses like these, it seems like every possible play goes the wrong way. There were two plays in particular that stood out as "it ain't gonna happen tonight" plays:

- With Houston leading 61-50, Ron Artest was being guarded closely by Varejao on the perimeter. With the shot clock winding down, Artest had no choice but to launch an off-balance jumper with one foot on the three-point line. *Swish.*
- Moments later, Williams missed a three-pointer. Ilgauskas, camped out under the hoop, grabbed the offensive rebound, and went back up for the easy put-back ... and missed it. *Gaah.*

I Don't Want To Call The Odds-On MVP A Bonehead, But...: Early in the third quarter, and having already collected three fouls in the first half, LeBron was whistled for his fourth foul after smacking Yao on the arm during a dunk attempt.

Granted, a block of the "Yao would have been huge; but Yao was already under the hoop and was going to dunk the ball no matter what, so trying to stop him was a pointless

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gesture.

Getting that fourth foul made James that much less aggressive at both ends of the floor, because he knew he was in that much more danger of fouling out.

The Achilles Heel: The Rockets' starting big men, Yao and Luis Scola, shot a combined 18 of 22 from the field (*18 of freaking 22*) and scored 42 points. It shows the number one weakness of the Cavs team:

their inability to defend against strong players down low.

That weakness won't hurt them against a team like the Celtics, who do not have a strong interior presence (before you e-mail me asking about Kevin Garnett, KG is more and more a perimeter player these days). It may not hurt them against Orlando, who does have the biggest beast in the league in Dwight Howard, but little else as far as interior punch.

But should the Cavs make it to the NBA Finals, they are likely to face a team like Houston, or the Spurs, or the Lakers. All of those teams have strong interior players, and all of those teams are tough matchups for the Cavs. And with Wallace's future for the rest of this season in doubt, that weakness has only grown weaker.

Is it possible to shine a Joe Smith beacon into the sky? (Hey, it worked for Batman.)

Let's Be Glad He Doesn't Have Hemorrhoids: At halftime, the TNT crew welcomed Miami's Dwyane Wade into the studio. Under his eye, he was wearing a bandage with "WADE" printed on it.

(The bandage has been a fixture under his eye ever since he was cut in a game a couple of weeks ago.)

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I would say that it jumped the shark, but I'm not sure it ever got to the other side of the shark in the first place.

NOT THAT YOU ASKED, BUT...

A Meaningless, And Rather Gross, Observation: I do not think I have seen a human being sweat as much as Shane Battier did during his interview immediately after the second quarter ended. (If you've ever seen the movie *Air*

plane

, think of

[Robert Hays sweating](#)

as he landed the plane.)

WHAT LIES AHEAD:

Time to forget about last night's game. (Actually, that should be true regardless of the result.) You're never as good as you seem when things are going great, and you're never as bad as you seem when times are especially tough.

Besides, there's no time to cry in the beer. The Road Trip From Hell continues tonight in San Antonio. While it will be a tough game, the Cavs do catch a break, as the Spurs' Manu Ginobili will definitely miss the game, and Tim Duncan may miss it too. After a day off, the four-games-in-five-nights grind concludes with games at Atlanta and Miami.

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