

## Cavs Look To Keep Momentum Rolling In Atlanta Tonight

Written by {ga=samamico}

Saturday, February 28 2009 7:00 PM -

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After seeing how the Cavaliers handled San Antonio on the road Friday, it's hard to understand how they managed to be so flat in Houston on Thursday. Sam says the team may have celebrated Boobie's Gibson's birthday a little too hard the night before the Rockets game out in Houston. Tonight, off the heels of their comeback win in San Antonio, the Cavs head to Atlanta to take on the emerging Hawks in their third of four straight tough road games.



After seeing how the Cavaliers handled San Antonio on the road Friday, it's hard to understand how they managed to be so flat in Houston on Thursday. Unless, of course, you consider that they were likely living it up the previous night (Wednesday) in celebration of Daniel Gibson's birthday.

How's that for an excuse?

In all seriousness, the Cavs can't be anything but content as they head into Sunday's game in Atlanta, the third of four straight toughies away from home.

That's because they showed that when they play with energy and purpose, they clearly are one of the top two or three best teams in the league, maybe even the very best.

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It's hard to believe a team could look so entirely different in 24 hours, but as LeBron James told reporters after the Spurs game, "That's the best thing about the NBA. You can play as bad as you ever played one night and the NBA schedule allows you to make up for it the next night."

Granted, it didn't hurt that the Spurs were without injured star center Tim Duncan -- but a win is a win, and more importantly, the Cavs got out and ran a little. They created offense from their defense, pressuring the ball, making steals and grabbing defensive rebounds, then pushing the ball, filling the lanes and finishing at the rim.

And let's face it, in order for the Cavs to remain among the league's elite, they need to garner some of their scoring off the fastbreak. They are more suited to that style of play than Boston, and at least as good at it as the L.A. Lakers. What's less certain is if they can beat either of those top contenders in a half-court game.

And the fact the Cavs have won 32 of their 45 games by at least 10 points really tells you something. Mainly, it says that when they speed up the pace a little, and when Mo Williams is pushing the tempo and LeBron James is sprinting out to the wing ... well, they can't be stopped. It's really that simple.

Does that mean the Cavs need to become the Phoenix Suns or Golden State Warriors, who treat defense like a nasty allergy and take perimeter shots that would get them benched by most sensible coaches?

Hardly.

But they aren't going to win many games like the one against Houston (or in the playoffs against Boston last season), where it's a lot of plodding, little cohesion, and few opportunities to score quickly. Basically, there needs to be a balance, and when the Cavs win easily, there is.

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Charles Barkley, the basketball analyst of all analysts, pointed out as much during Thursday's TNT telecast of the Cavs-Rockets game. Barkley pointed out that James shouldn't be counted on to generate so much offense in the half-court sets, that he should be less facilitator and more finisher. Unless that happens, according to Sir Charles, the Cavs won't get past the Celtics or Lakers.

Regardless of your opinions of Barkley, it's hard to argue with his logic. Again, there's nothing wrong with slowing it down and getting the ball in the hands of your superstar. Especially when that superstar may very well be best player in the entire league. Still, it has to be more than that.

Never was that more evident than the previous two games. In one, the Cavs ran some and won. In the other, they lumbered all the time and lost. A little bit of both? Well, that's why they're 45-12 and heading into the second part of this road trip looking a lot like the Beasts of the East.

Let's just hope there aren't any more birthday parties between now and then.

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