

Cavs Net Ninth Straight In Jersey

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}
Saturday, March 21 2009 7:00 PM -

A win, an individual franchise record broken, a team franchise record tied- so it goes for the Cavaliers this season, and so it went for them on Sunday evening in New Jersey. Cleveland's 96-88 conquest of the Nets in the Building Formerly Named for Brendan Byrne was its ninth straight and 57th of the season, tying the franchise record held by the 1988-89 and 1991-92 teams. Jesse tells us about the Cavs Sunday night win over the Nets.



A win, an individual franchise record broken, a team franchise record tied- so it goes for the Cavaliers this season, and so it went for them on Sunday evening in New Jersey. Cleveland's 96-88 conquest of the Nets in the Building Formerly Named for Brendan Byrne was its ninth straight and 57th of the season, tying the franchise record held by the 1988-89 and 1991-92 teams. One day after becoming the fourth Cavalier to score 10,000 points, Zydrunas Ilgauskas established a franchise mark for blocks with 1,202. Most importantly, the win kept the Cavaliers ahead of the Lake Show by a game in the battle for the top overall seed, and four-and-a-half games ahead of the Celtics in the battle for top East seed.

We're twelve games away from home-court throughout, people. Twelve games away from forcing every Playoff opponent to play the critical games in Cleveland, where every man's hand will be against them-

minus the bandwagon douche-bags in Kobe jerseys, of course. Twelve games away from being able to settle a championship in our building, on our terms, for the first time since the afternoon of December 27, 1964.

Can't ask for much more than that.

In Control: Like they did yesterday against Atlanta, the Cavaliers wasted little time in building a big lead. This time they got on top of the Nets 13-2 in the first four minutes, forcing New Jersey to miss seven of their first eight shots. The lead grew to 13 late in the period, and although the Nets would rally to within two at 36-34 late in the first half, Cleveland never lost essential control of the action.

Bronze this Stat: Cleveland led for all but the first 19 seconds, when the score was knotted at 0-0. Actually, the Cavaliers haven't trailed since midway through the first quarter of Saturday's win over Atlanta.

LeBron's Line: 30 points on 9-of-17 from the field, 1-of-4 from three, and 11-of-15 from the line, 11 rebounds, 8 assists, a steal, and a couple of dunks that he most decidedly did not miss. Twenty of the points came after halftime, 13 in the fourth quarter. LBJ spent much of the evening in distributor-rebounder-defender mode, but when he needed to open the spigot offensively late, he wasn't shy.

Move over, Hot Rod: Everyone's favorite droll, seven-foot-three Lithuanian has himself a new spot in the Cavaliers record books.

Zydrunas Ilgauskas is now your new franchise shot-block king, bumping Hot Rod Williams down to second with his 1,202ⁿ
d

career block on Sunday evening. The Big Fella celebrated the historic occasion by giving New Jersey's Brook Lopez a hard lesson in NBA post work. Draining jumpers off the pick-and-pop and dusting off some post moves that are as 1997 as

[Chumbawamba](#)

*, Z befuddled the rookie with 18 points, four blocked shots, and a game-high +18.

**- Awful song. But kind of appropriate for Z's career, no? And the Big Fella might even enjoy "pissing the night away" and "drinking a vodka drink" every now and again.*

Every day, we get weaker and he gets stronger. We're finished: In his last two games, Z is averaging 18.5 and shooting a cool 58 percent. Not that it's a huge sample size or anything, but it's nice to see the Big Fella has something in the tank this late in the season. Usually he runs out of petrol around February or so. Maybe it's the reduced minutes in the early-season slaughter fest. Or maybe the thought of not having to bang bodies with Brendan Haywood for six games in April has Z feeling a little spryer than normal.

This frontcourt RULES (for tonight at least): Anderson Varejao augmented Z's contributions with 16 points on 6-of-10 shooting and 11 rebounds. Joe Smith scored nine off the bench, all in the first half. Cleveland out-rebounded New Jersey 46-37 and limited Net starting postmen Brook Lopez and Yi Jianlian to 6-of-21 from the field.

This backcourt SUCKS (for tonight at least): Mo Williams and Delonte West combined to shoot 4-of-15 and score ten points on Sunday evening. Delonte is clearly hurt- he isn't making anything outside two feet and he grabs his wrist about every five seconds, which is kind of a dead giveaway. It'd be nice to be in a position to shut him down for a certain length of time before the Playoffs. His shot will be needed in the springtime.

How I stopped worrying and learned to love the third quarter: At halftime, Cleveland's lead was a solid ten, at 48-38. Despite being in command the entire half, the Cavaliers had left New Jersey a window to come back, especially if the Nets could get off to a hot start in the third quarter. They did not. Cleveland came out of the break with a precision 11-2 run, extending the lead to 19 at 59-40. From there, though they mounted several lukewarm rallies to cut into their deficit, the Nets never seriously threatened. In the first four minutes of each half, the Cavaliers outscored New Jersey 24-4, putting their hosts in scramble mode before they had even worked up a sweat.

It's not exactly Magic vs. Larry: Another page in the ongoing cold war between Sasha "The Roman" Pavlovic and Vince "The Vince" Carter was written on Sunday evening- hopefully in washable ink- and in the end, appropriately, there were no winners. The two adversaries guarded one another early in the fourth quarter; Sasha led in homicidal stares, while The Vince led in points, a slightly more significant category. Still, even though Mike Brown was forced to reinsert LeBron into the game to guard him, The Vince's moment of supreme embarrassment was still to come.

Whoa! I've been in this game damn near three minutes and haven't fouled anyone yet! Early in the fourth quarter, Sasha- right in front of an official- lowered his shoulder and bulldozed a Nets player setting a pick. It looked like he was intentionally prompting a whistle: *"Oh, you want to call a foul? Here's a ****ing foul."* All told, the glowering Serb picked up five fouls in just over 19 minutes of work. He also sprang for nine points and a big three-pointer to help hold off the Nets down the stretch.

Chance of Sasha goofing off for one of LeBron's pre-game "family photos": Less than zero.

The tragic story of The Vince: Perhaps lubricated by March and memories of the 1970 Tournament (in which he dropped a

record 61 on Ohio and
d

average
52.6 in

three games) Austin Carr declared that Vince Carter should be trying to take over and "score 30 or 40" in important games like, say, the one going on at the time. And The Vince did... try to take over. Starting late in the third quarter, he poured in 14 points and spearheaded a Jersey charge that brought the Nets back from 18 down to within eight at 86-78 with less than two minutes to play. Included in the display was a miracle three-point play in which he trucked Delonte West, tripped over his prone body, and banked in the stumbler-and-harm. It was vintage 1999, Toronto Raptors, Half-Man Half-Amazing stuff.

But the story never seems to end well for the high-flyer from Carolina, and it didn't on Sunday evening. With 1:48 left, The Vince broke free along the baseline and drove for the lay-up that would cut the lead to six. But his uncontested shot slid off the back iron, the Cavaliers rebounded, and that was pretty much it.

That's The Vince. In a nutshell.

Now LeBron, on the other hand... He took over when taking over was needed. With 7:27 left and the Nets within eight, he launched a quick six-point foray, muscling Trenton Hassell for a

lay-up, rattling in a jumper over him, and finally roaring right by him for a reverse lay-in that made it 81-67 Cavaliers with six minutes remaining.

Tight crew, huh? Real tight: Two games after committing two turnovers in the overtime win over Portland the, Cavaliers committed four in New Jersey.

Next: Wednesday night at 7:00 when these same Nets, still without Devin Harris, visit the Q.