

## Cavaliers Down Pistons, Move One Step Closer To Homecourt

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}  
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The Cavs' 79-73 victory over the Detroit Pistons on Tuesday night, their 13th in a row, wasn't a designated turn-back-the-clock night. But it looked, felt, and spooled out like a vintage Cavaliers-Pistons slugfest. Cleveland trailed by as many as nine in a first half and was still behind late in the fourth quarter. But at the end, the formula for victory was the same as it's been so many times against this opponent: scrambling defense, the pestering hands and flying feet of Anderson Varejao, and a topping of spectacular from the man wearing #23. We even got to enjoy a Rasheed Wallace meltdown, just for old time's sake.



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**Frosty Start:** The Cavaliers came out Siberian in Sunday's win over Dallas, and the cold front returned against the Pistons early on Tuesday night. Cleveland shot a bone-chilling 5-of-19 in the opening twelve

minutes and trailed 19-12 after one, despite holding the Pistons to under 40 percent from the field and forcing five turnovers.

**Crazy for Crazy Glue:** Delonte West was outstanding Tuesday night. He was Cleveland's only consistent offensive player in the first quarter, scoring six of his team's twelve points in the stanza on the way to 12 points, six assists, three rebounds, and excellent defense on Richard Hamilton, who shot 4-of-14. Delonte was aggressive all evening, whether it was breaking down Detroit's defense off the dribble, chasing Rip around picks, or picking up a technical foul when he laid out Hamilton at mid-court late in the third quarter.

**Looked like Kelly Tripucka vs. World B. Three for a hot minute:** Both teams ran and gunned like it was 1983 as the second period got underway. Detroit went from a 19-15 lead to a 37-28 advantage- their biggest of the night- by outscoring the Cavaliers 18-13 in a furious five-minute stretch that saw the teams combine for a twine-tickling 13-of-17 from the field. The Pistons accounted nearly a quarter of their night's scoring output in this burst.

**Play of the Night I:** The Cavaliers rallied from that nine-point deficit to tie the game 44-44 at halftime, a run topped off by the first of LeBron's series of game-altering three-point players. With Cleveland trailing 44-41 and time running out in the first half, Tayshaun Prince missed from deep in the corner. Running down the long rebound, Anderson found LeBron, who streaked down court and banked in a driving lay-up with harm supplied by Rasheed Wallace. The ensuing free throw tied the score for the first time since it was 2-2.

**LeBron's Line:** 9-of-24 from the field, 7-of-8 from the foul line, 25 points, 12 rebounds, three assists, three steals, and a blocked shot. He did not expend a terrible amount of effort on defense early in the game, nor did he shoot well. But he was cash-money at the foul line, took over the boards after Detroit initially dominated that area- and as always, his timing was impeccable. LeBron's three-point play to close the first half gave Cleveland momentum going into halftime, and two more three-point plays late in the fourth quarter gave them the lead for good and put the game away.

**This Number will win you some games:** Two nights after giving up 25 second-half points in their rout of Dallas, the Cavaliers held Detroit to 29 on 29.8 percent shooting after intermission. Even so, Cleveland could not pull free of the stubborn Pistons, mainly due to their own shooting woes. On several occasions throughout the third period and into the fourth the Cavaliers had opportunities to build a relatively comfortable lead, only to miss the dagger.

**They just... wouldn't... fall:** Cleveland shot 38.6 percent on the night, including 3-of-15 from three-point range. The troika of LeBron, Mo Williams, and Zydrunas Ilgauskas went a combined 15-of-49, and Joe Smith struggled as well, going 2-of-9.

**At least they took care of the ball:** The Cavaliers committed just five turnovers. They had four against Dallas.

**The Guy We Love to Hate:** Rasheed Wallace made his return from a stint on the injured list Tuesday night, and did as only Rasheed could

do. His hot shooting hand- including three quick three's in two minutes in the second period- helped Detroit to its early lead. But he couldn't keep his mouth shut long enough to avoid triggering an automatic one-game suspension with his sixteenth technical foul of the season, late in the third period. Rasheed wasn't even arguing a call against himself: it was over a blocking violation called on Prince.

**Play of the Night II:** With time running out in the third quarter, Joe Smith skied and spiked Rodney Stuckey's runner off the glass to preserve Cleveland's 62-58 lead.

**&quot;You're as cold as ice; you're willing to sacrifice this lead&quot;:** The Cavaliers extended their advantage to seven early in the fourth quarter, and then their game-long offensive struggles came to a head. Cleveland missed nine consecutive shots, went more than five minutes without a point, and the Pistons pieced together a 9-0 run to take their first lead of the second half, 67-65.

**Play of the Night III:** With 4:39 left and Detroit still leading 69-67, LeBron made the most important play of the night, first poking the ball away from Will Bynum, then brilliantly converting a twisting, stumbling lay-up for a three-point play. The free-throw sent Cleveland out in front, 70-69. LeBron then found Anderson for a lay-up, converted another three-point play, and concluded the 10-0 run with a driving lay-up off a Delonte West feed. With 2:15 left the Cavaliers led 77-69, and as a redneck college football coach used to say, the hay was in the barn.

Annoying Pistons Since 2004: Anderson Varejao has been a thorn in

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the side of the Michiganders for years, and was so again on Tuesday evening. He went 4-of-5 from the field, including a clutch jumper to tie the game at 67 late in the fourth, and combined his eleven points with seven rebounds, two steals, and some huge hustle plays down the stretch.

**Bronze this Stat:** Cleveland's 3-1 record against Detroit gave the Cavaliers the season series over the Pistons for the first time since 1997-98.

**But Wait! There's more:** The Los Angeles Lakers once again failed to keep pace with the streaking Cavaliers, as they were lost for the third straight time to the Charlotte Bobcats, 94-84. Kobe Bryant's shooting woes continued, as he went 10-of-28 and was outshined by Gerald Wallace, who stuffed the stat sheet with 25 points, 13 rebounds, four assists and five blocks. Cleveland's magic number for clinching home-court advantage now stands at six. The magic number for clinching the East is now four.

**Next:** Thursday night at 8:00, when the Cavaliers head east to face another old buddy of theirs, the Washington Wizards.