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The final year of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century was, once again, devoid of world championships for Cleveland's teams. The Cavaliers mounted a serious charge, but didn't have the height or muscle to match up with the Orlando Magic, and were turned back in the conference finals.

On December 27, the anniversary of the Browns' victory in the 1964 NFL Championship Game, the title drought will officially reach 45 years.

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Between now and the end of December, we'll unveil our top 10 Cleveland sports moments from 2009. Sit back and re-live the year that was.

[The Top 10 Cleveland Sports Stories of 2009: #10-#8](#)

[The Top 10 Cleveland Sports Stories of 2009: #7-#5](#)

[The Top 10 Cleveland Sports Stories of 2009: #4 Wedge Fired, Acta Hired](#)

### **3. LeBron's sweet shot stuns Magic**

*May 22*

The 2009 Eastern Conference Finals were everything we feared as Cleveland fans. Every weakness of the previously-mighty Cavs was expertly exposed by the Magic. Dwight Howard toyed with the smaller and athletically-inferior Cleveland big men. Hedo Turkoglu ran the Orlando offense as a 6'-10" point forward, taking advantage of ghastly mismatches that sometimes found 6'-3" Delonte West guarding him. Rashard Lewis just plain didn't miss a three-ball with the game on the line.

A Lewis three-ball inserted the dagger that gave Orlando a 107-106 upset in Game 1, and seemed to set the tone for the remainder of the series. The Cavs, whether they wanted to admit it or not, were spooked after that loss.

In Game 2, the Cavs jumped out to a 23-point lead in the first half, but in a recurring theme throughout the series, let it gradually evaporate throughout the second half. In the closing minutes, it was Orlando's game for the taking, and Turkoglu was ready to take.

Turkoglu's 12-footer in the lane gave the Magic a 95-93 lead with one short second remaining on the fourth-quarter clock. The Cavs, 39-2 at home during the regular season and undefeated in the playoffs prior to Orlando's Game 1 win, faced the devastating prospect of losing the first two games of a playoff series in their own building.

Coming out of the final timeout, amid the nervous murmur of 20,562 fans at Quicken Loans Arena, everybody knew the only number that mattered was 23. LeBron James was getting the ball. He was taking the shot. He was going to win it or not.

LBJ's course of action was the same, often-maddening course of action he always takes with the game on the line: cut to the inbounder, take the pass and then decide what to do. Invariably, LeBron seems to end up hoisting an awkward 20-footer.

But this time, there was a reason to hoist it from deep. That's all the reaction time the clock could spare.

LeBron took an inbounds heave from Mo Williams, and from roughly 25 feet, squared to the basket and did the only thing he had time to do. He let it fly.

In a scene straight out of Hollywood, the ball arced through the air as the clock emptied its last tenths of seconds, down to "0.0". The backboard frame glowed red. The ball fell toward iron.

Rattle, rattle, swish. The ball deflected off the inside of the rim and fell through. The arena - and bars and living rooms across northeast Ohio - erupted. LeBron sprinted to the other end of the floor and joined his teammates in a mob.

The Magic shuffled off the floor, burned by a buzzer-beater for the second time in the playoffs. Of course, we know the rest of the series favored them, as they eventually put the Cavs in a 3-1 hole before winning in six. But for that one night, Cleveland fans reveled as LBJ took them on the ultimate springtime thrill ride.