

Long on Guts: Cavs Top Spurs

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}

Tuesday, March 09 2010 1:00 AM - Last Updated Saturday, March 27 2010 2:12 PM



Quite a bit of star power was missing from Monday Night's game between the visiting San Antonio Spurs and Your Cleveland Cavaliers- the majority of them on the Cleveland side. Even with freshly injured Tony Parker off the scene the Spurs brought Tim Duncan to the Q and, more importantly for these purposes, Manu Ginobili. The Cavaliers were without LeBron, Shaq, LeBron, Z, and LeBron, and just in case they weren't shorthanded enough Antawn Jamison left with knee pain midway through.

So in response, the rest of the Cavaliers stepped up. Combining a remarkably balanced offensive effort with timely defense and clutch free-throw shooting, Cleveland fought from behind to defeat the Spurs, 97-95, in an absolute crackerjack of an NBA basketball game. With a much-needed three-day breather before their next contest, the Cavaliers are in a position to catch their breaths, heal a bit and enjoy their perch at the top of the overall standings. They certainly earned their rest on Monday.

Batman Returns: Two years ago in Cleveland, Manu Ginobili poured in 46 devastating points to lead a come-from-behind Spurs victory that had Austin Carr pleading to the Cavaliers to "knock him down!" Good idea. First you have to catch him. And two years later Manu was, again, nearly impossible to catch. The blade-nosed assassin from the Argentine erupted for 23 first-half points, part of a 38-point, 7-rebound, 5-assist, 2-steal masterpiece that nearly stole the game for San Antonio. Manu was everywhere the Cavaliers weren't- ducking behind screens,

Long on Guts: Cavs Top Spurs

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}

Tuesday, March 09 2010 1:00 AM - Last Updated Saturday, March 27 2010 2:12 PM

jab-stepping into space, slicing through double-teams and worming inside for three offensive rebounds as he whirled about all night. His steal set up Richard Jefferson's only field goal to give San Antonio its last lead at 90-89 with 1:24 left, and he hit five points worth of impossible jumpers in the last 14 seconds as the Cavaliers clung tenaciously to the victory. Manu did his job. Some others did not.

So *that's* why they're the 7th Seed: Keith Bogans, Richard Jefferson and Roger Mason went a combined 2-of-14 from the field and 0-of-12 from the three-point line. Their rankness managed to offset the combined efforts of Manu and George Hill, who scored 23. Bogans hoisted two shots in 22 minutes and was continually toasted on defense by Delonte West and Jawad Williams, a horrendous performance. And these guys play when Parker is healthy, too. That's bad news for San Antonio. The Mavericks have to be licking their chops in anticipation of a 2-7 match-up with these guys.

Kind of a Shame: San Antonio isn't capable of getting to the Finals. It would be fun to beat them.

Scoring Socialism: In contrast to the top-heavy Spurs, Cleveland was beautifully balanced. Six Cavaliers scored in double-figures:

Mo Williams: Mo came back strong from the embarrassment in Milwaukee with a nice line- 17, 8 and 8, surviving wincing pain in his shooting hand and a series of good looks that rimmed out (the Cavaliers as a whole had an inordinate number of shots refuse to go down.) His three-pointer with 5:48 tied it at 85-85, sending the Spurs out of the lead for the first time in 20 minutes, and his two free throws with nine seconds left helped salt it away.

Jawad Williams: Hot Wad went off for eight points in two minutes, three on mid-post turnarounds of increasing distance, to keep Cleveland right in San Antonio's rearview late in the third quarter. The St. Ed's grad finished with 13 points on 6-of-11 shooting with 5 rebounds.

Antawn Jamison: 'Twan knocked down his opening three attempts from three-point range and his 15 points paced the Cavaliers in the first half. But he left the game with 8:02 left and the Spurs in front 59-55, taking his 17 points and 4 rebounds to the locker room with him. Cleveland would outscore the Spurs 42-36 in Jamison's absence, enough to win it.

Long on Guts: Cavs Top Spurs

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}

Tuesday, March 09 2010 1:00 AM - Last Updated Saturday, March 27 2010 2:12 PM

J.J. Hickson: J.J. started at center against Tim Duncan, who was getting feeds from Randolph Childress in the ACC when the youngster was six years old. And J.J. played courageously- he scored 13 points, battled for 7 rebounds, knocked down a jump shot and hit two ice-cold free throws to give the Cavaliers the lead for good, 91-90, with 1:05 to play. Duncan was off, scoring only 13 points and grabbing only 5 rebounds, so statistically at least he was outplayed by the jumping jack from N.C. State.

Anderson Varejao: Despite battling foul trouble all night, Anderson came through with what has become a typical line for him: 11 points, 9 rebounds and the requisite game-best +10. Like the rest of the Cavaliers he was clutch at the free-throw line, hitting 5-of-7, including the two that provided the narrow margin of victory.

Delonte West: The Modern-Day Dennis Johnson attacked all night on both ends. He hit only 5-of-13 from the field but went a clean 6-of-6 from the line, scored 16 points, grabbed 5 rebounds, dished out 4 assists, nailed back-to-back jumpers to the Cavaliers in front 89-88 with 2:12 left- their first lead of the second half- and he provided the highlight defensive play of the night with 53 seconds left when his leaping steal of a Tim Duncan pass preserved a one-point Cleveland lead.

Honk if You Miss Mike Sanders: Anthony Parker hit 3-of-3 from the field, 2-of-2 from the line and scored 8 points.

Free Throws: The Cavaliers went 19-of-24 from the line and they made the ones they had to make. Cleveland swished a perfect 8-of-8 from the stripe in the final minute and with Manu drilling two circus shots in the final seconds, they needed nearly every one of them.

Good Defense or Bad Offense: San Antonio shooters *not* named Manu Ginobili went a combined 3-of-20 from the field in the fourth quarter.

Winning Time: Cleveland outscored San Antonio 17-7 in the final 6:41 to turn an 85-80 deficit into the 97-95 margin of victory.

The Situation: The win makes Cleveland the first team to hit 50 wins. At 50-15 they're three-and-a-half games up on Los Angeles, 5 up on the Magic and 6 up on the Mavericks, who are within two-and-a-half of the Lake Show in the West. 60 wins should be enough for the Cavaliers to lock down home-court advantage throughout the Playoffs. L.A., on the wrong end of the tiebreaker, would have to win 61. Orlando would have to go 16-2 to reach 60. Dallas would have to go 17-2 and the Mavericks have already won 12 straight; there is no way they'll

Long on Guts: Cavs Top Spurs

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}

Tuesday, March 09 2010 1:00 AM - Last Updated Saturday, March 27 2010 2:12 PM

keep up this insane pace the rest of the way.

Next: Friday night at 7:00 when the Cavaliers, presumably with LeBron James in uniform, head to Philadelphia to take on the 76ers.