

## Cavs Out-Fire Pistons, 113-101

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}

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Tuesday night's game between the Cavaliers and Pistons was fiercely fought, frightfully flawed, and for a Cleveland-Detroit donnybrook, unusually high scoring. The result, however, was very familiar- a 113-101 Cavalier victory. It was Cleveland's tenth consecutive victory over their erstwhile rivals from Michigan, including the four-game sweep in last season's Playoffs, and the fourth straight overall for the Cavaliers, whose league-best record is now 53-15.

**Turnovers, Turnovers, Turnovers:** Maybe I should have written that word five times instead of three- once for every miscue the Cavaliers committed in the first period. Cleveland turnovers were a major factor in the first, as the Pistons fought their way from an early seven-point deficit to forge a 28-28 tie at the end of twelve minutes. Detroit was ripe for the picking- they were beat up physically and had been humiliated by 26 points in Boston the night before- but Cleveland's failure to put them away early turned this game into a twelve-round prizefight, with the winner in doubt nearly until the final bell.

**Foul Shooting, Foul Shooting, Foul Shooting:** Just as they did on Sunday against Boston- and in numerous other games this season- the Cavaliers kept their opponent in the game with substandard free-throw shooting. Cleveland went a lackluster 22-of-33 from the line- a cool 66.7 percent. That isn't nearly good enough, and it's going to have to get better as this team heads down the stretch into the Playoffs.

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**LeBron's Line:** 29 points on 10-of-22 from the field, 1-of-3 from three-point range and 8-of-11 from the line with 12 rebounds, 12 assists and a block. It was LeBron's fourth triple-double of the season, although it took a while for him to pick it up in the scoring column. The

*wunderkind*

from St. Vincent St. Mary had just seven points at the three-minute mark of the third and seemed more interested in arguing with the officials (who, being NBA officials, were horrific for both sides) than in leading his team to a victory. LeBron being LeBron, however, he stepped it up when he had to.

**Mo... Clutch?** Fortunately the Cavaliers have some long-distance gunners of their own. Mo Williams was the biggest bombardier on Tuesday night, swishing 5-of-9 from downtown on the way to a 20-point, 5-assist, 4-rebound effort. Back-to-back threes from Mo broke fourth-quarter ties, and a third three-pointer staked the Cavaliers to a 104-98 lead with 2:53 to play- although, as it turned out, the game wasn't out of the fire quite yet.

**Add Another P and it Spells "Power:"** Leon Powe followed up his fine effort against Boston with another solid outing Tuesday night. Banging away with physicality under the boards, Powe scratched and clawed for 7 points and 4 rebounds in just 11 minutes of work. Once again the Cavaliers did solid work off the bench, combining for 34 points. Jawad Williams led the way for the reserve brigade with 10 points, while Anderson Varejao chipped in with 9 points and 6 rebounds. And we even had a Daniel Gibson sighting. The forgotten marksman from Texas had 5 points, including a long three-pointer that gave Cleveland an 83-80 lead early in the frantic final quarter.

**Quiet Man, Quiet Numbers:** Aside from LeBron and Mo only one Cavalier scored in double figures- Antawn Jamison, who went for a double-double 15 and 10. It's amazing how quietly Jamison compiles his numbers. He rarely makes the big shot or the spectacular play- he just scores, rebounds, and at the end of the day he's compiled a tidy little line on the stat sheet. That isn't a disparagement of the way 'Tawn plays- just a random observation.

**Onto the Fourth:** The final period of play featured the Cavaliers trying to put the Pistons away, and the Pistons refusing to go away. An 8-0 burst punctuated by a LeBron three-point play gave Cleveland a 91-83 lead with 7:01 left. Less than two minutes later it was 91-91, Detroit answering with its own 8-0 spurt. It was still tied 94-94 with 4:28 left when Mo banged home a three-pointer to give Cleveland the lead for good. But the Pistons still refused to go quietly. Trailing 104-98 they sliced the lead in half on a Rip Hamilton three-pointer. Then came the two key possessions of the night.

**The Two Key Possessions of the Night:** The first began with Detroit down by three, less than a minute left and Will Bynum out on a Pistons break. LeBron swatted away his lay-up attempt- it was goaltending, the ball was on the glass before LeBron touched it, but NBA superstars are NBA superstars and NBA refs are NBA refs, so the block was ruled clean. Mo promptly threw a

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horrible pass which was picked off by Jonas Jerekbo, giving Detroit another chance. But Jerekbo went wildly down the lane, Jawad Williams stuck his body in for the charge- and there was no doubt about this call. With 59.9 seconds left LeBron stuck a long jump shot to make it 106-101 and finally, Detroit decided to die quietly.

**Nice Stat:** LeBron James scored 15 points in the fourth quarter and made all five of his attempts from the field. The great players aren't always great; but they're great when they have to be.

**Situation Room:** Tuesday night's victory clinched the second consecutive Central Division Championship for the Cavaliers. More importantly, Cleveland is now six full games ahead of Orlando for the top spot in the East and three-and-a-half ahead of the Lake Show for the top spot overall (pending the result of L.A.'s late-night tilt with Sacramento.) Unfortunately, the rest of the news around the league wasn't so good. Charlotte gagged up a chance to seize sole possession of sixth straight, losing in Indiana to the dismal Pacers. So the dreaded Bobcats are still very much in the mix for the eighth spot, and a first-round date with the Cavaliers. Let's hope Larry Brown gets his charges to play with a little more consistency down the stretch.

**Next:** Wednesday night at 7:00 when the Cavaliers entertain those Indiana Pacers, in hopes of landing their fifth consecutive win and eleventh in twelve games.