



Picture a big brother facing his younger sibling with his arm extended and his hand holding little brother's head. Now picture the little fella swinging wildly and fiercely and with a great deal of effort, trying like hell to do big brother bodily harm.

The Chicago Bulls are that little brother.

Despite out-hustling, out-rebounding and out-muscling the Cavaliers on Tuesday night in game two of their opening round NBA playoff series, the Bulls couldn't connect with a big punch and, as a result, they walked off the court at Quicken Loans Arena down 2-0 in the best of seven series.

Give the Bulls some credit: they don't quit and it's not for lack of effort that they're winless in this series. Rather, they just lack the talent and the marquee player to get past a deep and talented Cavalier team.

The game was way too close for comfort through about 45 minutes of play until LeBron James went all sharks' eyes on Chicago for in the closing minutes. James had the outside shot falling Tuesday night and when that's happening he's simply not guardable. LBJ's eyes glazed over during winning time and he started dropping shots with hands in his face, falling out of bounds and after winding down the shot clock just to add another degree of difficulty. When he wasn't

raining in sick jumpers over Joakim Noah, Luol Deng and Kirk Hinrich he was putting his head down, drawing contact and finishing at the rim.

James went off for a very tidy 40 points, eight assists and eight rebounds on 16/23 shooting that included 2/4 from behind the arc. James was also a perfect 6/6 from the free throw line on a night when the Cavs as a team cashed in 22/24 freebies.

Speaking of behind the arc, Anthony Parker and Jamario Moon came up huge Tuesday night for the Cavaliers. Parker was hot early in the game and knocked down a couple of treys while Moon did the honors by hitting four three-pointers in the second half. The Cavs needed every one of those shots as they were busy getting embarrassed in the paint and on second chance points by a Bulls team that made a concerted effort to play the Cavs physically and crash the glass.

Chicago turned around the Game 1 muscle stats by outscoring Cleveland 56-38 in the paint and out-rebounding the Cavaliers 37-36 but by a 13-5 margin on the offensive glass.

Antawn Jamison, Mo Williams and Moon backed up LeBron with 14, 12 and 12 points respectively while Shaquille O'Neal chipped in eight points and seven boards in just 15 foul-plagued minutes.

Also in the 'Credit where Credit is Due' department, Noah played as big as his mouth Tuesday night. The free-speaking center acquitted himself much better against O'Neal Tuesday by scoring 25 points to lead Chicago while also hauling down 13 rebounds in an impressive effort just a day after bad mouthing the social opportunities available to him in Cleveland.

Derrick Rose added 23 points and eight assists and Luol Deng came back from the dead to drop in 20 points.

That's good news and bad news for Chicago. They got help for Rose and a balanced attack with Noah and Deng scoring 20+ apiece, they outworked and outplayed the Cavs for much of the night, but they still couldn't get within 10 points of the Cavaliers when everything was said and done.

Stay with it little brother. You just might land at least one lucky punch before this series is done and over.

### **Takeaways**

- "Kirk Hinrich. Paging Kirk Hinrich. The playoffs have started sir. You're welcome to actually show up whenever you're ready."

Where the hell is Bulls shooting guard Kirk Hinrich? The man has been AWOL for the better part of this series and he was missing again for most of Game 2. Hinrich is now 6/18 for the series and the Bulls desperately need him. I know a lot of Hinrich's success came before Rose showed up in Chicago but the Bulls have pretty much played the series four against five whenever Hinrich is on the floor. You have to think that if the Bulls are to steal a game or get back in this series they're going to need Hinrich to get involved and knock down some shots.

- At various times this season we've talked about the depth and the combination of lineups the Cavaliers can run at opposing teams. Tuesday night was a perfect example. With the game in the balance you didn't see Shaq or Antawn Jamison playing key roles. Instead you saw Anderson Varejao setting screens and attempting to keep possessions alive, Delonte West trying to climb into the shirt of Rose and Jamario Moon spotting up on the 3-point arc and knocking down big shot after big shot.

It's match-up basketball at its best and Mike Brown pulled the right strings and pushed and cajoled his team to a win Tuesday night because of the options he has available to him and because those options came through when called upon. This team can play pretty much any style of basketball and get a victory. That's a luxury most teams simply don't have. The fact the Bulls can't score the basketball and don't have an infusion of talent that can help may cause their nucleus to wear down as this series drags on. LeBron and Mo played 41 and 38 minutes respectively. No other Cavalier played more than 30 minutes on the night.

That's depth and it's also a sign that the coach is pulling the right strings and making the right moves when you can parcel out the minutes like that and still lead a postseason series 2-0.

### **They Got Next**

This series is about to get chippy as the Bulls head back to the sanctity of the United Center on Thursday night for Game 3. TNT has it starting at 7pm EST and the Bulls will have their back to the wall and will hope to draw some inspiration from their home crowd and draw a few more friendly whistles on their home court.