

LeBron's Elbow OK; Cavs Feeling Fine

Written by {ga=samamico}

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CLEVELAND - Good news for fans of the Cleveland Cavaliers: The Big Three is still a bigger concern than The Right Elbow.

More specifically, an MRI revealed Thursday that the right elbow belonging to Cavs star LeBron James is merely bruised and strained. Simply put, James bumped the elbow a few weeks ago, and it's tender. Nothing more, nothing less.



While it's certainly been painful for James, it won't cause him to miss any time.

Plus, the fact the Cavs eliminated Chicago in the first round Tuesday, and don't open their second-round playoff series against Boston until Saturday, gives James ample time to rest and receive treatment.

So it's business as usual for the Cavs, who meet the Celtics in the second round for the second time in three years. Last time, the series went seven games, with each team winning each game on its own home court, and the Celtics emerging with a 4-3 victory. Not long after that, they won the NBA championship behind the fearsome threesome of Kevin Garnett, Paul Pierce and Ray Allen.

But things are different this time around.

Garnett (33), Pierce (32) and Allen (34) are two years older, and the Celtics don't seem nearly as deep or intimidating as they were two seasons ago.

The Cavs also own the home-court edge this time, having compiled the league's best record for the second year in a row. They have also remade the roster since 2008, surrounding James with veterans such as Antawn Jamison, Mo Williams, Shaquille O'Neal, Anthony Parker and Jamarion Moon.

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In fact, only four Cavs remain on the roster from the last time they played the Celtics in the playoffs: James, Delonte West, Zydrunas Ilgauskas and Anderson Varejao.

So while these are two teams that are led by the same stars, they are also two teams that feel like they've made worthwhile additions, especially for playoff series like this one.

As for recent history, the Cavs and Celtics split their four-game season series during the regular season, with each winning once on the other's court. That included the season-opener, when the Celtics edged the Cavs at Quicken Loans Arena.

The Celtics will try to slow things down, keeping things physical and downright ugly. The Cavs, on the other hand, will aim to overcome the Celtics' vaunted defense by cutting to the basket and moving the ball. It's clear they have more success when they aren't just All LeBron, All The Time.

Either way, Celtics coach Doc Rivers insists his team is as ready as it's ever been, and feeling supremely confident following a first-round defeat of Miami (also in five games).

"During the regular season we were trying to focus on winning games and staying healthy and getting rest," Rivers said. "Now we have a single-minded interest, everybody, and that's to win."

As for James and the Cavs, well, Cleveland's basketball King insisted they too are feeling secure.

"Cleveland fans have nothing to be worried about," James said, in reference to his elbow. "They don't have any reason to panic."

CAVS-CELTICS VITALS

Probable Starters:

Cavs - C Shaquille O'Neal; PF Antawn Jamison; SF LeBron James; SG Anthony Parker; PG Mo Williams.

Celtics - C Kendrick Perkins; PF Kevin Garnett; SF Paul Pierce; SG Ray Allen; PG Rajon Rondo.

Top Reserves:

Cavs - C/F Anderson Varejao; G Delonte West; F Jamarion Moon; C Zydrunas Ilgauskas; F J.J. Hickson.

Celtics - F Rasheed Wallace; F/C Glen Davis; G Tony Allen; G Nate Robinson; G/F Marquis Daniels.

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Leaders in regular-season series:

Cavs - James, 36.5 ppg, 8.3 apg; Varejao, 9.0 rpg; Williams 54 percent on 3-pointers.

Celtics - Allen, 22.5 ppg; Garnett, 8.8 rpg; Rondo 10.3 apg; Allen 57 percent on 3-pointers.

Sam Amico covers the Cavaliers for NBA.com and CBS Sports, and is a regular contributor to SportsTime Ohio and The Cleveland Fan.