



The carnage is complete.

The final score was 94-85 Boston. With that the Celtics win the best of seven Eastern Conference semi-final series 4-2 that completes the most unlikely collapse many of us have personally witnessed in the long and horrid history of Cleveland sports collapses.

It's all over.

Done.

Certainly there will be no more basketball played by the Cavs this season and it may well be the end of an era in Cleveland Cavaliers history.

The Cavs' own uneven play throughout their second round series against Boston paved the way to their elimination and the Celtics guts, determination and execution sealed the deal.

Guts, determination and execution simply weren't part of the Cavs arsenal in this series.

On Thursday night it wasn't completely for lack of effort as was the case on Tuesday. Instead the Cavaliers, despite somewhat better energy, just felt the Boston defense tighten around their necks like a garrote and the Cavaliers had no answer.

With every offensive possession seemingly muddled and hesitant the Cavaliers hung around for three quarters but were ultimately left in the wake of a rejuvenated Celtic club that got another huge night from Kevin Garnett and a little bit of help from the rest of the Celtic rotation.

The fact the Celtics are advancing to face Orlando and that the Cavs simply had no answer when it got right down to it was unthinkable ten days ago when the series began. But the sad truth is that a season that promised so much as recently as a week ago and the Cavaliers have been sent reeling and staggering into the good night.

For his part LeBron James put up better numbers in Game 6 than he did in Game 5. But the dominating version of King James was still AWOL and he contributed more than his share to the series-ending defeat with nine costly turnovers to go with 27 points, 19 rebounds and 10 assists which led to what might be the most hollow of any playoff triple-double in recent memory. James was, once again, sometimes hesitant to push tempo and take open shots. Maybe that was a reaction to a sore right elbow that's been the cause for so much speculation over the past month or so, maybe it was something else. LBJ gave glimpses of his MVP form, most noticeably when he hit two straight treys to bring the Cavs from 12 points down to within four points late in the third quarter.

But Garnett and Paul Pierce, along with Rasheed Wallace, hit big shots for the Celtics to quickly push the lead out to 14 again halfway through the 4th quarter and it was all over but the dancing.

Garnett scored at will over Antawn Jamison and around Shaquille O'Neal and finished with 22 points and 12 boards. Rajon Rondo added 21 points and 12 assists while Pierce and Wallace knocked in 13 points a piece for Boston.

The Cavs got 22 points from Mo Williams (20 of which came in the first half) and 11 points from O'Neal. No other Cavalier reached double figures in scoring and Jamison had a miserable 2/10 shooting night to really make things difficult for the Cavs.

Now it Gets Worse

In only a half-joking manner I wonder if Head Coach Mike Brown will be fired before or after the team plane takes off from Logan Airport for its return to Cleveland.

It's not a matter of 'if' folks, it's a matter of 'when'. Brown's uneven handling of his playoff rotation and his inability to make adjustments during a game are certainly going to cost him the first head coaching job he ever had. Brown is a fine defensive coach and a better man, but the price of failing to live up to expectations and an exorbitant payroll is going to be high. In fact, for Brown it's going to be fatal.

And Worse

A couple weeks back I would have placed the likelihood of James remaining in Cleveland at upward of 90%. That feeling was based on the fact the Cavs looked to be aspiring toward the city's first championship in nearly 50 years and because the Cavs could guarantee LBJ the most money. It was also based on the fact that owner Dan Gilbert has basically made James a

de facto partner in the basketball operations department for the Cavaliers while also fostering all opportunities for James to succeed from a business and marketing standpoint.

Now, all bets are off.

With the shocking and sudden deterioration of a season of dreams and the accompanying upheaval in the coaching staff and quite possibly in the front office the Cavs have gone from the brink of a championship to the brink of pure disaster. From what looked to possibly be a fairy tale ending to a season we here in Cleveland are now faced with the fact that there may be other more palatable options for LeBron, despite his being born and raised 40 miles from the only place he's ever called home as a professional. Maybe James's appreciation of the peace and quiet he's afforded by an adoring Cleveland media holds more sway than I'm giving credit but at best, in my approximation, the likelihood of James signing to remain a Cavalier is a coin flip.

And Worse Yet

As if all of that isn't bad enough, not only is there likely a 50/50 chance that James moves to another franchise this offseason but for the next 7 weeks we're going to be hearing about nothing else. The 'Where Will LeBron Go' story will not die during that time period. It will be like going steady with the prettiest girl in class for seven years only for her decide to entertain other suitors under your nose while deciding if you're really best for her, all while newspapermen and on-line websites report every detail of every damn date.

If you thought the Celtics series was vile and disgusting just wait another couple months while your nose is rubbed in the stench of this upcoming courting period.

You'll be begging for a horrific, disappointing six game, two week elimination.