

The Cavs Coulda, Shoulda, Woulda...

Written by {ga=jdclevelandfan}

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Everyone knows that this year's Cleveland Cavaliers are going to lose games they *could* win, games they *should* win, and games fans thought they *would* win. It's part of having a team that's - at the very least - in retooling mode.

But even being fully aware of that doesn't make this recap any easier to write.

On Wednesday night, the Cavs lost the second half of a home-and-home back-to-back set with the New Jersey Nets, 95-87. Actually, they lost the *second half* of the second half of a back-to-back set with the Nets.

There was a lot to be happy about in the first quarter. Generally, the Cavs were defending well, rebounding well, and did a great job keeping the offense in motion, with ball and player movement.

Daniel Gibson played an important role in that. Pay attention to him, he's really blossoming as a point guard. In the first half, Gibson had fantastic dishes to Anderson Varejao, Antawn

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Jamison, and Ryan Hollins.

Coming into the season, I had mixed feelings about Gibson serving as one of the primary ballhandlers in Coach Scott's offense. It was mostly because he's the Cavs' most-consistent outside shooter, and he's not as good at creating his own shot, off the dribble, when he's running the offense.

But so far, he's been very impressive at pushing the ball and hitting his teammates with passes *when* and *where* they need them to create easy, quick offense. He "only" had five assists on Wednesday night, but all of them must have been pretty notable, because it seemed like he had more.

In this particular game, though, "the focus of Gibson's game" argument was moot . . . because he just couldn't get his shot going. He finished with a season-low five points (on 2-of-10 shooting).

Anyway, you may have noticed that I mentioned Hollins. He actually looked great in the first half. He was active and involved, and even scored the halftime chat with Jeff Phelps on the Fox Sports Ohio feed. He finished with 11 points (on 4-of-5 shooting) with two rebounds. (Although all that damage was done in the first half, in his first nine minutes on the floor. He ended up with 13 minutes total.)

One of the more exciting plays of the game came when Gibson found Hollins at the end of the first quarter. Gibson grabbed a defensive rebound on the run . . . and fired a half-court pass to Hollins for an alley-oop. That play was made by Hollins running the floor hard, and Boobie looking up the court.

The bigs, collectively, were playing aggressive. J.J. Hickson looked focused, under control and dominant. He was finishing strong and had a few early and-one opportunities. Anderson Varejao was also playing well, despite taking a shot to the chest and suffering bruised ribs in the first quarter. [Hopefully, he's OK. Also, Mo Williams couldn't finish the game because of a groin-type injury. His status for Saturday against Indiana is very much in doubt.]

So what happened in the *second* half?

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Well, nothing. And that was the problem.

The Cavaliers came back from halftime and put on a two-quarter-long power-point presentation on all the things that they're going to struggle with at times this season.

There was: The drop in energy, the fading intensity on defense, the lack of creativity with the ball, the forcing of your own shot instead of allowing motion and ball movement to break down the defense and create opportunities for teammates, the out-of-rhythm Mo Williams jumpers, the Gibson floaters, the Anthony Parker one-on-ones, the Ramon Sessions jump shots and/or Red-Rover-drives into traffic at the hoop . . . and, in this game at least, the hey-andy-just-got-his-ribs-banged-up-so-let's-find-him-some-mid-range-jump-shots offense.

In the end, the game was close until the final minute or so, but that was more a credit to the Nets' ineptitude than it was the Cavs' competitiveness.

The Cavs had one last opportunity to turn things around with 4:30 left in the game, when J.J. scored on a sweet show-and-go. He finished it with a slam, and the crowd was *up*. That gave the Cavs an 81-80 edge, but they couldn't build on it.

The Cavs' win-streak ends at three; their record falls to 4-4.

Here are some more box-score stats: J.J. led the Cavs with 15 points (on 6-of-11 shooting) with six rebounds. Sessions (4-of-10 shooting) and Jamison (6-of-12 shooting) followed with 14 points apiece. Jamison also had a team-high nine rebounds . . . and Sessions had three rebounds and three assists. Parker only had four points (on 2-of-5 shooting) but he did have five rebounds and five assists.

The Nets were led by Devin Harris (31 points, nine assists), Anthony Morrow (21 points, 5-for-8 beyond the arc) and Kris Humphries (13 points, 18 rebounds).

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[By the way, I have to credit the Cavs' fans at the Q yet again in this game. I realize there are extenuating circumstances, but it was great to see a packed arena after the embarassingly low turn-out (in the good seats!) that you couldn't help but see Tuesday night in New Jersey. It's great to see the fans here show up - physically, mentally and emotionally - for this team . . . even in a game when they're seeing such a sub-par effort in the second half. If the Cavs could've got a few more stops, I bet the fans could've, should've and would've willed this one home.]