

## Sun-Downer: Cavs Drop 10th Straight in Phoenix

Written by {ga=hermanfontenot}

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There is good news and bad news in the wake of Cleveland's 108-100 loss to the Suns in Phoenix on Sunday night, the tenth defeat in a row and twentieth in twenty-one games for the Cavaliers.

The good news is that we're near the halfway point of the 2010-11 NBA season. The bad news is that we've still got more than half of the season remaining to be played.

Freshly deprived of Anderson Varejao for the rest of the season, the Cavaliers gave a spirited effort on Sunday night, holding a five-point lead early in the fourth quarter. Ultimately it wasn't enough to overcome the Suns, who are having problems of their own. Phoenix came into the night losers of eleven of fourteen, their 14-20 record a far cry from last season's 54-28 and Western Conference Final finish.

Alvin Gentry's team didn't play well against the Cavaliers either, committing twenty turnovers and surrendering twenty-three fast-break points and fifty paint points to their undersized, under-talented guests. But they tightened up on defense, got some big three-point baskets and pulled away late to snap a three-game losing slide. The Suns also survived the loss of wizened Grant Hill early in the game with an ankle injury.

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You'd expect Steve Nash to show up- particularly against the defense-impooverished Cavaliers- and the Canadian Mark Price did indeed with 20 points, 17 assists and three steals. But the big games came from two of the younger members of this aging team; Jared Dudley and Channing Frye. Dudley, the former first-round pick of the Bobcats who has blossomed in the desert, came off the bench to score 21 points on 5-of-8 shooting from downtown with seven rebounds. Frye hit 4-of-6 from three-point range and came through with a 16-point, 12-rebound performance.

Once again, three-point shooting- the other team's, that is- led to a Cavalier loss. Cleveland is last in the league at opposing three-point percentage (42.2 percent) and true to form the Suns buried 13-of-28 from downtown. The Vince Carter contributed 3-of-7 from long range and his three-pointer with 2:40 left gave Phoenix an insurmountable 99-94 lead. With Nash, Grant Hill and the Vince, Phoenix has a team that would have been lethal in the year 2000.

Cold shooting was the dominant characteristic of the Cavaliers, particularly in the fourth period. After taking an 86-81 lead on Manny Harris's three-pointer with 11:12 left, Cleveland missed its next eight attempts and didn't make a shot from the field for more than five minutes. Phoenix used this drought as a springboard to a 12-4 run and a 93-90 lead. After Antawn Jamison made a shot to cut the deficit to 93-92, the Cavaliers missed their next nine attempts and went more than six minutes without a field goal. They had a couple of chances to retake the lead in the last five minutes but couldn't get a shot to go down. Such is life as the worst team in the NBA.

It was, however, a solid individual night for several of the Cavaliers- Manny Harris in particular. On the heels of his 16-point, 10-rebound outburst at Golden State the undrafted rookie from Michigan had by far his best game as a pro. Harris scored a career-high 27 points, hit 4-of-7 from downtown and pulled down eight caroms. His fourth and last three-pointer capped off a 15-2 run that put the Cavaliers in the lead by five early in the final period.

Two other Cavaliers scored more than twenty points. J.J. Hickson went for 23 and grabbed a season-high 17 rebounds, while Antawn Jamison equaled him with 23 points along with seven rebounds. It took volume shooting to get them to that total, though, with Hickson going 8-of-23 and Jamison 9-of-23. Cleveland shot poorly as a team on Sunday, bricking away at a 36.8 percent clip. Mo Williams also lost the Nash match-up decisively, scoring five points and shooting 2-of-11. Mo did contribute 12 of Cleveland's 24 assists.

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Next: Tuesday night at 10:30, when the Cavaliers drag their sixteen-game road losing streak into the Staples Center to take on the Los Angeles Lakers.