

## The Fat Lady Sings

Written by {ga=jerryroche}

Sunday, March 13 2011 3:31 PM - Last Updated Monday, March 14 2011 1:24 PM

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Okay: In Cleveland, it's time to finish up the NBA season and get to the college draft. At least, that's how it appeared Sunday afternoon at the Q.

Forget the final 17 games of the season. Forget the quest for a winning culture. Forget trying to establish a fluid offense or a well-coordinated defense. Forget trying to make lemonade out of a bunch of lemons. The Fat Lady has sung, ladies and gentlemen.

The Cavaliers went through a ho-hum snoozer against the blossoming Oklahoma City Thunder, losing 95-75. Sloppy, stupid, youthful floor mistakes on both ends of the court were the culprit -- although an apparent lack of confidence from the opening tip to the final buzzer didn't help.

The Cavs might have been beat before the National Anthem, judging by their lack of intensity for the rare early-afternoon game.

The Thunder, en route to snuffing out what seemed like every shot the Cavs took in the paint,

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jumped out to a 29-14 first-quarter lead and never looked back. The Cavs drew to within 10 points just before the end of the first half, but Thunder guard Russell Westbrook sashayed uncontested to the hoop no fewer than six times in the third quarter, and Oklahoma City had a 75-56 lead heading into the fourth.

Midway through the third stanza, the frustrated wine-and-gold-clad fans in the stands started booing. It wouldn't have been a surprise to see them throwing their jerseys onto the court in disgust. It was that bad.

The following long list of floor errors shows pretty much exactly how the Cavs blew the game, starting from the opening tip:

*Defense leaves Nazr Mohammed open on pick-and-roll for an easy basket; defense leaves Mohammed open on pick-and-roll again; J.J. Hickson has short shot blocked; Serge Ibaka slams an offensive rebound home; Cavs called for three-second offensive violation; Anthony Parker throws pass away; defensive rebound by Hickson knocked away to Thunder; Thabo Sefolosia hammers home an offensive rebound; Boobie Gibson has layup blocked; Ramon Sessions throws the ball away; Sefolosia goes down Broadway uncontested for slam; Sessions misses easy layup; Ibaka gets an easy dunk in transition.*

And that was just the first quarter.

With veteran all-star guard Baron Davis out in L.A. mourning the death of his beloved grandmother, the Cavs looked exactly like the team that suffered through a 26-game losing streak before Davis came via a trade with the Clippers.

And the poor Cavalier guards looked like they never met a basketball. Mr. Gibson, Mr. Sessions, Mr. Parker, meet Mr. Spalding. Boobie dribbled the ball on the baseline. Sessions skittered around as usual, but often forgot the ball. Parker threw it away three times. The Cavs had 17 turnovers, but it seemed more like 27. The Thunder had 13 steals and 11 blocks, including seven by Ibaka, who was made to look like the NBA's Next Big Thing.

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(Worth a mention is the fact that Thunder players are tall, lean and have the wingspans of Boeings 767s. The front line goes 6-foot-10, 6-10, 6-9, putting the Cavs' 6-9, 6-9, 6-6 to shame.)

Oklahoma City all-star forward Kevin Durant had a quiet 19 points in just 29 minutes of play. He sat most of the fourth quarter, along with the rest of the starters. Westbrook scored 20 points on 10 of 16 shooting, but had he realized in the first half the porosity of the Cavalier defense, he could've easily had 50.

Oklahoma City's largest lead was 90-62 when James Harden (whose beard rivals that of the Cavs' Baron) hit a trey with 6:13 left. The game clock, incidentally, seemed to move at an eternal creep all afternoon.

Amazingly, the Thunder were out-rebounded 60-51, mostly because the Cavs shot only 33 percent from the field and managed to grab 18 offensive rebounds. Trouble was, the Cavs couldn't do anything with any of the second-chance points against Ibaka and Mohammed in the paint.

It didn't help that the Cavs shot 61.5 percent from the foul line -- not that another 10 free throw conversions would've made an iota of difference.

Who stood out for the Cavs? Nobody, really. Gibson had 13 points but was helpless to guard Westbrook. Bulky forward Samardo Samuels had 10 points and 10 rebounds. Hickson had 15 rebounds, but only eight points. Parker didn't have much. Sessions and Luke Harangody, an early sub at forward, both stunk the place up.

Not that it matters any more, but the Cavaliers' next game is Wednesday at Sacramento, which has lost its last six and is giving the Cavs a comparatively weak run in the reverse race to having the most ping-pong balls in the draft hopper. Game time is 10 p.m. EDT.