

Cavs Lose Re-Match with Clippers

Written by {ga=jdclevelandfan}

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On Saturday night, the Cleveland Cavaliers lost to the Los Angeles Clippers, 100-82, in L.A.

It avenged the Clippers' loss to the Cavs in overtime on February 11th, which infamously snapped Cleveland's historically bad 26-game losing streak. A lot has changed since then, and some has stayed the same.

Obviously, the biggest change - aside from Cleveland no longer being in an unprecedented slump - is the trade between the two teams that sent Mo Williams and Jamarion Moon to L.A., in exchange for the Clippers' unprotected first round draft pick this coming June, and Baron Davis.

For the Cavs, the trade was made predominantly (if not exclusively) for the pick, which barring hell freezing over, will be a lottery pick. (Right now, the Clippers have the 8th worst record in the NBA . . . and are 6-4 in their last 10. Obviously, the more they fall, the better off the Cavs are, since they own that pick. That's why everyone wanted the Cavs to win on Saturday night, even those of us who want the Cavs to lose enough games to stay at the bottom to maintain the biggest shot at the #1 pick.)

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For the Clippers, the trade was made predominantly (if not exclusively) to get rid of Baron Davis and/or Baron Davis' contract. But they did get Mo too, and he was the only one of the traded players that appeared in Saturday's game.

Mo played OK, but he wasn't a difference maker. He did hit a 3-pointer with just over two minutes left, which put the game on ice, but it was over by that point. He finished with 11 points (on 3-of-6 shooting) with five assists and two rebounds.

Since joining the Clippers 10 games ago, Mo is averaging 16.3 points, 5.7 assists, 2.3 rebounds and 1.2 steals, which is basically just a touch over what he was doing with the Cavs this season (13.9 points, 6.8 assists, 2.6 rebounds and 1.0 steals).

Jamario Moon didn't get off the bench on Saturday. His role seems pretty similar to what it was in Cleveland this season. In 10 games, he's only played more than 15 minutes in four . . . and in those, the most he's scored is five points.

Baron Davis didn't play because he's suffering from back spasms. He played 15 minutes Thursday in Portland. That was his first game back after being excused for a week (three games) to deal with the death of his grandmother. Baron is considered day-to-day at this point.

Both Baron and Mo had great games in the last Cavs/Clippers face-off, when they were playing for the opposing team. Mo had 17 points and 14 assists, while Baron had 26 points and seven assists.

Since that game, the Cavs have lost Antawn Jamison (who had 35 points and nine rebounds) and the Clippers have gained guard Eric Gordon, who missed most of the past two months with a wrist injury. He was big in Saturday's game, with 29 points and five assists. He made six of his 10 3-point attempts.

But not everything was different.

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Both J.J. Hickson and L.A.'s Blake Griffin had huge games on Saturday . . . just as they did in the first match-up. (Not that Griffin's greatness came as that much of a surprise; he had a near-triple-double, with 30 points, eight rebounds and eight assists.)

J.J. came close to out-shining Griffin again this time, although they had two different approaches. Blake did almost all his damage in the paint, while J.J. did almost all his from 15 to 20 feet.

This is where we are with J.J. right now. He had 28 points (on 12-of-18 shooting) with nine rebounds (two offensive). He also had four turnovers, and they were pretty glaring. He fumbled the ball on a few possessions, and overthrew two passes. Some of his jumpers seemed ill-advised, but he was feelin' it, so it's hard to argue with them.

What you can argue is that J.J.'s outside game should be doing more to complement his *inside* game. But for now, when he gets in a rhythm from the outside, he's content to keep shooting from long-range. (It's interesting: For the most part, J.J. has great body and ball-control when he's making a move to the basket. But when he moves with the ball otherwise, he loses focus . . . and is mistake-prone.)

He was aggressive though; you have to like that.

In addition to J.J., Samardo Samuels had another great game. (He didn't play against the Clippers last month.) In the first quarter, in less than 10 minutes on the floor, Samardo had scored 14 points.

Unfortunately, he struggled with foul trouble after that . . . including being called for three offensive fouls taken by Griffin. He fouled out with just over a minute left in the game, finishing with 17 points (on 6-of-9 shooting) with five rebounds, three steals and a massive block.

Ramon Sessions added 18 points (on 7-of-13 shooting) with seven assists.

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The Cavs were up three after the first quarter, but lost their footing by not offering much resistance on the defensive end. The Clippers weren't playing great defense either, so the Cavs were able to stay within striking distance until the final few minutes.

This breaks Cleveland's nine game winning streak against the Clippers. They hadn't beat the Cavs since December of 2005.