



The next phase of the Cleveland Cavaliers officially got underway last night. An argument can be made that it began when LeBron James said “I’m taking my talents to South Beach,” but last year was a necessary portion of the rebuilding process. As fate would have it, the Cavs were fortunate enough to land the first overall pick and we can hopefully look ahead at the future of the team.

Kyrie Irving made his NBA and Cavs debut against the Detroit Pistons and he played better than expected. His first shot was wide-left and left a lot to be desired. Luckily for him, a free-pass was given due to the delayed start of the NBA season and the fact that he only played in eleven games at Duke. Additionally, he got over his butterflies and proceeded to play relatively well.

Tristan Thompson, the other Cavaliers rookie did not impress until the fourth quarter. He picked up four fouls in approximately one quarter and he ended the half with zero points, two rebounds

and four fouls. Thompson appeared to play much better in the fourth quarter when he notched eight points, two rebounds, a steal and two blocks. It will be interesting to see if he can carry some of the fourth quarter momentum into the next preseason game against Detroit on Tuesday.

The main attraction of the matchup was between rookie Kyrie Irving and Brandon Knight. Both point guards had moments where it was evident that they were rookies playing in their first NBA game. They both also had moments that justified where they were selected in the lottery. Both teams appear to have some very nice players.

Very little is known about what to expect from Kyrie Irving this season due to the small amount of basketball that he has played. The best aspect of Kyrie Irving's performance was his driving ability and the amount of times he got to the free throw line. He looked fairly comfortable handling the ball and he had an impressive first step. He finished the game with twenty-one points, six rebounds, three assists and two steals. The areas that he should look to improve on in the next game are his shots that were blocked and turnovers.

Anderson Varejao played his first game since January 5th and he performed as-expected. He hit on all four of his shots and pulled down 4 rebounds. Assuming he doesn't get traded, one thing to look out for this season is how well Kyrie Irving and Anderson Varejao can run the pick-and-roll.

Making snap-judgements after a preseason game is something that I am usually against. Having said that, Antawn Jamison put forth very little effort. An argument could be made that the lockout did not affect him and that he was in mid-season form. Jamison got off to a rousing start and shot 14% in the first quarter and mailed in his defensive effort. In the case with Jamison, he has a history of taking off defensive plays and attempting bad shots. Hopefully he turns up his effort or he can be traded. This is not the kind of leadership and effort that the rookies should be exposed to.

Coach Byron Scott's rotations were fairly simple. The starters mostly played together in the first and third quarters and the bench players did the same in the second and fourth quarters. Expect to see Kyrie Irving play more with the first team moving forward, which should elevate his assist totals and playmaking.

Overall, the Cavs shot a poor 35.2% and they hit on 15.8% of their three point attempts. Detroit did not fare much better and they shot 37.7% overall and 31.6% from beyond the arc. The major difference was free throws with Kyrie Irving and Samardo Samuels attempting a combined 31.

The readers may have noticed that I have not mentioned the final score of the game. That was intentional. It must be stressed that very little should be made of a preseason game. These are the types of games where players sit out with even the most minor of injuries. It will be interesting to see how the Cavs look when Omri Casspi, Manny Harris, Daniel Gibson, Semih Erden and Ryan Hollins play. In addition, it was painfully evident that Byron Scott's rotation was not fine-tuned. The importance of preseason games are for the players to get their sea legs, the coaching staff to assess their team, training camp invites to make a case for why they deserve to be in the NBA and for everybody to stay healthy.