

The big storylines for Friday night's matchup between the Timberwolves and Cavs were supposed to be about the rookies. Will Derrick Williams make a statement and leave the Cavs second-guessing leaving him on the board for Minnesota? Who will win the battle between the two frontrunners for the Rookie of the Year award?

With so many questions about the rookies and hype surrounding certain matchups, it may come as a surprise that the veterans made the biggest impact. Antawn Jamison continued his great play and finished with 22 points, 6 rebounds and 2 blocked shots. Kevin Love, who spent much time guarded by Jamison had 29 points and 14 rebounds.

The strong play of Anderson Varejao was a game-changer. He made reverse layups that were the result of screens. He was active. He was relentless and grabbed every available rebound. What was most impressive was how he was able to find an open man and make the extra pass. Varejao had 5 assists and there were a few times when his court vision was quite impressive. To put it into perspective, you would have to go all the way back to March 8, 2008 to find the last time Varejao had more than 4 assists in a game. Obviously this playmaking is not something that will carry over since that is not his game, but it was certainly a spark for the Cavs.



The Ricky Rubio and Kyrie Irving matchup didn't necessarily disappoint, but it was not as great as expected. Rubio finished with 10 points and 5 assists in 27 minutes. Irving had 14 points and 5 assists in 29 minutes. Neither had amazing performances, but they both put on a display that highlighted their strengths and weaknesses. Rubio made passes that exhibited his veteran-quality court vision and played at a high comfort level. Kyrie Irving showed off his ability to score and passing ability. Although they did not play a game that will have the internet buzzing, they both made strong cases for why they are going to be fantastic point guards moving forward. This is a matchup that will be fascinating to watch and hopefully evolve into a rivalry.

Derrick Williams played relatively well. He came off the bench and scored 12 points in 26 minutes. The book is still being written on which player will ultimately be the best one from the 2011 draft. One game should not change the popular narrative about the rookie class. Although Williams has not been recording fantastic statistics, there are a lot of factors that could explain why this is the case.

The Cavs bounced back from their bad loss in Toronto and once again played like an actual NBA team. Against the Raptors, Cleveland shot 29.6% and lost by 15 points. Two nights later, the Cavs bounced back and scored on 46.2% of their shots. Additionally, the Cavs were superior to the Timberwolves in rebounding, assists, steal, blocks and turnovers.

An impressive aspect of the 2011-2012 Cavs compared to last year's counterpart is how they bounce back after tough losses. Going into the season, I assumed that the lockout would make that a difficult task. There is only so much time between games to focus coaching strategy and practice. When the young Cavs shoot poorly in addition to give up plenty of open three point shots, there are a lot of issues to address. Byron Scott appears to be getting through to his team and it shows.

The Cavs won the game by a final score of 98-87, which makes it the 4th double-digit win for the Cavs in 7 tries. To put it into perspective, last year's team won a total of 2 games by at least 10 points. Their biggest win was a 12 point victory against the Miami Heat. In victories, Cleveland is winning by an average of 14.25 points. The season is young and the Cavs have had the 7th easiest schedule thus far, but that is a statistic that should not be ignored. Regardless of what the final record is for the Cavs, the team will be much better than last year. Of course, this prediction is subject to change if they lose 26 games in a row.

The Good: Daniel Gibson is playing very well into this young season. He made all 3 of his three point attempts and has been a nice spark off the bench.

The Bad: Michael Beasley suffered an injury and could miss games. In addition to getting injured, he did not have a strong performance and played like he was out of the flow of the game. Hopefully he can get back to playing basketball sooner than later.

The Ugly: Tristan Thompson had another stinker. He played 14 minutes and registered 2 points, 2 rebounds and 2 turnovers. It should also be noted that Ryan Hollins didn't record a single stat in 6 minutes of play.