



The game in 300 words or less

At face value, this was just the Cavaliers' third loss in the fourth installment of their seven-game road trip, the longest of the season. Utah is one of the league's toughest places to play, so I sat down to watch this one expecting the worst but was encouraged by a couple of things.

First, the Cavs had plenty of opportunities to quit and/or get blown out, and it never happened. The Jazz finished the first half with a flurry to open up a nine-point lead, but the Cavs fought back and played most of the second half within a few possessions. Byron Scott won't let these guys quit.

Second, we're starting to see a team dynamic forming. Irving and Jamison are both candidates for 20-25 points a night, while Parker, Varejao, Gibson, Sessions, and Gee provide the supporting performances. Rarely is a guy in that second group going to break out for 20 points, but most of them will crack double-digits more often than not.

So what's the big negative takeaway from tonight's game? As many suspected, the Cavs are very vulnerable to quality bigs. Al Jefferson, Paul Millsap, and Derrick Favors poured in 30, 19, and 14 respectively. That triumvirate shot a combined 27-for-33, which my calculator app tells me comes out to a hair under 82%. Yeah, that's not going to get it done.

It shouldn't come as a shock that the Jazz shot almost 60% as a team. Interior defense is going to be a challenge for this team all year long.

Irving watch

Another solid game for the rook; 20 points, 5 assists, just 2 turnovers, all on 7-for-14 shooting. This was Irving's fourth 20-point performance in just 9 games, and 50% shooting is terrific for a point guard. The two turnovers are especially encouraging after a couple of fairly sloppy performances in Minneapolis and Portland.

Irving's ability to get to the rim almost at will continues to be his most impressive attribute, but he's also shown a jump shot that's been better than advertised. The Duke product is a good distributor and as the season progresses I expect his assist numbers to rise. We can't overlook how little time this team has actually played together, or the fact that Irving is still just 19.

Someone's missing

Maybe it's just me, but it still feels weird to see a Utah Jazz game without Jerry Sloan prowling the bench area. After all, Sloan did take the helm in Utah when I was the ripe old age of one.

Tyrone Corbin, who had a cup of coffee with the Cavs in the late '80s, is the new coach, and it's really too early to make much of an assessment. I will say this much – it's much tougher to

make jokes about Corbin being a raging alcoholic. It is also very unlikely that Corbin will lead the league in technical fouls, as Sloan did so frequently.

So we traded J.J. Hickson for, um, this guy?

Omri Casspi has really looked awful so far. He is shooting under 40% and had another poor, 2-for-6 display tonight. Casspi has been pretty lost on defense, too.

I know it's early, but I still have to wonder how long Byron Scott can stick with Casspi as the starter, especially with Alonzo Gee playing some very solid ball so far. Maybe Scott has done everything but bench Casspi, as Gee is averaging over five minutes more per game than the Israeli. Plus, Gee balances the second unit by adding some scoring ability.

Hopefully the shots start falling and these early struggles just become a memory. Casspi obviously isn't Jiri Welch, but those of us who were hoping to see him grab the starting small forward spot and score 12-15 points per night are going to have to wait.

He's not Z, but he'll have to do

Semih Erden played his second game of the season and only the sixth of his Cavaliers career. It is tough to say whether Erden will be anything other than just another big body, but considering that he hasn't logged a half hour of floor time yet I'll reserve judgment. If nothing else, it's nice to have a seven-foot European back on the floor.

One thing Erden has going for him: he's one of two seven-footers on the team and his name isn't Ryan Hollins. That alone is a step in the right direction. Also, he looks like Lurch from "The Addams Family."

Even if Erden can just focus on rebounding and protecting the rim, he has a chance to really contribute. As much as I like the Cavs' bigs, Varejao, Thompson, Samuels, and Jamison are all in the 6'8" to 6'10" range, and all are really better suited to power forward than center. Just having a seven-footer who could clean the glass for 15 to 20 minutes would be terrific. And again, it would be great if that guy could save us from watching Ryan Hollins pretend to be a basketball player.

And Many More...

In the fourth quarter we saw a clip from the commercial break, in which a Jazz fan had a birthday celebration at the arena. The emcee, Jazz mascots (Jazz Bear...and some other smaller bear), and a couple of cheerleaders delivered a cake complete with lit candles to a lucky fan in the first row of the upper bowl.

As Jazz Bear tilted the cake to show it to the camera...yep, it plummeted into the lower bowl onto a lucky fan. Fortunately a fall of some 30 feet extinguished the candles, and just as fortunately they didn't appear to be of the trick re-lighting variety. (Those are so lame.)

The woman who absorbed the blow seemed to take it in stride, and why not? With the exorbitant cost of concessions in NBA arenas, we should all be so lucky.

Up next: 1/12, at Phoenix Suns, 9:00