



The Cleveland Cavaliers (7-11) comeback effort against the New Jersey Nets (7-13) was too little, too late. That's not to say that it was impressive, but the effort needed to overcome their lackluster effort through three quarters was simply not possible. The Cavs went into the 4th quarter trailing by 11 points and the biggest lead for the Nets was 17 points. In the end, the Cavs (who never held a lead) lost by a final score of 99-96.

The final score is a respectable one mostly because of a superhuman effort by Kyrie Irving and a combination of poor execution and missed free throws by the Nets. Irving scored 21 of his career-high 32 points in the 4th quarter. He had a wide-array of impressive drives and even made 2 three point shots that gave the Cavaliers fans a sense of hope that the game could be won. The Cavs scored 35 points in the 4th quarter, which is only 2 less than they tallied in the first half played.

A positive note that can be taken from the game against the Nets is the fact that Kyrie Irving put on a spectacular performance in the 4th quarter. Conversely, that effort would not have been necessary if he would have been more assertive in the first 3 quarters. Seeing Irving play with that much intensity and ultimately coming up short made the game more entertaining, but one

has to worry about fatigue from the rookie.

Nets coach Avery Johnson atoned for his head-scratching decision to give extended minutes to Deron Williams at the shooting guard position in their prior meeting with the Cavs. Williams responded and poured in 27 points and 10 assists on 18 shots. In addition to Williams tallying more impressive individual stats, the Nets looked and played like a much more competent basketball team.

The story of the game once again is inferior execution. The Cavs only made 14 out of 24 free throws and had 18 assists compared to their 16 turnovers. The amount of turnovers wasn't as concerning so much as the timing of them. For example, the Cavs closed the 1st quarter out by committing 2 consecutive turnovers. Turning the ball over is one thing when it is a result of an errant pass, but dribbling the ball off of your foot or slipping without an apparent reason is another. Once again, the Cavs are in dire need of learning how to value the basketball and not give away points due to carelessness.

It is difficult to shake the feeling that the Cavs could have won this game if they would have done a better job defending Kris Humphries. On the season, Humphries is a 35% shooter from midrange. He has only taken 55 shots that could be categorized as midrange and made 19 of them. Against the Cavs on Friday night, he made 5 field goals that were from the midrange. If Kris Humphries was defended competently and he did not have a career night shooting jumpshots, the Cavs would have been in a position to win the game.

In the grand scheme of things, it is difficult to get too upset over wins and losses this season. What can be upsetting is when progress is not discerned by the team and individual players. I understand that Byron Scott is trying to win as many games as possible, but he is still playing the veterans an excessive amount of minutes. If Antawn Jamison was held accountable for his excessive shooting and practically non-existent defense like the younger Cavaliers are, he would have gotten the JJ Hickson treatment from Byron Scott a long time ago. I do not believe in making any single player a scapegoat after a loss, but the discrepancy in accountability that Scott has with veterans and rookies is mind-boggling.

**The Good:** Kyrie Irving once again demonstrated that he is not afraid of the big moment and played at a high level in the 4th quarter.

**The Bad:** Scoring is down across the NBA, but the Cavs were only able to score 37 points in the first half. Had they scored 41 (which is not a lot), they very well could have won the game.

**The Ugly:** Execution by the Cavaliers continues to be an issue. They once again had a potpourri of areas that were unacceptable. The Cavs manage to turn the ball over, play bad defense, shoot poorly, have poor spacing and not hit free throws in what feels like every loss. This was once again the case against the Nets. If they could do better in one area, they would probably have more wins.