



Tonight was one of those nights. After weeks of telling yourself she wasn't worth it; that you wouldn't even acknowledge her existence again until she got her act together—there you were, getting into bed with the Cavs again. Are you proud of what you've done? No. There's no pride in a 93-90 loss to a geriatric Celtic team. But do you regret what happened? No, no you do not.

Not since the heyday of Chris Gatling and the "Zoo Crew" has a collection of scrappy, overachieving bums inspired this much irrational excitement in Cavalier Nation. Hosting Boston (10-10) just two nights after sucker-punching the C's on their home floor in last-second fashion, Cleveland (8-12) hoped to make a major statement for their own fans at the Q tonight—to show that wins like Sunday night's were no fluke. In a roundabout way, that's exactly what Byron Scott's boys accomplished, but certainly not in the way he drew it up.

Right from the beginning, strange things were afoot. With Tristan Thompson still limited and guards Anthony Parker and Daniel Gibson both on the shelf, the Cavs were embarrassingly understaffed and Boobieless, forcing Coach Scott to put rookie Mychel Thompson—freshly hatched from his cocoon—into the starting line-up. The Pepperdine grad wound up going 31 minutes, shooting 3-of-9 for 8 points along with 4 assists. You get a cookie, Mychel. Nice job.

In other strangeness, long lost Cavalier guard Sasha Pavlovic was discovered—alive!—wearing a green Boston jersey and green shorts. Startling both his ex-teammates and the real members of the Celtics, the 6-foot-7 Serb ran on to the court in the first quarter, made two baskets, and then vanished back into the night, never to return.

Meanwhile, on Cleveland's side of the ball, a trend was set within the first several minutes of the game, as Anderson Varejao drained not one, not two, but three straight 15 FOOT JUMPERS en route to a 10-point opening quarter. It was 28-24 Boston after 12 minutes, but The Wild Thing had clearly eaten his Wheaties.

[Synopsis of 2nd and 3rd quarters deemed unsuitable for publication]



And so Cleveland entered the fourth quarter down 18 points, 76-58, as Boston's Big Three old dudes (Rondo missed a seventh straight game due to injury) looked poised to claim their redemption for Sunday's crunch time meltdown at the Garden. With Kyrie struggling offensively, the Cavs had no answer for Paul Pierce (20 pts, 4 rbs, 6 asts), who's been dominating Cleveland defenders since back when he and Campy Russell used to go toe to toe. Worse yet, after the Cavs dropped 12 unanswered points on Boston in the final minutes of their previous meeting, there would be no way the veteran Celtics would possibly open a door of opportunity like that again.

And yet... that they did! Despite making up virtually no ground with Pierce and Ray Allen resting for the first few minutes of the fourth, Cleveland eventually began chipping away in eerily similar fashion to Sunday's game. At the core of everything was the team's perpetual unsung hero, Varejao, who's quietly having his best season as a pro. In the boxscore, Andy's 20 points and 20 rebounds (including 10 offensive boards) certainly jump out. It was the first 20-20 game of his career. But beyond the numbers, it was Varejao's notorious, relentless energy that finally started catching on with his previously sleepwalking teammates in the final eight minutes.

In the backcourt, Irving and Ramon Sessions—on the court together and looking pretty damn lethal in the process—found an offensive spark through ball movement. While Irving did his magic act to get in the lane and to the line, Sessions stroked a pair of jumpers and found an open Alonzo Gee for a huge three-pointer that suddenly cut the Celtic lead to 78-71 with 6:35 to go. The Q was swooning. You had us at “Alonzo Geeee for Threeee.”

After a timeout, Boston came out determined to cut off the charging Cavs at the pass. Garnett (13 pts) hit a difficult fade away jumper from 18 feet, then fed Pierce for an acrobatic layup to stretch the Celtic lead back to 11 at 84-73. It felt like the geezers had weathered the storm. But here came those pesky Cavs yet again.



The suddenly hot Irving (21 pts, 6 asts) connected on a jumper, Antawn Jamison (12 pts) threw in a couple of his little junk flips, and Gee (11 pts, 4 steals) continued to impress— forcing turnovers, making two key free throws, and confidently nailing an 18-foot jumper to cut the lead down to 4 at 89-85 with 1:49 to go. After a Ray Allen charging call on the other end, Irving spun through traffic and twirled in a left-handed lay-in to narrow the gap to just 2 as the crowd went appropriately bonkers. Hot damn, this is fun!

Unfortunately, after a Garnett hook shot crawled along the rim and dropped in, the Cleveland comeback train had finally run out of fuel. Varejao and Irving were both forced to launch ugly threes with the clock running down late, and by the time Kyrie got another look from downtown and scored it, it was too late.

Of course, in sports, there is no such thing as moral victories—except in cases where there

totally is such a thing, like tonight. The Cavs—led by a brilliant rookie point guard and a Brazilian maniac who ought to be this city’s favorite athlete—are by no means a good basketball team. But they’re maybe an even rarer thing in today’s NBA: a loveable team.