

The Cavs appeared to have a commanding lead when they led the Sacramento Kings by 10 points with 10:52 left in regulation. As Cavaliers fans should be accustomed to, no lead is safe. The Kings made a game of it and the winner was determined by poor decision making by Demarcus Cousins and Kyrie Irving's ability to stand up to pressure and make two free throws with .4 seconds left on the clock.

The star of the game for the Cavs was Tristan Thompson, who had his best game as a professional. Thompson came off the bench and scored 15 points, grabbed 12 rebounds and had 2 blocked shots in 30 minutes of playing time. Most interesting was the fact that Byron Scott trusted Thompson to play center down the stretch. Thompson may not be the tallest guy on the court, but his wingspan is extensive and he also makes the most of his athleticism. Tristan Thompson is not an ideal center in the NBA, but neither are Semih Erdon, Samardo Samuels and Ryan Hollins.

Much of the game was sloppy. The Kings outshot the Cavs 37.6% to 36.0% but could not secure the win. Because of the extensive missed shots by both teams, there were plenty of opportunities to grab rebounds. There were stretches where it seemed like neither team could rebound competently and the ensuing result was a combined 37 offensive rebounds.



Going into the game, the expected narrative was how Omri Casspi and JJ Hickson would perform against their old teams. With the exception of Casspi setting a career high in rebounds (12), neither of the players were overly impressive. The Cleveland crowd gave JJ Hickson a warm reception, which so happened to be the highlight of the night for the young power forward.

What proved to be the most interesting storyline from the game was how the last pick of the 2011 draft played against the first overall pick. Isaiah Thomas, who was picked 60th, finished with 23 points, 8 rebounds, 11 assists and only 2 turnovers. The 5'9" point guard played much bigger than his small frame. The Kings appear to have found a diamond in the rough with Thomas. Kyrie Irving had one of those rare games where he seemed to go through the motions. Irving took 21 shots, made 8 of them and had 1 assist to his 4 turnovers.

The Cavs shot 25% in the fourth quarter and they managed to win the game. The difference was the 8 free throw attempts by the Cavs compared to the Kings who did not get to the line once during the final quarter. The biggest turning point was when Demarcus Cousins fouled Alonzo Gee with 6.2 seconds left in the game. The Kings were leading 91-90 and the game was tied after Gee split the free throws. The Cousins foul was one of frustration and very well could have cost the Kings the game. To make matters worse for the Kings, Tyreke Evans fouled Kyrie Irving on the next Cavaliers possession which were the go-ahead points for the Cavs.

The Cavs are currently in a delicate position. Much is made of whether they should focus on the lottery or win as many games as possible. Regardless of what happens, the most important thing is that they do not become a team like the Kings. Sacramento has amassed plenty of lottery talent, but it is not resulting in wins for the Kings. Conversely, the Kings do not have a player like Kyrie Irving who is surpassing expectations. It will be interesting to see how everything pans out for the Cavs in the future.

**The Good:** Tristan Thompson made a strong case for why he should be getting starter's minutes. Thompson set a career high in minutes played and he delivered.

**The Bad:** The JJ Hickson for Omri Casspi trade is one of those rare swaps where both teams are probably regretting the transaction. JJ Hickson made it known that he never wanted to

leave Cleveland and that he is not very happy in Sacramento. Omri Casspi plays a very awkward brand of basketball. Watching Casspi play is difficult at times. He does not look relaxed and plays a little tight.

**The Ugly:** This was Lockout Basketball at its best. Low field goal percentage by both teams, poor execution down the stretch and two teams that are playing like neither want to win. I'm glad this one is behind us.