



The Cleveland Cavaliers ended their three game losing streak on Monday night against the New Jersey Nets. The win required an incredible showing and effort from the duo of Cavaliers rookies. Tristan Thompson and Kyrie Irving combined for 53 points and both looked great in the starting lineup.

The final score was a 105-100 win for the Cavs. The biggest statistical edge that Cleveland had was in rebounding. Cleveland pulled down 55 rebounds compared to 37 for the Nets. Because of the rebounding, the Cavs had the opportunity to take 8 more shots than the Nets. In addition, the Cavs shot better from the field than their opponent. Cleveland converted on 46.1% of their shots and New Jersey did so on 42.0%. The difference was all of the extra shots and the superior shooting. Cleveland only won by 5 points, but it is fairly clear that the extra effort on the glass is something that paid dividends. Sometimes a team does not shoot the ball particularly well or they struggle with turnovers, but they can make up for it in other areas.

Cleveland had another great fourth quarter. The effort was capped off by Kyrie Irving and Tristan Thompson who combined for 20 points on 63.6% shooting in the final twelve minutes. Once again, an encouraging sign was not only that they both played so well, but that Byron

Scott trusted them to play together when it really mattered. They both played for the entire fourth quarter.

Up until recently, the two rookies had limited time on the floor together. Ever since Byron Scott named Thompson as a starter, they have finally gotten extended time in the same five man group. The experiment is short-lived, but worked very well against the Nets. To put it into perspective, Irving has only assisted to Thompson four times prior to the Nets game and they connected three times on Monday night. Running offensive plays for Tristan Thompson is something that good teams will be able to account for, but there's no reason that they should not have better chemistry on the pick-and-roll. There were some definite encouraging signs in that department.

Daniel Gibson left the game with an ankle injury in the third quarter. Injuries are never a positive thing, but this allowed for Byron Scott to get an extended look at Donal Sloan. The rookie point guard scored 11 points on 4-6 shooting and he also contributed 3 rebounds and 1 assist. The biggest play that he made was a 3 point basket in the fourth quarter which shrunk the Nets lead to three and was a turning point in the game.

For the Nets, Gerald Wallace played his second game after being traded to the Nets. He had a very nice outing for his new team and recorded 27 points and 12 rebounds. Gerald Wallace is a very good player who can do incredible things to help his team win, but the Nets appear to have given up too much in their trade for him. The Nets are fully committed to making the Deron Williams experiment work and have given up multiple first round picks to get him and in an attempt to surround him with teammates that will make him happy. One does not need to be a clairvoyant to predict how things will end for the Deron Williams and New Jersey Nets relationship.

The Cavs are probably a far way from being considered a playoff team, but the efforts of the rebuild are on display when the rookies play as well as they did against the Nets. Tristan Thompson isn't going to regularly score 27 points on 75% shooting, but he is showing that he is capable of stepping up and playing like a lottery selection. This may not always result in wins, but the growth of the young players during games like these that are truly encouraging.

**The Good:** The 2011 Cavaliers draftees looked great. They combined for 53 points, 17 rebounds and 8 assists. Regardless if these types of performances are far and few between, it is fun to watch as it happens.

**The Bad:** The Nets simply are not a very good team. They have had big plans to sign LeBron James and then Dwight Howard and are stuck in a situation where they are making panic moves to keep Deron Williams. Quite frankly, this must not be a fun period for Nets fans.

**The Ugly:** Omri Casspi (who is a regular around these parts of my recaps), followed up his admission that he does not truly understand Byron Scott's offense by scoring 2 points in 15 minutes. With J.J. Hickson being waived by the Kings today, it is safe to say that the trade was not a positive one for either team.