



On Sunday nights, Cleveland Cavalier fans had a unique opportunity to look into a crystal ball and look into the post-Dwight Howard Orlando Magic world. Although he opted into the final year of his contract, it would take a miracle to get him to stay with the team long-term . In the crystal ball world that we got to witness, it didn't matter and the Magic handedly beat the Cavs with a final score of 100-84.

The game ball belongs to Jameer Nelson. The point guard who has been inconsistent this season finished with 21 points, 7 rebounds, 9 assists and 3 turnovers in almost 29 minutes of playing time. He got plenty of help. There were four other Magic players who had double-digit scoring. Glen Davis was well on track to be the sixth member of the Magic to score in double-digits when he had to leave the game after only 7 minutes due to a sprained right knee.

The Magic are literally limping into the playoffs. It is not a given that Dwight Howard, Hedo Turkoglu and Glen Davis will be ready for the playoff berth that they just locked up by beating Cleveland on Sunday night.

The Magic are a team that take and make a lot of three pointers. When a physical presence like Dwight Howard is in the paint, it should be expected. When he is out with an injury or an “I am trying to get my coach fired and deeply regret opting in” sabbatical, it is inexcusable for the Magic to have taken so many open threes. Due to the nature of NBA defensive statistics, it is impossible to quantify how many open threes the Magic took, but it seemed as if the Cavs were constantly running through a screen and closing in on an open shooter a half second too late. On the season, the Magic average 26.9 three point attempts per game and they make 10.2. Both averages are the most in the NBA. Having shooters and the most dominant big man in the league makes that a prudent way to run an offense. The fact that the Magic made 11 threes without Howard should lead to an extra film session for Byron Scott.

The Magic had control of the matchup for most of the game. The one stretch that felt like Cleveland was dictating the game was before the end of the first half. A series of questionable calls was made against the Cavs and they responded with a 7-0 run to finish the quarter.

The Cavs did not execute on offense throughout most of the game. In the first half, they managed to score only 30 points. They did score 30 points in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter to make the final score look somewhat respectable, but they cannot continue to have such bad stretches on offense. The Cavs were worse than the Magic in a slew of different statistical categories. They had more turnovers (17) than the Magic (6). They shot a worse percentage overall (37.3%) than the Magic (45.6%). Worst of all is the biggest lead for both teams. For the Magic, the biggest lead was 20. Cleveland never held a lead in the entire game.

The highlight of the game came in the third quarter when the arena production crew showed Mark Price on the Magic bench. The former Cavaliers point guard is the most universally beloved Cavalier in the team's 42 year history. Being at the game and witnessing the ovation that he received was pretty great.

**The Good:** Donald Sloan has now set career highs in points in two straight games. His previous high was 13, which came against the Wizards on Saturday night. Sloan scored 15 points against the Magic.

**The Bad:** Despite the fact that the Magic were missing two rotation forwards and their starting center, the Cavs were not able to capitalize. Tristan Thompson had his shot blocked 3 times and made only one field goal out of eight tries. The backup big men for the Magic did not miss a beat. Daniel Orton and Earl Clark came off the bench and scored 24 points. Of course, the Cavaliers big men situation is dire to begin with and they are dealing with injuries. Having said that, their effort was pretty poor.

**The Ugly:** Luke Walton had 5 turnovers in his 13 minutes of playing time. It takes two players to commit a turnover, but at least a few of those were a result of the man he was passing to not being ready for the ball. Luke Walton is never going to be confused for Jason Kidd, but it has been a while since the Cavs have played with a guy who creates passes as creatively as Walton. They need to be ready for his passes.