

## Cavs/Wizards - The Good, The Bad, & The Summary

Written by {ga=diminishingskills}

Wednesday, November 01 2006 7:00 PM -

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We promised wall to wall coverage of the Cavaliers this year on The Blurbs, and that's exactly what we're going to give you. High priced free agent journalist John Hnat chimes in with his thoughts on last night's game in only the way John can. Hnat will be delivering his analysis all year for us as we track the wine and gold all the way to the NBA Finals.



### THE SUMMARY:

Cavs beat the Wizards, 97-94, in an exciting game that would have fit right into the playoff series between the two teams last spring. You could almost hear the TNT executives cursing that they got the Chicago-Miami blowout instead of this nail-biter for its Opening Night game. Larry Hughes led the Wine and Gold with 27 points, and LeBron had his usual 26, 10, and 5. Caron Butler paced the Wizards with 23 points. Washington superstar Gilbert Arenas' dog has sore ribs today, as Arenas had a very uncharacteristic 7 points on 2 of 12 shooting.

### WHAT I LIKED ABOUT THE GAME:

1. THIS was the Larry Hughes we've been waiting to see. On a night when LeBron was "only" very good instead of spectacular, Hughes stepped up and hit several key shots. Many of those shots were from long range (he went 3 of 4 from beyond the arc). Oh, Hughes also had 9 boards, 5 assists, and a couple of steals. I'm not expecting Hughes to be quite that hot from long range, but if he continues to play like he did yesterday ... watch out.

2. The rumors are true ... Cleveland actually has something of a motion offense! They were consistently moving without the ball, and the times when the other four guys stood around and waited for LeBron to do something were minimal. This type of offense creates more opportunities, and it particularly plays to the strengths of Hughes.

3. Drew Gooden: 14 points, 11 boards, 8 of them on the offensive glass. Put that line in the copier and Xerox it, because we'll see it again and again. Not coincidentally, we will also see quite a few Cavalier victories.

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4. The Cavs were able to give LeBron a few minutes of rest; LeBron played “only” 40-plus minutes. More impressively, the Cavs increased their lead while LeBron was on the bench in the second quarter. (It was a different story in the fourth quarter, alas...)

5. I'll give one to the Wizards: Etan Thomas played a great game, hitting all seven of his shots and generally being a bad ass under the boards. When I attended the opener of the Cavs-Wizards playoff series last April, Thomas barely got into the game. Every time he did, a loud, hops-and-barley-fueled gentleman in the next section would swear loudly at him. Apparently, this fan took exception to Thomas's long braids, and he kept calling Thomas names. Something about him being a cat, I think. Anyway, I was glad to see Thomas redeem himself with a strong performance.

### WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE ABOUT THE GAME:

1. 15 for 30 from the free throw line. The 5 for 9 from Varejao is kind of a given, but 2 for 5 from Hughes and 2 for 6 from Bron isn't. This game should not have been close down the stretch. Had the Cavs shot 75% from the stripe (the *de facto* standard), then they would have had 7-8 more points, and we're not holding our breaths on those three point attempts by Jarvis Hayes and Antawn Jamison.

2. The numbers for Free Agent Acquisition #1, David Wesley:

10 minutes, 0 points (missed two shots, both of them three pointers), 2 boards, 2 assists, 3 turnovers.

I'm not gonna pick on him too much – it is one game, after all. But his three turnovers were the kind you see on Open Gym Night at the local Y. One in particular – an ill-advised cross-court pass – had “steal and breakaway dunk” written all over it, and Caron Butler was only too happy to oblige.

3. The numbers for Free Agent Acquisition #2, Scot Pollard:

Again, we shouldn't read too much into this one. But with Big Z playing only 20 minutes because of foul trouble, it would have been nice to see a few minutes from the Man of 1,000 Hairstyles.

4. Sasha Pavlovic. I was kind of surprised to see him out there at all, as reports were that he was one of the guys relegated to the end of the bench. After last night's game, he'll be lucky to get off the pine. He was out of control the times that he touched the ball (almost turning it over twice), committed three fouls in his seven minutes, and generally looked like a guy who is Just Not Getting It.

He did have one nice play, when he screened out a defender and created an easy hoop. Only

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problem was, the defender was Andy Varejao, and the hoop was scored by Washington's Brendan Haywood.

My gut feeling is that Coach Brown will be searching for that backup to LeBron for some time, and will rotate between Pavlovic and Ira Newble based on who has stunk less recently. In that vein, I am expecting Newble to leapfrog Pavlovic in the rotation fairly soon.

5. I have to say: I miss Michael Reghi. Not that I would have heard him yesterday anyway – ESPN's high definition feed versus FSO's non-high def broadcast made that decision for me – but I know I am going to miss his enthusiasm and his balance of optimism with legitimate criticisms.

### **WHAT LIES AHEAD:**

The Cavs travel to San Antonio to play the Spurs on Friday night. Doesn't this happen every year? Isn't this the umpteenth year in a row that the Cavs go to the Alamodome the first weekend of the season? But keep the chin up. After Friday night's acid test, the Cavs have a generally easy schedule for the rest of the month. They should be able to make hay early on and get the season off to a good start.