Mr. Hnat is back with his wrapup of last nights win in the Big Apple for the Cavs. Amongst other things ... he comments on LeBron willing the team to victory, The Damon Jones Explosion, and Drew Gooden disappearing after a hot start. Up next for the Cavs? The Blazers here at home tomorrow night.

THE SUMMARY:

The Cavs outlasted the Knicks, 102-96, ruining the evening for Spike Lee and 18,467 other fans. The Cavs were paced by LeBron James (no surprise there) and Damon Jones (NO, THAT IS NOT A MISPRINT), who scored 29 points apiece. With the win, Cleveland improved to 5-2 on the season, good for the top record in the Eastern Conference. Nate Robinson led the Knicks with 19 points; overall, the Knicks had six players score in double digits.

WHAT I LIKED ABOUT THE GAME:

Three for Damon, Damon Jones: This game started out almost like the Celtics game on Saturday – the Knicks almost immediately jumped out to a large lead, with Cleveland seemingly unable to put the ball in the hoop (they missed 12 of their first 14 field goal attempts). Could the Knicks run the lead well into double digits, like the Celtics did two days ago?
Not on my watch
, said Damon Jones. Inserted into the game with five minutes to go in the first quarter, Jones drained six three pointers on his way to 24 points in the first half. While he obviously spent a lot of his time outside the three point line, Jones also had a couple of nice drives to the hoop. He finished with 29 points on 9 of 12 shooting (including 7 of 10 from three point range). Nice to see Damon providing some of that long range punch

Just Call Him Atlas: When Jones wasn't busy carrying the team on his shoulders, LeBron

was. One sequence in the third quarter is particularly illustrative. With the Cavs holding a 63-58 lead, LeBron hit a tough one-handed runner in the lane; on the next possession, he stole a pass and drove to the other end for a layup; and after a Knicks time out and subsequent missed shot, he hit a long three pointer. Just like that, the lead was 12 points. It is easy to take for granted just how much LeBron means to this team,

Three in a Row: For the third straight game, Sasha Pavlovic provided a contribution off the bench. Seven points, a couple of rebounds, and tough defense on Jamal Crawford (more on him later) in 22 minutes. Sasha has clearly moved ahead of David Wesley in the rotation (Wesley did not see the floor except for a few moments as a defensive replacement in the final minute), and if he keeps playing like he has been, he will not relinquish his minutes any time soon.

The Chess Match: Give Coach Mike Brown credit for going to a smaller lineup down the stretch (Eric Snow, Larry Hughes, Pavlovic, James, and Anderson Varejao) to counter the Knicks' smaller lineup. That move may have saved the game, as the Cavs were getting torn apart with a larger lineup in the previous minutes.

WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE ABOUT THE GAME:

Off the Hook: There were at least two occasions when the Cavs had the Knicks on the ropes but couldn't deliver the knockout punch.

First was the sequence in the third quarter described above, when the Cavs took a 70-58 lead. The Cavs promptly turned the ball over on their next two possessions, and just like that, the lead was back down to 7 points, with the momentum clearly behind the Knicks.

The second time was with ten minutes remaining in the game, after LeBron and Jones each buried three pointers to extend the lead to 14 points, at 81-67. Content to settle for a series of long-range jumpers (none of which were good), the Cavs let the Knicks back into the game, and the Knicks eventually whittled the lead down to two points (84-82) before the Cavs pulled away.

The problem is not that the Cavs could not sustain the run; games have an ebb and flow to them, and each team will typically have a few runs over the course of 48 minutes. The problem

is that the Cavs fell in love with the long range shots (somewhat understandably, given how many three pointers they did nail), and that (combined with a few turnovers) made it a game again. Once you are up 14 points, you can be content with trading baskets the rest of the way. The Cavs are making it too difficult for themselves. It cost them the Charlotte and Atlanta games, and it almost cost them last night's contest as well.

Whatever Happened to the Roast Duck with the Mango Salsa?: Somebody, anybody please explain to me the Geico ads. They're painful to watch, especially the one with Peter Graves (who looks about one step removed from a Weekend at Bernie's type situation).

Nothing Like a Good Hex: Last week in this space, I suggested that Drew Gooden could be a dark horse in the All-Star derby . Looks like that horse just got a lot darker, as Gooden followed up his 0 point performance against the Celtics on Saturday with 2 points (on 1 of 8 shooting) against the Knicks. Gooden did pull down 11 rebounds, 4 of them at the offensive end, so he did contribute to the victory.

Certified Cav Killer: Jamal Crawford always seems to bring his A game against Cleveland. For three quarters, he was quiet, and then BOOM! Crawford exploded for 16 points in the fourth quarter, including a you've-gotta-be-kidding-me three pointer that he launched from Long Island.

Another Certified Cav Killer: The Cavs always, always, ALWAYS have problems with small point guards. Nate Robinson seemed to penetrate the lane and score at will against the Cleveland defense. It's just not fair to ask Eric Snow to try to cover much quicker players at this juncture in his career, and the Cavs have nobody else in the rotation who matches up well with waterbug type guards.

WHAT LIES AHEAD:

The surprising Portland Trail Blazers (surprising to me anyways; I figured that 0-0 would be the last .500 or above record that they would see for the season) come to The Q on Wednesday night.