As if a brutal early season west coast trip weren't daunting enough for a team of untested youngins, the Cavs took on Golden State with starting center Anderson Varejao and his backup Tyler Zeller both on the shelf with random injuries. The result was a pretty forgivable 106-96 setback, but it was actually a surprisingly competitive ballgame given the circumstances.

Coming off a breakout 15-point game, the rookie seven-footer Zeller was scratched early in the day with a concussion and broken cheekbone suffered in Monday's win over the Clippers. It wasn't until shortly before game time, however, that Varejao—who's been putting up a monstrous 14 points and 15 boards per night this year—also was transferred to street clothes. Andy apparently had a knee bruise flare up on him, leaving Cleveland (2-3) essentially centerless for the third game of their baptism-by-fire road trip.

Mark Jackson's Warriors (3-2)—an exciting, youthful bunch not unlike the Cavs—quickly targeted Cleveland's vulnerable interior defense in the first quarter and made some hay. With Aussie Andrew Bogut playing the distributor role from inside the paint, Golden State got some wide open looks for marksmen Steph Curry and Klay Thompson, as well as some easy cuts and lay-ups for David Lee. Without Sideshow Bob's whirling dervish activity, the Cavs D looked thoroughly out of its sorts, surrendering 37 first quarter points and sinking into a 16-point deficit.

The game had all the makings of an old school massacre. But credit Byron Scott's undermanned crew for showing some considerable fight once again. First, Boobie Gibson stroked a couple threes to stem the tide. The, after being held to just 2 points in the first quarter,

Kyrie Irving got in a rhythm in the final minutes of the first half, scoring Cleveland's last 7 points and cutting the lead to a manageable 59-51 margin.

Things got even more promising out of the break, as back-to-back threes by the suddenly deadly backcourt duo of Irving and Dion Waiters got the Cavs off on a roll. Several minutes later, a 17-footer from Waiters at the 6:39 mark topped off the rally, giving Cleveland its first lead of the night at 69-67. The Warriors looked lethargic and frustrated, and Mark Jackson looked pissed. Out of the subsequent timeout, though, Steph Curry calmly nailed a quick jumper to tie the score once more. And from there, Golden State never looked back.

In a game of classic, textbook momentum swings, this was the one that sealed the deal, as the Warriors—paced in large part by the unlikely duo of Carl Landry and Jarrett Jack—burst out on a 17-4 run to close the third quarter, taking an 85-74 lead into the final frame.

Despite the noble efforts of makeshift center Tristan Thompson (11 pts, 10 rbs), and fill-in big men Samardo Samuels (11 pts, 7 rbs) and Jon Leuer (7 pts, 4 rbs, and lots of energy), the Cavs had little choice but to settle for a lot of challenged jump shots down the stretch. And with both Waiters and Irving hitting dry spells, and C.J. Miles posting another 3-for-11 night off the bench, a second comeback just wasn't in the cards.

In total, the Cavaliers only shot 42% from the field on the night, with a rather silly 32 shot attempts coming from beyond the arc (they made 11 of those, as Gibson and Irving each went 4-for-8). By comparison, Golden State only shot 5-of-18 from downtown, but thanks to a string of easy fastbreak points off Cleveland turnovers, the Warriors continued a recent trend by shooting well over 50% overall against the Cavs D (54% to be exact).

Despite Irving's usual fourth quarter bucket haul, the game never got closer than 9 points in the fourth quarter, as the rookie Harrison Barnes—one of the guys Cleveland passed on to take Dion Waiters—got a wee bit of revenge with a string of backbreaking baskets in crunch time. Barnes finished with 14 points, but the standouts were Lee (22 pts, 14 rbs, 6 assts), the always-dangerous Akronite Steph Curry (21 pts, 5 rbs, 6 assts), and the improbably dominant Carl Landry (19 pts, 9 rbs). Apparently, the absence of Anderson Varejao and Tyler Zeller makes life a little easier for opposing teams' interior guys. Who knew?

On the Cavs end, Waiters didn't quite have the stroke tonight, finishing 5-of-15 for 12 points. But he added 5 assists and ZERO turnovers while basically running the point for large chunks of the night, as Irving continues to evolve into more of a hybrid two-guard. Meanwhile, Kyrie did what is fast becoming his usual damage—28 points (10-for-22), 7 assists, and 6 rebounds for the hell of it. On a team where frontcourt scoring is going to be rare even when everyone's healthy, it's not unreasonable to think Kyrie could be among the league leaders in scoring for quite a while.

As for that frontcourt situation, there is no word on how long Varejao or Zeller will be out, though neither injury ought to be considered too serious at this point. Still, a team on which Samardo Samuels plays 40 minutes is not a team with a lot of winning in front of them. And that's no insult to my good friend Samardo whatsoever.