A brief defensive lapse and an on-target triple from Kawhi Leonard lifted the visiting Spurs over the Cavaliers by a whisker tonight at the Q, 96-95. Leonard's shot—which came with just 2.9 seconds remaining-- sent the Wine & Gold into the All-Star break on yet another of those pesky three-game losing streaks. But as a far more dire consequence, it also led to the inevitable 180-degree turn in tonality on the post-game radio shows, as local hosts decried Byron Scott's failures to will his 16-37 team over a 42-12 team in the final minutes. Yes, if Kawhi Leonard had just been kind enough to short-arm that wide open three-pointer, your upstart Cavaliers would have had themselves a touchstone victory over a league elite (with Tim Duncan back on the floor, no less), leading to a week of good feelings and boundless optimism. But Kawhi Leonard—selfish prick that he is—made the shot.

And so we carry on with the mope show.

Despite having their big three of Duncan, Tony Parker, and Manu Ginobli together on the court for the first time since January 13, San Antonio had problems all night creating any distance between themselves and the Cavs. This was especially surprising considering that the guy objectively agreed upon as the best Cav—Mr. Kyrie Irving— was shooting the rock like a cross-eyed Cedric Henderson. Kyrie himself went as far as to call his 6 point, 2-for-15 shooting performance "probably one of the worst shooting nights I've ever had." And yet there were his teammates picking up the slack, rallying Cleveland to a 54-46 halftime lead.

That lead would be erased within the first three minutes of the second half, of course, as the

Spurs ran out to an 8-0 run. But the Cavaliers scrapped back again, with rookies Tyler Zeller (16 pts, 9 rbs, 4 asts) and Dion Waiters (20 pts, 6 rbs, 4 asts) doing most of the heaving lifting while Kyrie wandered in the desert.

With 8:32 left in the game, a layup from C.J. Miles (10 pts, 5 rbs) put the Cavs back in front by an 81-80 count. Five minutes later, a mid-range jumper from Tristan Thompson (10 pts, 7 rbs) expanded that edge to 91-86. Despite Irving missing his last 10 field goal attempts, Cleveland was somehow pulling away down the stretch.

Only they weren't really. With the Spurs trailing 93-90, Duncan kicked out to an open Gary Neal, who drained a game-tying three with 1:25 left to go. This was followed by a flurry of chaotic sloppiness, as Irving missed a short jumper and threw a pass away, only to redeem himself (briefly) by picking off a Kawhi Leonard pass on the other end, giving Cleveland the ball with just 30 seconds on the clock and the game still tied at 93.

"Dion, it is your time now," Kyrie told his young apprentice (who is actually a year older than him). And the young Waiters did indeed answer the call for his ailing comrade, stepping back and swishing a 20-foot jumper with 9 seconds to go, sending the half-filled Q into a tizzy.

"I can't wait to call into my local sports talk radio program tonight and sing the praises of this exciting, young, competitive basketball team," the crowd said in unison.

Then Waiters was late rotating to his man on the Spurs ensuing possession, and Kawhi Leonard—not Duncan, not Parker, not Ginobli—put San Antonio back in front.

Mind you, there were still almost 3 seconds left on the clock as Coach Scott rallied his troops for a final play. But somehow, it kind of already felt over. And sure enough, despite it being the absolute right call to give your superstar the last shot, Kyrie's eventual stumble and miss on a drive to the basket would give our city's hindsight heroes all the fuel they needed for the evening.

"How do you give the ball to a guy who has been missing shots all night?" the crowd called in to

their radio station in unison.

Anyway, what else? Well Marreese Speights is establishing his general M.O.. He is a guy who can rebound a bit and throw his weight around while missing 60% of his shots. I like him anyway cuz he is tall and a basketball team needs that.

On the Spurs' end of things, Tony Parker led all scorers with 24. Duncan had 13 in his return (playing just 25 minutes), and Ginobli managed just 5 points in 10 measly minutes. The bench was the difference, with Gary Neal (15 pts) and DeJuan Blair (12 pts) getting it done.

As for Kyrie Irving… well, those lovely media people asked the seemingly exhausted point guard about whether he still planned to play in the various events he's booked for at the upcoming All-Star Weekend, considering his tired legs and all. Irving answered, "well, I don't really have a choice," which pretty much confirms that the kid is beat down and doomed for an assortment of otherwise preventable injuries by week's end.