Fresh off his show-stopping All-Star Weekend performance, Kyrie Irving had another opportunity to display his talents in front of a national audience Wednesday

night against New Orleans at the Q- and once again he didn't disappoint. Cleveland's newest superstar rescued his struggling team with a sublime fourth-quarter performance as the Cavaliers began the second half with a hard-fought 105-100 victory over the Hornets err Pelicans.

With ESPN beaming the game from coast to coast, Kyrie presented the viewing public with a concise resume of his season so far. The super sophomore re-entered the game 7:08 to play and Cleveland trailing 78-74, the Pelicans having overcome a ten-point third quarter deficit with a 22-8 run. Not much was working for the Cavaliers at the time: their offensive possessions were sloppy and forced, they were getting hammered on the boards and it looked for all the world as if they were going to let a very winnable game get away at the hands of an opponent that entered at 19-35 and on the second night of a back-to-back.

At that point Irving had 15 points on 7-of-13 shooting. Not bad, but not nearly enough if Cleveland was going to pull this one out. Kyrie immediately went to work, hitting two free throws and converting a three-point play to tie the score. After Robin Lopez put NOLA back in front with a pair from the line, Kyrie dropped in a reverse layup to make it 81-81 with 5:42 left. That made it seven points in a minute-and-a-half, and the kid was just getting warmed up.

With the clock under five minutes and the score knotted at 83 apiece, Kyrie took over completely. First he dropped in a fall-away jumper to give the Cavaliers the lead. After a Pelican miss, Kyrie took a pass from Luke Walton in transition and buried a three-pointer to make it 88-83. Roger Mason missed and Kyrie rebounded, went coast-to-coast and put in a reverse layup to make it 90-83. He then took a charge to foul out Robin Lopez and drove for another layup to make it 92-83 with 2:14 to play.

In the fourth quarter of Wednesday night's game- the last seven minutes, to be precise- Kyrie Irving scored 20 points, hitting 6-of-7 from the floor and 7-of-7 from the line. He played well at both ends, making critical plays on defense as well as on offense, and quite simply was every bit the franchise player. He willed the Cavaliers to victory and dropped jaws from Alaska to Key West in the process. Kyrie's line: 35 points on 13-of-22 from the field, 2-of-5 from downtown and 7-of-7 from the line with 7 assists, 5 rebounds and 2 steals. Yes, America, the kid can play.

Kyrie's fellow top overall pick didn't fare so well. Anthony Davis, the number-one selection in the 2012 draft, struggled all night. The rookie from Kentucky went 2-of-7 from the field, not getting his first field goal until the final moments, and finished with 12 points, 4 rebounds and a negligible effect on the game. Some credit should go to Tristan Thompson, who also had a tough night offensively (9 points on 2-of-8 from the field and 5-of-12 from the line) but hounded Davis defensively and banged away for 13 tough rebounds.

Prior to Kyrie's home-stretch outburst Cleveland appeared poised to lose a game it should have won somewhat handily. The Cavaliers came out strong in the third, riding the hot hand of Irving and Dion Waiters (16 points, 6-of-10 from the field) and looked to be on the verge of blowing the game open. But after falling behind 66-56 with 4:03 left in the period, New Orleans ripped off a 12-0 run to take the lead and carried a 69-68 advantage going into the fourth.

Cleveland's main problems came on the backboards and at the free-throw line. New Orleans outrebounded the Cavaliers 39-34 and dominated the boards until well into the fourth period. Cleveland started out 7-of-17 from the stripe, with Thompson the biggest culprit as he reverted to the brick-laying form he displayed at the University of Texas. The Pelicans, meanwhile, finished 19-of-22 from the line and also got a big night from their bench, with Roger Mason, Jason Smith and Brian Roberts combining for 38 points on 16-of-22 shooting.

Fortunately, when you have a guy like Kyrie Irving you sometimes don't have to worry about little niceties like rebounding and free throw shooting. And to give credit to the entire team, they cleaned up their act in crunch time, dominating the boards in the final minutes and drained their final 17 attempts from the stripe as they closed out the feisty Pelicans. It all added up to a positive start to the second half, and a nice showcase for the national-television audience. If this keeps up ESPN might have to come back to town a few more times in the near future.

Next: Saturday night at 7:30 when the 17-37 Cavaliers head to Orlando to take on the woeful Magicians, now 15-39 (and 3-26 since December 19) after losing at Dallas on Wednesday night.