The Cavs fell to 3-8 on the road last night, losing 113-111 to Jersey in a game that featured less defense than your average Globetrotters-Generals contest. Despite chopping away at a 16 point fourth quarter lead, the Cavs just ran out of time ... and Vince Carter lit em up for 38. The team comes back home tonight for a huge game with the Pistons. John is here with the recap.

THE SUMMARY:

The Cavs dropped yet another road game, falling 113-111 to the New Jersey (But Eligible To Be Brooklyn In 2009-10) Nets at Continental Airlines Arena. Why do corporations pay big bucks to have their name plastered on sports venues? Has anybody ever walked into Continental Airlines Arena, and thought to himself, “that settles it, I am going to take Continental the next time I need an airline”?

Oh, yeah, the game. The Cavs came out blazing, shooting 61% from the field in the first quarter. They then shot 24% (no, that is not a typo) during the second and third quarters, and trailed by as many as 16 points in the fourth quarter. The Cavs whittled the lead to 5 points, then fell behind by 13 with a little over two minutes remaining, and had their furious comeback attempt (aided by what seemed like ten three-pointers in the final minute) fall just short.

New Jersey's Vince Carter outgunned LeBron James, 38 points to 37. Larry Hughes added 19 points for the Cavs, and Zydrunas Ilgauskas continued to get his double-double machine up and running, scoring 18 points and pulling down 11 boards.

WHAT I LIKED ABOUT THE GAME:

Don't Hate Him Because He's Beauti- … Er, Rich: Ilgauskas, the frequent target of the ire of Cavs Fan, is starting to string together some nice performances. His 18 points matched his season high, and he generally was a presence around the basket (at least, as much of a presence as a guy with multiple foot surgeries can be). LeBron and Hughes consistently hit Z with passes as he moved to the basket, and the result was some easy baskets.

21: No, not blackjack. That's the number of free throw attempts that LeBron had during the game (he made 16 of them). LeBron, who sported an Iverson-esque sleeve on his right arm (apparently to protect a recent addition to his tattoo family), drove to the hole time and again, and time and again he drew the whistle. One example that particularly stood out: with the Cavs down 91-84 in the fourth quarter, LeBron had the ball outside the three point arc. His defender sagged off him ever so slightly, and LeBron twitched like he was going to stop his dribble and launch a three-pointer. Instead, he drove to the lane and hit a runner. LeBron is at his best when he drives first and second and settles for long jumpers only as a third option.

Do The Hustle: In one sequence in the third quarter, Anderson Varejao showed how he can influence a ball game, even if his contributions don't always make their way into print. With Cleveland trailing, 71-64, Donyell Marshall was fouled and went to the line for a pair of free throws. He made the first, then clanged the second. Varejao slipped between the Nets' tall timber to tip the ball to Marshall. The possession led to a LeBron jumper, which he missed … and which Varejao rebounded. LeBron was then fouled and went to the line. Like Marshall before him, LeBron split the free throws … and Varejao drew a foul while grabbing the rebound. Andy then sank both of the resulting free throws.

Varejao is like the guy at the YMCA who always hustles, never gives up on a ball, and has that knack for giving his team more possessions than they deserve. When he plays against you, you hate him. When he's on your team, you love him. Well, he's on our team.

Boomerang: Every time the Cavs got behind by a large margin, they rallied. The game was actually pretty close for the first three quarters; New Jersey did not lead by double digits until the end of the third quarter.

New Jersey landed what appeared to be a knockout punch (appropriate, seeing as though yet another Rocky Balboa movie just opened) with a six-point play in the first minute of the fourth quarter. Jason Collins scored a layup and drew a flagrant foul from Drew Gooden in the process. That meant a free throw (which Collins hit) and the ball back (which turned into a Marcus Williams three-pointer). The flurry drove the Nets' lead to 86-71, and I wrote "game over" in my notes.

Not so fast. Behind some stepped-up defense and an 11 point run, the Cavs cut the lead to 89-84 barely three minutes later. The Nets answered the challenge, and built their lead back to double digits with two minutes remaining. The Cavs refused to die, slicing the lead to two, but ran out of time.

WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE ABOUT THE GAME:

The Boomerang Has To Fly Out Before It Can Return: Just as the Cavs get credit for coming back, they need to draw some heat for getting so far behind in the first place. The Cavs did not play defense during the game, except during the two runs mentioned previously. (New Jersey shot over 57% from the field for the game. That should tell you all that you need to know.)

One nasty habit that the team is developing is the knack for giving up the "and one" on a cheap foul. When the Nets began to pull away towards the end of the third quarter, the key play was a Nenad Krstic jump hook that drew a mosquito-swatting foul from Daniel Gibson. Krstic sank the resulting free throw. Later, in the fourth quarter, the Cavs were down by ten when Collins put in a layup and drew another cheap foul, this time from Marshall. When the Cavs do foul with some authority, they draw a flagrant foul (see the Gooden foul described above). Maybe the team needs to hold a fouling drill. Either foul hard (but without going after the head, which is a guaranteed flagrant call) or step out of the way.

Invisi-Drew: Same shit, different night. Gooden shows up to play for the first six minutes or so, then disappears for the rest of the game. Last night, Gooden had eight points in the game's first five minutes. He finished with 10 points.

"Guys, The Flight Home Will Feature A Choice Of Prime Rib Or Salmon": That has to be the theme of most of the Cavs' time-outs. They certainly do not seem to be spending the time making any adjustments. This game followed the typical Cavs script:

ACT I: The Good Start: The Cavs jump out to an early lead, with good ball movement leading to several easy baskets.

ACT II: The Laying Of The Bricks: The defense figures out that maybe they should do something different. The Cavs do not adjust, and settle for long jumper after long jumper.

ACT III: The Fury: The Cavs put together a run or two in the fourth quarter.

The coaching staff has to take some of the blame for this play. They are not reacting quickly enough to their opponents' defensive adjustments. Last night, after the Cavs shot 61% in the first quarter (I keep saying that; I sound like the guy who always has to remind you that he

scored four touchdowns in a game back in high school), New Jersey adjusted its defense. They put heavy pressure on LeBron whenever he touched the ball, played a sagging zone otherwise, and the Cavs went completely cold.

Not A Big Deal, But: Every so often, when Damon Jones goes up for a jumper, he will split his legs. I haven't kept track, but my observation is that when he does this, his shooting percentage is approximately zero. He did it again tonight, bricking a jumper while doing his midair splits.

WHAT LIES AHEAD:

Detroit comes to The Q tonight for the first time since last season's playoff series. Then on Saturday, the Cavs will get another crack at the Orlando Magic, who beat the Cavs last week.