Charlotte was hot, having won 8 of 11. The Cavs have been perpetually terrible in back to back games. There was reason to worry last night. However, the Cavs took care of those worries, dominating the Bobcats from start to finish in a 101-81 win. John Hnat was there live, and checks in thies morning to recap the game and tell us about the start of The Walter Herrmann Era. Huh? Read on ...

THE SUMMARY:

The Cavs rebounded from their tough loss at Miami Thursday night to crush the Charlotte Bobcats, 101-81, last night at Quicken Loans Arena.

Cleveland took an 8-7 lead on a Larry Hughes jumper with seven minutes remaining in the first quarter, and never looked back. Aided by some tough defense and the Bobcats' refusal to make any shots they took from the paint, the Cavs led by five points (24-19) after one quarter, extended it to 16 points (50-34) by the half, and maintained that margin the rest of the way.

LeBron James, who still appears to be playing at less than full strength on his tired legs and injured toe, nevertheless led the Cavs with 18 points; he also pulled down 10 rebounds.

Drew Gooden backed him up with 16 points, Larry Hughes and Donyell Marshall each scored 13, and Anderson Varejao put up 12 points and 13 rebounds in a little less than 20 minutes of work. Gerald Wallace led Charlotte with 16 points, and rookie Adam Morrison chipped in 14.

WHAT I LIKED ABOUT THE GAME:

No Excuses: It was the second night of a away-and-home back-to-back. The game was against a Charlotte team that had recently been playing much better than their record (heading into last night's game, they had won three of their last four, including road wins against the Lakers and Nuggets). In other words, it was the perfect setup for the Cavs to blow a winnable game, then sheepishly hang their heads in the post-game interviews while explaining how, for the *[insert some large number here]*th time, the dog ate their homework.

Instead, they went out and dominated the Bobcats. From start to finish. The Cavs never got on a huge run. But every time you glanced at the scoreboard, their lead was a point or two more than the last time you checked.

The only time that Charlotte really challenged was during the third quarter, when they cut what had been a 16 point Cavalier lead down to nine. But the Cavs got points on each of their next three possessions, pushing their lead back to fourteen points, and then delivered the game to the Human Victory Cigars (who came in the form of Scot Pollard and David Wesley on this particular evening) with a 16-7 run in the first half of the fourth quarter.

It's Not Easy To Have A Good Game When You Shoot Two For Ten: But Sasha Pavlovic managed to do just that. His apparently poor shooting night came as something of a surprise; he did not seem to be forcing shots, which will often happen when a bench player has strung together a couple of good games. If anything, he looked like a point guard in training – he had five assists (tops on the Cavs), and would have had a couple more had his teammates been a little more proficient in their layups. He also had four steals. Hey, let's put

those two together in the form of a written highlight reel: early in the fourth quarter, he stole the ball from Charlotte's Melvin Ely, then led the break to the other basket. He bounced a perfect pass to LeBron, who was streaking down the left lane, and LeBron thundered home a huge dunk.

Has Sasha earned the additional playing time (which seems to have come right out of Damon Jones's minutes)? Is he being showcased in anticipation of the trading deadline later this month? I do not know. I do know that I have not seen Sasha play this consistently well as a Cavalier, and it's intriguing to see him scratching the surface of his visible potential.

It's Much Easier To Have A Good Game When You Shoot Eight For Thirteen: When Gooden is on, he makes you wonder why the Cavs don't run every other play through him. He is the Cavs' best post player, and last night was another example of why. That little jump hook of his, especially when he shoots it from the right baseline, is money. That 15-foot jumper of his, especially when he shoots it from the right baseline, is money. Hey, that's the trick! Put Gooden on the right baseline, and never let him leave! (Except to let him crash the offensive boards.)

What Rock Did They Find This Guy Under?: Charlotte has a reserve forward named Walter Herrmann. Before last night, I had never been introduced to Mr. Herrmann's body of work. I did not even know that Mr. Herrmann existed.

That all changed with 9:31 remaining, when Herrmann entered the game. Mind you, he wanted to enter the game earlier than that. He was at the scorer's table with all of the visible excitement of the small kid at the Y who called "next game" about a half hour ago, has been pacing the sideline ever since, and who is finally, *finally* going to play. To get a true mental image, consider that:

- Herrmann is listed as six-foot-nine, but has arms that belong on an eight-foot tall man;
- Herrmann is listed as 225 pounds, but appears at least twenty pounds lighter;
- Herrmann has a wild shock of Euro-pop-star blond hair, pulled back into a samurai-style ponytail and secured with a headband; imagine the offspring of David Beckham and Bjorn

Borg;

- Herrmann runs around the court like a squirrel. On speed. After chugging a Red Bull.

On the Cavs' first possession A.W. (After Walter), Herrmann was left to guard both Marshall and Varejao. Varejao was in the lane; Marshall, out by the three point line. (*I know, it's a stretch. Try to imagine it.*
) Herrmann ran to guard Marshall … then sprinted towards Varejao … then twirled and ran back towards Marshall ... et cetera. Varejao and Marshall were the two paddles; Herrmann, the human Pong ball bouncing between them. I had never seen a human being try to chase his tail before.

And in that moment, he won me over. He had me at hello. The Walter Herrmann Era is starting, and I want in on the ground floor. Even though this is a Cavs' column, we're going to check in on Walter from time to time. (P.S.: Herrmann later drilled a three-pointer and finished with five points.)

WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE ABOUT THE GAME:

What Rock Did They Put This Guy Under?: The only down side to last night's offense was the complete lack of any role for Zydrunas Ilgauskas. The big guy took only five shots, scored four points, and was basically as invisible as a seven-foot-three fella can be. Not a major gripe; they did score north of 100 points, after all.

I've Run Out Of Snappy Lead-Ins: The Cavs' free throw shooting sucks. It has cost them some victories this season, and it has made close games out of would-be blowouts. Last night, it made a mere blowout out of what should have been … well, whatever is one step beyond "blowout". The main culprits were LeBron and Varejao, both of whom went 4-for-8 from the stripe. Varejao has always been a butcher from the line, so his troubles aren't unexpected.

LeBron is another story; he is far too good a shooter to be averaging under 70% from the line, as he currently is. (Interesting stat: LeBron's free throw percentage has gone *down* in each of his seasons, from 0.754 as a rookie in 2003-04, to .750 in 2004-05, to .738 last season, and now to .688.) His form is visibly off – he is shooting his free throws while standing almost perfectly straight. He's not bending his knees, so he is not getting any ass into his shots. And the result is … 4-for-8 shooting from the free throw line. Has this gone unnoticed by everybody on the Cavs' coaching staff?

Still Going Crazee: Following up on my column about last Sunday’s game against Phoenix, the brain cells behind the scoreboards at The Q are still misspelling the name of sponsor Northfield Park during their in-game promotions. Were I "Northfiled" Park, I would misplace a couple of zeroes on the next check I send to the Cavs.

I'm also not sure of exactly where the Cavs' PR department is trying to go with some of its in-game promotions. Last night's game "featured" (term used very loosely, I assure you) a sing-off between two young ladies whose voices … words fail me. Think of a Roseanne Barr – Carl Lewis duet of the Star-Spangled Banner, and you'll be in the ballpark. (You still won't be close to home plate, but you will be in the ballpark.) I could only sit there and think:
they are making me wish I were deaf just so they can win a #&%^*#$% pizza?
Even Nicole!, the Cavs' eternally perky hostess, looked like she wanted to jab her ears repeatedly with her microphone.

I completely forgot to mention this gem from the other day: during one of the breaks in the Phoenix game, a group of young kids (think eight to ten years old) came out to dance to … Michael Jackson's "Beat It"? Yeah. *That* Michael Jackson. A brilliant idea, having small children dance to a song by a man whose lasting legacy will be his fondness (in the NAMBLA sense) for small children.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Having little kids dance to Michael Jackson music. Suggesting

to O.J. Simpson that he write a guide on how he would have murdered his estranged wife. Which idea was the product of the most brain damage? E-mail me with your thoughts. Bonus points if your answer is in the form of haiku. (It works for Hiko and Buff ; it can work for me too.)

WHAT LIES AHEAD:

The Cavs play a nationally televised contest against Detroit tomorrow afternoon. The homestand will continue next week with a rematch against the Heat sandwiched by games against both Los Angeles teams.