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THE SUMMARY:

Don't look now, but the Cavs are on a winning streak. (Around here, "two in a row" qualifies as a streak.) Cleveland crushed the Miami Heat, 103-79, last night at Quicken Loans Arena. The victory provided some measure of revenge for the Cavs, as the memories from last week’s disappointing loss to the Heat were still fresh.

LeBron James, looking strong, led all scorers with 29 points; he also added seven rebounds and six assists. Larry Hughes added 16 points, and the surgent Sasha Pavlovic had a mini-LeBron sort of game with 15 points, five rebounds, and six assists. Dwyane Wade led the Heat with 27 points, with Shaquille O'Neal adding 14.

WHAT I LIKED ABOUT THE GAME:

Not Letting History Repeat Itself: Last week, the Cavs had a 12 point lead in the fourth quarter against Miami. The Heat rallied (actually, Wade rallied; the rest of the Heat just came along for the ride), and won the game by three.

Last night, the Cavs had a 12 point lead in the fourth quarter against Miami. This time, they did not let the Heat get any closer. The Cavs extended their lead to 17 early in the fourth quarter, as LeBron scored on a three-point play, followed by a layup by Anderson Varejao off a nice pass from Eric Snow. Miami did not fold its tent just yet, as they cut the lead back to 12 on a James Posey three-pointer with a little more than seven minutes remaining. The Quicken Loans Arena crowd had the "we've seen this movie before, as recently as last week, and we don't like how it ends" silence about it.

And then LeBron and Varejao stepped up and said, "not on our watch". LeBron found Varejao with a sweet pass through traffic; Andy laid the ball in the hoop and was fouled. He missed the resulting free throw, but Zydrunas Ilgauskas (who had a miserable night shooting, but still gathered ten rebounds) ran down the loose ball. He passed it to LeBron, who redirected the ball to a cutting Varejao for a dunk. The Cavs were back up by 16, any Heat momentum had gone down the drain, and the game was basically over.

One of the marks of a top team is that it doesn't give the opposition a chance to get back into a game. When the opponent is down, you don't help him back up; you step on his throat and make him cry "Uncle!". (Figuratively speaking. Life isn't " A Christmas Story .") The Cavs did that last night; and frankly, it's about time.

Welcome Back: For the first time in several games, LeBron came to the game, instead of the identical-looking, less-adept twin that he had sent in his place recently. LeBron was slashing to the hoop time and again, hitting open shots (he was 12-of-22 from the floor on the evening), finding teammates with laser passes, and generally being The Chosen One.

The signature play came as the third quarter was winding down. LeBron had the ball at the top of the key, veered right, then steamed down the lane for a thunderous right-handed dunk over Miami's Alonzo Mourning (who smacked LeBron across the face with his arm; the refs swallowed their whistles on that one).

The game wasn't quite the one-on-one duel that LeBron and Wade waged a couple of seasons ago, but LeBron clearly wanted to send a message … and he did.

Do The Hustle!: It's a cliché (and usually an inaccurate one) to say that one team "wanted" to win more than the other. That phrase is typically announcer-speak for "it was a close game, one team won, and we need an explanation other than 'as a statistical matter, one team had to win'".

Last night, that phrase did have some truth to it. Cleveland was much more active than Miami in all facets of the game. They out-rebounded the Heat (49-37, including an 18-11 advantage in offensive rebounds), moved the ball better on offense, and played more inspired defense.

Give It Up: The ball, that is. The Cavs did plenty of that last night, and the result was 30 assists, 48% shooting from the field, and free chalupas to all for scoring in the triple digits. It wasn't 30 assists in the old Utah Jazz sense, where John Stockton would have 25 assists and the rest of the team had five. The Cavs spread the ball around, with Snow leading the way with seven assists (in only 17 minutes of action), and LeBron and Pavlovic each having six. Mercifully, the Cavs stayed away from the one-four, "hey LeBron, only three seconds left on the shot clock, stop dribbling and jack up a shot!" offense into which they lapse all too often.

QUESTION: Have you ever actually eaten a chalupa? I never was much of a fast food eater, particularly not after " Super Size Me ", and those chalupas look … well, we don't need the Taco Bell legal machine churning TheClevelandFan.com through its gears, so let's stop there

The Light Bulb Is Officially On: Forget any thoughts about showcasing Pavlovic in advance of the trade deadline; he has become the team's most important reserve. He has become a true weapon on offense (as we figured he could, given his combination of drives to

the hoop and silky-smooth outside shooting), and he is looking like more and more of a defender as well. (One notable play: guarding Wade at the top of the three-point arc, Sasha reached in, stripped the ball from Wade, avoided Wade's attempt to grab the ball pack, and hurled the ball down to LeBron for an easy dunk.)

WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE ABOUT THE GAME:

The Sight Of A Lion In Winter: I remember Gary Payton in his prime, when he was one of the game's top players. He scored more than 20 points a night, he'd dish out eight or nine assists, and he'd play the brand of defense that earned him the nickname "The Glove". He was cocky, but had the game to back it up; the type of player you hated as an opposing team's fan, all while silently wishing that he played for your side.

The Gary Payton who plays for Miami these days is not the same player. Last night, Payton took only three shots, all of them three pointers, all of them major-league bricks. The Cavs were playing Eric Snow defense (i.e., stay back ten feet and dare him to shoot) on Payton, and Payton couldn't do anything about it.

The saddest part: I actually felt sorry for Payton. And the Gary Payton who has had such a brilliant career would never, ever, EVER want anybody to feel sorry for him.

I Know It's Petty, But: Somebody please buy Udonis Haslem a mouth guard that fits his teeth. Dude is always taking it out of his mouth, or chewing on it, or otherwise playing with it.

I Know It's Even More Petty, But: At the end of the game, Damon Jones had the ball on the "kneeldown" possession. Usually, that means he should dribble out the clock, hand the ball over to the ref, and hit the showers. Instead, Jones spiked the ball on the ground with

about ten seconds left, then made an exaggerated show of guarding the ball so that nobody else could touch it. I know that Damon likes to put a little Vegas into his play; I'm not here to bash him for that. I'd just prefer to see more Bellagio and less Golden Nugget; and last night's move was definitely of the poly-blend gold lame variety.

While I'm Hating On Damon: No, "hating" isn't the word. Damon's a good guy. But he was signed to fill a desperate need for three-point shooting, at about four million dollars per year. Meanwhile, Miami 's Jason Kapono (a former Cavalier) happens to lead the NBA in three-point shooting. And does so for about $3 million less per annum. Why exactly did the Cavs decide that they could live without Kapono?

WHAT LIES AHEAD:

A (drum roll please) Nationally Televised game against the L.A. Lakers tomorrow afternoon concludes the Cavs' five game homestand. They'll then head west for games against Utah (who are once again without Carlos Boozer … funny how that is always the case when the schedule says "Cleveland", no?) and the Lakers, and then it's the All Star Break.