What a week for Cavs rookie Shannon Brown, who pulled off a "back to back to back" stretch of three games in three nights for the Cavs after a demotion to the NBDL, then promotion back to the varsity team after injuries to Damon Jones and Daniel Gibson. And somewhere in that stretch, the light bulb has come on for Shannon, who all of the sudden looks like a guy that can really help this team down the stretch. Papa Cass hits on the Cavs talented rookie from Michigan State in his latest.

Someone might want to check the basement of The Q for an alien pod, or at the very least, make sure Shannon Brown wasn't stung by some kind of magical basketball scorpion during his recent soiree through the Southwest.

Somewhere, between the plane ride into Dallas, the demotion to Albuquerque, the promotion back to the Cavaliers and the plane ride to Cleveland less than 24 hours later, Brown has suddenly morphed into the type of player GM Danny Ferry thought he was drafting last summer.

Over that span, Brown completed a "back-to-back-to-back." Three games in three days. A fact of life in the days of platform shoes and polyester collars, but enough to make the jaws of pampered modern players hit the floor with shock and awe.

Maybe all the Michigan State rookie needed was a chance to prove himself. Maybe the bone bruise in his leg is completely healed. But the Dallas-Albuquerque-Cleveland trip has stamped Brown as watch-worthy for the rest of the season.

It's not so much his stat totals -- five points in Dallas, 14 in Albuquerque and 14 upon returning to the Cavs lineup against Toronto -- it's how he has played the game.

For the first time all season, Brown actually looks in control of his game. He no longer looks intimidated by the NBA. Gone are the kamikaze drives up the floor, the "get the ball to the hoop at all costs" mindset that marked his first four months in the league.

Though it's a small sample of work, Brown now appears to want to play in the flow of the

offense and let the game come to him. In other words, he's slowed down and actually thinks before he moves.

Viewed in the context of his sloppy play prior to March, his efficiency in Saturday's win over the Raptors was eye-catching. His 14 points came on six shots in 13 minutes. He was 3-of-3 from three-point range. Granted, one of those threes was on a halfcourt heave to beat the second quarter buzzer, but if you've watched
Donyell
Marshall and Larry Hughes clang three after three off the rim this season, you'll take what you can get.

As a kind of payment for his newly-discovered basketball IQ, Brown was allowed to take a half court
lob and flush an alley-
oop
dunk in the closing minutes of the game, showing that he can do much more than shoot from the outside. It would be nice if Hughes and Marshall would do the same sometime.

Maybe more importantly than Brown's athleticism, Saturday's game showed that you can't underestimate a motivated, educated rookie when the light bulb finally goes on. The energy Brown and Dan Gibson bring can do a lot to offset the lackadaisical efforts the team's veterans have put forth many times this year.

As the WTAM broadcast went to halftime Saturday, Cavs radio voice Joe Tait reiterated his preseason prediction that if the Cavs are to penetrate deep into the playoff this year, Brown and Gibson will factor in heavily. As usual, Tait's time-tested perspective is spot-on.

Brown and Gibson are the cure for the common cold-shooting offense. On nights when Hughes, Marshall, Drew Gooden and even LeBron James just don't seem to care all that much, coach Mike Brown needs to be able to turn to his capable rookies and get meaningful play from them.

The rookies are happy for the minutes they get. They have less of a chance in getting bogged down in the politics of whether coach Brown's offense is right for the team. They want to go out there and put the ball in the hoop, they just have to be taught the right way to do it.

Gibson has been this team's shining rookie star all season. If Brown can join him, I'll feel a lot better about where this team might be headed in the coming seasons.