Every team runs into a least a few put-up-or-shut-up moments over the course of a season. The Cavaliers are about to have one on Saturday. With Thursday night's 83-81 victory over the Pistons, the Chicago Bulls will enter Saturday afternoon's home matchup with the Cavs only a half-game off Cleveland's pace for the No. 2 seed in the Eastern Conference. The Bulls have won 11 of their last 14. The Cavs, meanwhile, have lost four of six. Will the Cavs come out laissez faire? Or determined and focused? Papa Cass talks about the two faces of the Cavs and the magnitude of this game in his latest.

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Everything appears to be on Chicago's side heading into the game: They have the momentum, they'll be playing on their home court. They've also won two straight against Cleveland.

If there was ever a time for the Cavs to approach a game focused and determined, now is it. This is a pre-playoffs playoff game.

If the Cavs lose Saturday's game, not only will they drop to the fifth seed, they will also lose the tiebreak with Chicago in the event both teams end the regular season with identical records.

After several months' worth of carving out a place for themselves at the two-seed, after brashly setting their sights on the first-seeded Pistons, to choke away the second seed at this

point would be pretty embarrassing.

You realize that. I realize that. Do the Cavs?

You'd think it would be a slam dunk. Unfortunately, the Cavs, particularly team leaders LeBron James and Larry Hughes, tend to eschew slam dunks in favor of 20-foot jumpers on many occasions.

Following Wednesday's loss to the Knicks, while Mike Brown was ranting and raving to the media about his team's lack of defensive intensity over the past two weeks, LeBron seemed to greet this latest failure with a stretch and a yawn .

"It's not disappointing," James told the Akron Beacon Journal about the loss. "We lost the game on the defensive end. At times, the effort was there; at times, it wasn't."

Granted, it's hard to criticize a guy who continues to slam headlong and back-first to the floor as he gets mauled by opposing players, many times without the toot of referee's whistle to soften the impact. It's hard to criticize a guy who shakes off brutal hardwood contact when so many Cleveland athletes have suffered season-ending and career-threatening injuries by simply turning their knee the wrong way.

But the apparent shrug with which LeBron met Wednesday's loss doesn't bode well for Saturday, at least from this writer's perspective.

I still believe this team takes the attitude of LeBron. If LeBron is determined to win, he'll be surrounded by teammates who are determined to win. If LeBron is whining to Brown about offensive schematics, he'll be surrounded by teammates who are concentrating on the shortcoming's of Brown's playcalling instead of doing what it takes to win ballgames. If LeBron dismisses a loss with a wave of the hand, so will the other 14 guys on the roster.

Right now, I think LeBron has reverted back to focusing on his offensive frustration. To his credit, he's still trying to be a good example, taking the first bus over from the team's hotel to get extra shooting practice in prior to Tuesday's win over the Pacers.

But for all of LeBron's valiant Thespian efforts in Nike commercials, he's still a poor actor when it comes to leading his team. Whatever he's feeling is whatever bubbles to the surface. He can't seem to take his petty personal feelings and stuff them at the bottom of his mental gym bag until the final horn sounds.

It's reflected when the team falls into a funk and can't seem to get out of it for several weeks.

Saturday is a test, a game that will show us what LeBron and his team are really made of. With some pointy bovine horns about to gore them from behind, the Cavs have every reason in the world to enter this game in attack mode, ready to defend the seed they worked so hard to plant all winter.

If they cant, if this game follows the losses to New York, Denver and Charlotte down the fourth-quarter drain, then the Cavs do not deserve the second seed. Period.

If the Cavs lose and LeBron brushes it off with another "que sera sera" quote afterward, then until further notice, he is in league with Tracy McGrady and Vince Carter, not Michael Jordan and Magic Johnson. Until further notice, he should be branded as the kind of guy who can win you a game, but not a championship.