108-90 Victory Prevents Winless West Coast Trip For Team

LeBron James emerged from the midst of what has likely been the roughest stretch of his three-year career, turning in a dominating performance in leading the Cavaliers to a 108-90 road win over the Utah Jazz.

The game was the last of a six game west coast trip for the Cavs, in which they had dropped the first five. James has chances to win each of those first three games with last second shots, and failed to deliver, inciting a firestorm of criticism from the local and national media. Additionally, James has been battling a sore knee, and turned in one of the poorest performances of his career the night before in Golden State in a twenty-point loss to the previously sub-.500 Warriors.

James broke out of that funk in a big way last night, dropping 51 points, 5 rebounds, and 8 assist on a Jazz team that was powerless to stop him. He made 19 of his 35 field goal attempts, and also became the youngest player in NBA history to reach 5,000 points scored. He left the game with two minutes left to a standing ovation from the opposing fans still remaining in the Delta Center.

Making the performance even more amazing was the fact that the majority of James points came on drives to the basket against one of the league's top defenders, Andrei Kirilenko. Also, LeBron was a game time decision due to a sore knee and bad head cold. After the game, he told Austin Carr in an interview that he almost didn't go, and wouldn't have been able to if it were an afternoon game.

The win was the first in two weeks for the floundering Cavs, and the third straight in the Delta

Center after losing their previous thirteen contests at Utah, dating back to 1989. It puts the team back in the #4 seed in the Eastern Conference, and prevented a 0-6 road trip that would have made for a long flight back from Utah last night.

The game got off to a sloppy start for the Cavaliers, who suffered through a turnover plagued 1st quarter that also saw center Zydrunas Ilgauskas pick up four quick fouls. The team also got off to a poor start shooting the ball, and trailed 28-20 after one quarter. The team rallied back in the second quarter, thanks largely to a 12-2 run to tie the game at 32, with eight of those points coming from James. They trailed 47-45 at the half.

While poor starts to the 3rd and 4th quarter were the teams undoing a night ago at Golden State, it was strong starts to those same quarters that fueled the victory for the Cavs against the Jazz. The Cavs went on a 13-2 run midway through the third quarter that was capped off by a Donyell Marshall three pointer, and an electrifying dunk by LeBron, and gave the Cavs a 66-58 lead. Marshall also had a great game for the Cavs, breaking out of a two-week funk. Marshall ended with 24 points, and made 4-8 from three-point range. James and Marshall combined for 75 of the Cavaliers 108 points.

With Utah still hanging around, the Cavs delivered the knockout blow via a 29-9 onslaught to start the final tilt. Fifteen of those points came from James, and back-to-back-to-back three pointers by James, Marshall, and Damon Jones effectively ended this one.

Coach Mike Brown adjusted the rotation in the hopes of revitalizing the teams struggling offense, going to a seven man rotation and starting Sasha Pavlovic over Ira Newble. Marshall and Jones were the only ones that saw any meaningful time off the bench, and Newble, Luke Jackson, Alan Henderson, and Mike Wilks saw no action. The Cavs hit 58% of their shots from the field after the first quarter, and made 10-22 from three point range for the game. The Cavs were also much better at the foul line, hitting 22-26 from the charity stripe.

The Cavs return home for a couple days of rest before hosting the Pacers at The Q Tuesday night. They then travel to Atlanta, and then Indiana for another meeting with the Pacers to finish out the week.