Thank you New Jersey Nets. Faced with the possibility of ending up with the #5 seed and opening with the defending NBA champion Miami Heat, the Cavaliers got a big break last night and ended up with the #2 seed. Cassano recaps on how things have gone from fatalistic with the #5 seed to very optimistic with the #2 seed. Also, how there will be big expectations for this team to make the EC Finals this year and more.

Some non-linear observations from the final night of the NBA regular season:

1. The Cavaliers had better realize that my defense/coping mechanisms have come down now that they have zipped past the Bulls and clinched the second seed. If the Cavs had drawn Miami as the fifth seed, my attitude about their playoff chances would have been fatalistic. If they would have clinched a first-round series with the Heat, it just wasn't meant to be this year, and my emotional investment in a Cavs-Heat series would have reflected that.

Now that they have the second seed and wouldn't face Chicago, Miami or Detroit until the East Finals, my hopes are officially up. I'm going to become emotionally attached to this team over the next month-plus, I'm going to hang on each game, anticipating a magic-carpet ride deep into May, or possibly into June.

2. With the second seed now comes the accompanying expectations. Anything short of a conference finals appearance is unacceptable. And, given the fact that the Cavs are in a pool with a declawed Wizards team, the Nets and the Raptors with the Pistons, Heat and Bulls beat on each other, the Cavs might not find a much better scenario for advancing to their first-ever NBA Finals.

As long as the Cavs don't follow their usual M.O. and fall asleep at the switch against lesser competition. As long as they don't let the Wizards or their would-be second round opponent hang around and push what should be a five or six-game series to seven emotionally-draining games.

Take care of business, quickly and efficiently. The Wizards are reeling without Gilbert Arenas or Caron Butler. The Cavs had better be headed to Washington for Game 3 up 2-0 and close this series out in no more than five games. This year's Cavs-Wizards rematch needs to have decidedly less drama than last year's series.

3. Bostjan Nachbar is my favorite Eastern European basketball player of the moment. (Sorry, Z. And send my apologies to Sasha.) The Nets swingman was largely responsible for me being in a good mood at the moment, hitting several clutch three-balls down the stretch of Wednesday night's Nets-Bulls game. Whenever the Bulls made a run in the second half, Nachbar or Vince Carter always seemed to come up with a huge bucket.

4. The Bulls' impotent offensive performance in the second half makes me still question how for-real this team can be, even though they've been on fire since the start of April. Sure, you might say the same thing about the Cavs, but when the Cavs' offense sputters, it's usually because they're not trying hard enough to make it work. The Bulls were trying to make their offense work, and they still looked bad.

5. Chicago's consolation for watching their basketball team lose out on the second seed? They got to watch Mark Buehrle throw a no-hitter for the White Sox. Seems like a good deal to me. Unless you're a Cubs fan and can't stand the White Sox, in which case I don't know what to tell you.

6. Finally, a brief Western Conference note: For the first time since 1994, the Golden State Warriors are headed to the playoffs. Not only does it end the longest playoff drought in the NBA, they will face the Dallas Mavericks in the first round.

Yes, that is worth mentioning. It might be a one-versus-eight matchup and the Mavs might be a juggernaut, but the Warriors beat them three times this year. They went 3-0 against the Mavs.

I'll repeat that: The Warriors went 3-0 against the Mavs. Call it the Don Nelson effect.

Sure, the regular season means nothing once you get to the postseason, but a team as mediocre as the Warriors doesn't sweep the season series from a team as good as the Mavs without it getting into the Mavs' heads.

I fully expect Dallas to win that series, but Golden State might make them sweat a little bit beforehand.