The Cavs dodged a bullet (no pun intended) last night, fending off a pesky and undermanned Wizards team by a 109-102 count at The Q ... taking a 2-0 series lead as the action shifts to the nation's capital. The Cavs were led by a SPIRITED Drew Gooden, lending creedence to The John Hnat Drew Gooden Tease Theory. John and I were in section 121 for this one last night. And he delivers another of his excellent game recaps for us this morning.

THE SUMMARY:

There is a fresh hole in the wall at Quicken Loans Arena. It was caused by the bullet the Cavs dodged last night.

Proving yet again that they'll play down to any level of competition, the Cavs edged past the Washington Wizards (*with my lead-in, why oh why did they change their name from the Bullets?*), 109-102. Technically, the team's name is no longer the "Washington Wizards"; it is the "Washington Wizards minus Gilbert Arenas and Caron Butler." Even without two of their top stars, the Wizards gave the Cavs a much closer game than most of the 20,562 fans in attendance would have expected.

This game followed almost the same script as Game 1: Cavs and Wizards go toe-to-toe for

three quarters, with the Cavs pulling away in the fourth. When the Cavs scored three quick baskets (a Larry Hughes bank shot, an Eric Snow jumper that serves as a good working definition of "what are you doing … nice shot!", and an Anderson Varejao layup) to go up 83-68 early in the fourth quarter, the game looked to be over. It was time to stick a fork in the fat lady's toast. (I never was very good with metaphors.)

Somebody apparently forgot to deliver the script to the Wizards, because they made it a game again. An Antonio Daniels three-point play … then an Antawn Jamison three-point play a minute later … then some more fireworks from Jamison, capped by a three-pointer … and sonofagun, it was a six point game (91-85) with five minutes to go. A tangible tension coursed through the home crowd, as they realized that *they might not beat the post-game traffic from the Indians game next door* .

Although the Wizards made it close, LeBron James ensured that they would not get much closer, scoring nine points down the stretch. Larry Hughes also chipped in with seven points in the final minute (all of them coming on free throws), and while Washington was able to slice the lead to three points with 18 seconds left, they would get no closer.

LeBron led the Cavs (*welcome back, cut-and-paste*) with 27 points; he also added eight rebounds and seven assists. Drew Gooden, playing like a man with a reverse soul patch on fire, notched a double-double (24 points, 14 rebounds), while Zydrunas Ilgauskas just missed one himself (16 points, nine boards). Jamison bombed his way to 31 points, while former Cavalier Brendan Haywood and Darius Songaila (the first-ballot Reggie Cleveland Hall of Famer) each added 13 for the Wizards.

WHAT I LIKED ABOUT THE GAME:

By The Numbers: You never would have guessed that the game was a last-minute nail-biter by poring over the boxscore. Consider:

- The Cavs shot 48% from the field;
- They held the Wizards to 42% shooting from the field;
- They went to the free throw line 33 times, and made almost 80% of their freebies;
- They destroyed the Wizards on the boards, outrebounding Washington by a 56-38 margin.

Stop right there. Had I told you those four facts about the game, you wouldn't have been asking "did the Cavs win?"; you would have been asking "how early in the fourth quarter did Coach Brown put in Scot Pollard and Damon Jones?". Put up those numbers, and on most nights, you'll win by double digits.

Right On Schedule: In previous columns, we've discussed the Drew Gooden Tease theory, which says that approximately once per month, Gooden will tantalize with a tremendous effort at both ends of the floor. That game will fool us into thinking that Drew has *t urned the corner*, and that *he's starting to get it*, instead of simply being *a good night; no more, no less*.

Fortunately for the Cavs, last night was Drew's turn to shine. (He was a little ahead of schedule; his 20 point/13 rebound effort against Minnesota on April 3rd would have suggested that his next strong game would have waited until early May.) 10 of 13 from the field, 24 points, 14 rebounds (with four on the offensive end), and even a couple of assists in his 32 minutes. He essentially *was* the Cavs' offense in the second quarter, scoring 15 points in a span of just over five minutes. If you've watched Drew play, you know that his game consists of the following shots:

1. The jump hook, usually from the right side of the lane;
2. The baseline jumper;
3. The turnaround baseline jumper;
4. The jumper from the top of the key.

On occasion, Drew will also bust out:

1. The fake jumper, followed by the drive and dunk.

Drew had all of them working last night. (*Actually, not so much on the jump hook; but had I*

omitted it, it would have stuck out like that godawful raccoon hide on the back of his head .)

Now, I know that some of you are saying, "that's great, John, but why haven't you mentioned any news items featuring burritos?". Wait no longer! As you may have already seen, a Florida doctor dressed as Captain America was arrested after propositioning a woman to, well, touch his burrito. (Despite the obvious double entendre, he really did have Mexican food on his person.) It may not have had the cache of the 30-inch burrito that shut down a New Mexico school , but it's certainly "it's 11:28 and we need one last strange story before turning it over to Leno"-worthy.

But wait: it gets better. After being arrested and transported to the local police station, he attempted to flush the marijuana in his possession (*if you can imagine!*) down a toilet at the station. Reminds me of an exchange (Yes, This Actually Occurred Division) between a police officer and a person suspected of possession:

POLICE OFFICER: Do you have any drugs on you?

SUSPECT (Pointing to another man): No, I just sold them to that guy over there.

Most people know that trafficking is a harsher crime than possession; apparently a few have to learn it the hard way.

The Other Big Guys Showed Up Too: Yes, LeBron had his 27, 8, and 7, which will keep him on any number of statistical cutoffs designed to put him in a class with only Oscar Robertson. He's putting up those numbers while clearly favoring his injured ankle. This just in: he might

make it in this league.

Ilgauskas also had a solid night. In the opening minutes, he seemed to have a personal mission of seeing how many awkward hook shots he could miss before getting benched. In the second half, he floated out to the wing, where he took pass after pass from LeBron, and converted them into basket after basket. With the memories of his disappearance in last year's playoffs still fresh, it is good to see the big fella doing some damage to the Wizards.

No Fair Going To Google: Here's a fun party game (this one was actually used to distribute game tickets last night): Name all the players from the 2002-03 Cavs (the last team B.L.). Yes, Z is the free space on that particular bingo card, but the rest are not as easy.

WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE ABOUT THE GAME:

"A Pick … Hmmm, What Would Follow It?": Time and again, Washington killed the Cavs with a basic pick-and-roll play. By now, the Cavs' defensive tendencies have become apparent even to regular fans who Never Played The Game (i.e., me). When an opposing guard has the ball at the three-point line, the Cavs will run one of their big men out to double-team him. Said double-team will continue for exactly 3.2 seconds; then the big man turns and runs back to his original spot down low. (The savviest opponents have learned that said big man can be followed, much like a fullback leading a tailback to daylight, right to the hoop for an easy bucket.)

How did the Wizards counter this strategy (as though a scheme that results in Ilgauskas 25 feet away from the hoop could be described as a deliberate plan of genius, versus a head-scratcher that brings to mind the letters W, T, and F)? Simple. They would run the guard off a pick; then, as the Cleveland big man came out to defend, Washington's own big man would roll towards the hoop, where he would be wide open. And that, fellow fans, is how you almost lose to a team of Darius Songaila, Etan Thomas, and Brendan Haywood.

Yes, I Know His Assist To Turnover Ratio Is Something Like Eighty-Six To One, But…: …when the one is a rockheaded play that puts the opponent back in the game, it cancels out a lot of the good. That brings us to Snow. With 43 seconds to go in the game, Washington's Daniels made a pair of free throws to cut the Cleveland lead to 101-94. The Wizards were already in full hack-a-Cav mode, having immediately fouled Pavlovic and Hughes on Cleveland's previous two possessions. Snow took the ball out of bounds. His choices were basically these:

1. Throw a safe pass to a teammate standing in front of him; said teammate would be immediately fouled and would step to the line for a pair of free throws;
2. Throw a crazy pass into traffic (*insert image of Charlie Frye here*), and have a defender intercept it;
3. Curl into the fetal position, with a little thumb-sucking for effect.

Snow seemed to consider option (3) for a few moments, then went straight to (2), flinging a half-court pass that Washington's Hayes was only too happy to steal. Two seconds, one pass, and a Jamison three-pointer later, the Cavs' lead was down to four. Had it been ASPCA Night at the Q, there would have been a lot of dogs with sore ribs in the concourse.

Wait A Minute, Maybe Eric Knew What He Was Doing: In defense of Snow, the Cavs' recent history suggested that option (1) was not a wise move. Over a stretch of thirty seconds of game time (*cue the Lorne Greene voice: "that's six months to you and me* "), the Cavs bricked four of eight free throws. (As mentioned earlier, they actually shot rather well from the line for the entire game; they must have gotten the yips when the clock wound down.) Hit those freebies, and the last minute of the game isn't nearly as interesting. (Which would have been fine with me.)

An Aside To The Two Gentlemen Sitting Next To Me In Section 121: You were both correct – both of you DO enjoy the company of your mothers to an extent that is not healthy. Next time, shut up and watch the game.

WHAT LIES AHEAD:

Game 3 of the series is in Washington this Saturday at 5:30 PM. You could watch it at home, all by yourself. But why? By that time, the TCF NFL Draft party at Panini's will be morphing into the TCF Cavs Game 3 party; come on down and watch the action with some fellow Cleveland fans.