That was nauseating. To see a team come out, in the second round of the playoffs, and just completely give a game away due to a total and complete lack of effort is unthinkable to this Cavs fan. Memo to LeBron ... it's OK to try to score in the first three quarters. What were you waiting for last night? That was a flat out disgrace. Our resident Cavs expert John Hnat is also sick to his stomach ... which is evident in his morning recap.

THE SUMMARY:

As a fan, I'd like to be able to write the sentence "The Cavs sucked last night" and call it a column. Alas, journalistic duty calls, meaning that I will have to find ever more creative ways to continue repeating the message that "The Cavs sucked last night" until the column inches are where they need to be.

Facing the end of their season, the Nets outhustled, outworked, and outplayed the Cavs en route to an 83-72 victory last night at Quicken Loans Arena. That's an especially amazing feat considering that New Jersey took the fourth quarter off (they scored only six points - *six!* - in the entire quarter). The Cavs still hold a 3-2 lead in the best-of-seven series against the Nets, but the landscape looks much different this morning.

The high point of the game for the Cavs came at exactly 8:28 of the first

quarter. The Cavs led 9-4, and Zydrunas Ilgauskas rose for a hook shot that would have given Cleveland a seven point lead. Z's shot clanged off the rim. The game was pretty much downhill from there. New Jersey collared the rebound, and then the Nets' Jason Kidd drained a three pointer. Moments later, Bostjan Nachbar turned the game into his own personal three-point exhibition, hitting three in a row from the exact same spot on the floor. (They really should have thrown a tri-color ABA ball out there, to let him try for the big bonus shot.) After Nachbar's outburst, the Nets led 20-15, and would not trail for the rest of the game.

The Nets pushed their lead to eight points (47-39) at the intermission, then effectively put the game away with a 17-6 run to start the second half. (Five Cavalier players were nominally on the court during these few minutes, but did not appear terribly interested in the game.) New Jersey led by as many as 22 points, and carried an 18 point edge into the fourth quarter.

Did you ever play a game of one-on-one against a much smaller kid, go way up on him, then allow him to score a few baskets in order to think he still had a chance? That image accurately captures the fourth quarter, as the Nets allowed the Cavs to creep back to single digits. On second thought, the more proper image is a very large brick building. The two teams combined to shoot 4 for 32 in the final quarter (3 of 17 for the Cavs, 1 of 15 for the Nets). That has to set some sort of record for Field Goal Futility (Non-Ira Newble Division).

I beg you, for your own good: if you TiVo'd the game, and have yet to watch it, don't. You may go blind.

Somebody had to be the leading scorer by default; for the Cavs, it was LeBron James, with 20 points. Ilgauskas, the only other Cavalier to score at least 10 points, added 16. Kidd matched LeBron's 20, with four other Nets (Richard Jefferson, Vince Carter, Mikki Moore, and Nachbar) also getting into double digits.

WHAT I LIKED ABOUT THE GAME:

That I did not pay for a ticket.

I also appreciated the announcers' attempts to keep viewers from unleashing those channel-surfing yearnings. "They're only down by 15, and there's still five minutes to go"? The only way a human being can utter those words is with a producer yelling in his earpiece to "dammit, say something to keep people from turning off this dog of a game!"

WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE ABOUT THE GAME:

I feel like I am at a buffet - there are so many choices in

front of me, I am not sure where to go first.

Enjoy The New And Improved Halftime Spread (Now Featuring Extra Tryptophan!): The Cavs did not *play* in the third quarter; they *sleepwalked*. They settled for outside shots, were consistently a step slow in getting to loose balls, and just did not act like a team on the verge of the conference finals. Was it fatigue? Coaching issues? Oversized turkey sandwiches in the locker room? Whatever the reason, Cleveland had best avoid a reprise in Game Six ... or else there will be a Game Seven too.

He Wanted To Put On The Superman Cape, But The Phone Booth Was Occupied: LeBron did not have a *terrible* game - he did have 20 points, nine boards, and five helpers - but it definitely was not the kind of performance that will get him more chances to play paintball with the giant tongue. (*No, that was not a double entendre, though it sure sounds like one.*)

More than the statistics, the real issue was that LeBron just could not take charge of the game. New Jersey was very effective in double and triple-teaming Bron, and daring the rest of the Cavs to beat them. (Seeing as though the entire Cavs' team shot 33.3% from the floor, it was a chance that the Nets were wise to take.) Several times, LeBron drove into the lane, met resistance, and did not know what to do next.

It's The Free Space On The Bingo Card: Larry Hughes: 3-of-17 from the field, including 1-of-4 from three point range. Quick, somebody roll over one of Larry's ankles! (Coach Brown, it's really in poor taste for you to volunteer.)

Who Said It?: Try to guess the source of this quotation:

Results! Why, man, I have gotten a lot of results. I know several thousand things that won't work.

Hey, we're easy here. Instead of a short answer, we'll make this test multiple choice:

1. Thomas Alva Edison, speaking of the process of invention;
2. Donyell Marshall, speaking of his attempts to make a field goal last night.

The correct answer is (a); but (b) is equally as plausible. Forget points; 'Yell was lucky to draw rim in Game Five. His first two shots were airballs, and he later missed the rim completely on a layup attempt. To continue the buffet theme (which I started about ten paragraphs ago, so really the segue value is completely lost, but I'll go for it regardless), Donyell's problem is that he can't pass one up. He looks very out of shape and slow. My guess: he'll be chained to Coach Brown's bench for the rest of the playoffs, and will then face a soul-searching offseason. Hopefully one with very few forks.

Nobody Ever Said You Had To Qualify For Mensa To Play Basketball: As I believe I have conveyed, Marshall did not come close to hitting a shot last night. He looked

as comfortable as Dick Cheney on the bow of the *Rainbow Warrior*

.

So why in blue blazes did the Nets' Moore foul Marshall with a fraction of a second remaining in the third quarter, as Marshall launched an end-of-the-quarter desperation heave from halfcourt? If ever there were a time to back off and take the risk of a guy burying a 40-footer, this was it.

Speaking Of Mikki, The Refs Like Him: At 10:11 of the third quarter, Moore drove to the basket on a breakaway. The Cavs' Sasha Pavlovic stopped him by swatting at the ball (Moore was holding it around waist level at the time. In fact, he hit mostly ball, although he did get some of Moore's arm as well. After conferring, the referees decided to hit Pavlovic with a flagrant foul. Really, half of that foul should go to Robert Horry for planting Steve Nash into the scorers' table the other night: it was apparent that word had gotten out that David Stern and Co. were not going to tolerate hard, potentially incendiary fouls.

WHAT LIES AHEAD:

First, the Cavs need to forget everything about last night. Forget that they played, forget that they lost, forget that they even arrived at the arena. What did you say the team's name was, again?

Once they've (hopefully) done that, they'll travel to New Jersey for a Game Six that will optimistically exhibit at least a modicum of shooting ability. The fun at the Continental Airlines Arena starts at 7:00 PM.