Sam Amico is a guy I've been reading for over a decade. And a guy I've been trying to get to come over to TCF for well over a year. And to the benefit of all of our readers, Sam is now a member of the family. And with John Hnat (he of The Good, The Bad, & The Summary) ... will give us the best 1-2 punch of Cavs writers in this city, hands down. Sam was out at the Cavs first preseason game for us last night, and in today's piece, reports on Boobie Gibson as the starting point guard, and the status of negotiations with Sasha and Andy.

Pro basketball's preseason is all about individual players getting to strut their stuff, to prove they belong. It's an audition of sorts.

For Daniel Gibson, that audition took place as the Cavaliers' starting point guard in the preseason opener, an 81-62 loss to the Washington Wizards Tuesday at Quicken Loans Arena.

Gibson is in his second season and made a name for himself in the Eastern Conference finals last year - when he came off the bench to help power the Cavs past Detroit and into the NBA Finals for the first time in franchise history. But his contributions then were primarily as a reserve shooting guard.

On Tuesday, he ran the point whenever he was on the floor, finishing with a team-high 13 points on 5-of-9 shooting.

"I think I learned a lot just being out there and running things," Gibson said. "I got more comfortable as the game went on."

Gibson took the starting spot of Sasha Pavlovic, who has yet to report to camp because of contract issues. Also, veteran guard Eric Snow is out four-to-six weeks after knee surgery. In other words, the job appears to be Gibson's to lose.

Another benefit of having Gibson run the team: It allows Larry Hughes to switch to

his more natural position of shooting guard.

But as is the case with any young player, there were a few hiccups in Gibson's debut as a full-time floor leader. He was whistled for palming the ball. He committed a rare double-dribble. He shot an air ball. In the end, he had three turnovers and just one assist in 24 minutes.

"I thought he did OK running the team," said Cavs coach Mike Brown. "He still has a lot to learn and a long way to go."

While that may not sound like a ringing endorsement, Gibson isn't too worried about the adjustment.

"I think by the time the season starts I'll have a better understanding of where the guys want the ball, and all the other things that go into playing the point guard role, and really understanding it," he said.

Aside from Gibson, the Cavs struggled mightily.

LeBron James made one field goal for three points, while forward Drew Gooden went 2 of 12 from the floor.

"We shot too many jump shots," Brown said. "We didn't attack the basket enough."

Second-year guard Shannon Brown and veteran Damon Jones added nine points apiece for the Cavs.

NOTES

Bowling Green product Antonio Daniels, now in his 10th pro season and a reputed Cavs killer, finished with a team-high 12 points for the Wizards. ... Cavs newcomer Devin Brown, a 6-5 guard, finished with four points and two assists. ... Pavlovic and forward Anderson Varejao are still miles away from reaching a deal with the Cavs, according to team insiders. ... Varejao's absence opened the door for young big men Dwayne Jones (seven rebounds) and Cedric Simmons (two points, three boards), a newcomer from New Orleans and lottery pick in 2006. ... The Cavs continue the preseason Thursday at home against Detroit (7 p.m.). They then host Seattle on Friday at 7:30 p.m.

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