The Q had that playoff intensity again last night, as the high profile Boston Celtics and their "big three" came to town last night. LeBron was LeBron, Z continued his great start to the season, and Drew Gooden ... he outplayed Kevin Garnett last night from start to finish. Just like that, the Cavaliers have won four in a row, and are 9-6 heading into tonight's game with the Pistons in Detroit.

The Cavaliers will never admit it publicly, but they wanted this win in the worst way, maybe even felt like they had to have it.

That much was obvious during their 109-104 overtime victory over visiting Boston on Tuesday. The Cavs spent the night trading baskets with the suddenly powerful Celtics, as well as trading a few verbal jabs with Kevin Garnett and Paul Pierce.

As Cavs forward Drew Gooden said, "There was a lot of trash talking out there. It was like an old streetball game."

Streetfight might be more like it, as both teams seemed to have won the game on a few occasions, then lost it on a few more. On and on it went, as you couldn't ask for anything more from a matchup involving last year's Eastern Conference

champs and this season's supposed favorites.

So even if James told reporters that this wasn't really a "statement" game ... well, it really was. And both teams played like it.

Celtics coach Doc Rivers agreed with James, saying that "Game 7s are statement games."

That is true, but this sure had the feel of a Game 7. The fans roared, the arena rocked, the P.A. announcer screamed. The players looked spent when it was over. Even Rivers appeared to be in need of a cold beverage and a hot bath. His eyes were bloodshot and his shirt drenched with sweat as he talked about lost opportunities and how "before overtime, I thought we had the game in hand."

But the Cavs surprised, and not just because they won. They actually looked more like a real team than at any other time this year. They proved that they can be more than just princes to James' King.

Yes, James was his usual phenomenal self, with game-highs of 38 points and 13 assists. Yes, he hit arguably the biggest 3-pointer of the night (again). And yes, he yelled at his teammates, instructing them to quit standing around, watching and waiting. As has been all the case all season, James simply delivered.

But on this night, so did Sasha Pavlovic, Zydrunas Ilgauskas, and especially, Gooden.

It was Gooden who was matched up with Garnett for most of the night, and it was Gooden who made 11 of 15 field goals to finish with 24 points. He also snared 13

rebounds and welcomed every challenge Garnett (19 points, 5 rebounds) threw his way.

Meanwhile, Ilgauskas continued his All-Star type season with yet another double-double, finishing with 15 points, 14 rebounds and four important blocked shots.

"It was a total team effort, but I thought Drew and Z especially stepped up for us tonight," said Cavs coach Mike Brown. "We did a good job of defending them, and those two were big in that area, having to deal with KG all night."

As for Pavlovic (16 points), he finally played like he didn't skip all of training camp by displaying a sense of rhythm. He made the most of what James handed him by hitting some gutsy shots of his own.

The bottom line for the Cavs is nearly everyone contributed -- and that is exactly what they'll need if they are hoping for a repeat of last year's playoff run. On this night, they proved it's certainly a possibility.

CELTICS REACTION

* Rivers said the Cavs dictated the tempo, that the Celtics were hoping to run more but the Cavs wouldn't let them. "It was a (slower-paced) ball game and I thought that benefitted them," Rivers said. "We talked about that beforehand." But the Cavs were able to set the pace anyway.

* Most fans are still rubbing their eyes and trying to believe they really DID see Ray Allen miss TWO free throws with 22 seconds left in regulation and the game

tied at 92-all. After all, this was Allen, a career 89 percent shooter from the line. "I feel like I let the team down," Allen said. "I was so surprised I missed the first one, I didn't let it go. I took it into the second one."

* Further proving that this was indeed an emotional game, James hit a jumper over Pierce, then clapped in his face as the two jawed on their way back down the floor. "We can't let them off," Pierce said, before quickly noting, "We've got them again Sunday."

VARAEJO ON THE BLOCK

Anderson Varaejo has been in the news lately, as the still-unsigned forward told ESPN.com that he "doesn't want to play (in Cleveland) anymore."

Varaejo also said he is hoping for a sign-and-trade -- and the Cavs are aggressively trying to grant him his wish. But according to several league sources, the Cavs will not take back inferior players just to rid themselves of Varaejo's contract issues.

Meanwhile, James said he spoke to Varaejo a few days ago and is approaching the season as if Varaejo won't be back with the team. James did say that Varaejo has indicated to him that he would like to stay with the Cavs.

When asked if Varaejo's absence is effecting the team's performance, James snickered.

"It doesn't look like I'm playing basketball and thinking about Andy, does it?" he asked sarcastically.

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