For those of us that hunker down on the lazy boy nightly with a cold one, it hasn't been very much fun watching Cavs basketball lately. That all changed last night. Andy was back. LeBron finally wasn't wearing a suit. And Larry Hughes absolutely lost his mind, burying 13 of his 17 shots from the floor en route to a 36 point night. Sam Amico recaps last nights win for us this morning.

When Ira Newble stops on a dime and buries a 15-foot jump shot in traffic, you know it's your night.

When LeBron James plays his first game in two weeks and doesn't miss a beat, then all is well.

And when Larry Hughes joins James by coming off the bench and looking like a young George Gervin, it's easy to understand how the Cavaliers dismantled the visiting Indiana Pacers 118-105 on Tuesday night.

Speaking of Gervin, this one had the feel of the old fast-breaking, wild-shot-taking American Basketball Association -- as the Cavaliers scored 65 points by halftime and a whopping 97 by the end of the third quarter. Hughes was the hottest Cav of them all, scorching his way to 36 points on 13-of-17 shooting.

As Pacers coach Jim O'Brien said, "It was like they had two LeBrons out there."

The game indeed marked the return of James, out with a sprained finger since Nov. 28, as well as forward Anderson Varejao, out all season in a mind-boggling contract dispute.

James, Varejao and Hughes came off the bench together late in the first quarter and heated things up immediately. And life appears to be good again for the defending Eastern Conference champions, who may have played their best all-around game of the season. They looked cohesive, fluid and determined.

"We knew once we got our guys back that it would be a totally different story," James said.

And yes, even Newble got into the act, coming off the bench and making three of his four shots for nine points.

The chemistry was evident all night, with the best example coming in the middle of the third quarter. That's when Hughes threw an alley-oop pass to James, who slammed it home and hung on the rim with his one good hand (the other was protected by a glove-like wrap). Then on the next possession, Hughes knocked down a 3-pointer.

It was a night when Hughes did just about everything right, and nearly every shot he took went in. There was a fallaway 12-footer off the backboard ... a dipsy-do layup in traffic ... five 3-pointers overall. You name it, and Hughes made it.

Interestingly, the oft-injured Hughes had been out a month with a bone bruise in

his leg before returning Saturday in Charlotte. Prior to that, he was averaging just 6.8 points on 29 percent shooting. But in his past two games, he's erupted for 58 points.

Earlier in the week, Hughes said he wants to play solely at shooting guard -- rather than run the point, as he did late last season and in the playoffs. And right now, Brown should let him.

After all, if Hughes shoots like he did against the Pacers, and LeBron (17 points, five assists) continues to just be LeBron, and the Cavs can finally stay healthy ... well, there should be more wins like this one in the coming months.

"They were just too much for us tonight," O'Brien said, and he may not be the last opposing coach to feel that way this year.

MINUTE MATTERS

The absence of James and Hughes created playing time for some of the other Cavs, particularly second-year guard Shannon Brown, who even started several games (including Tuesday).

But now that James and Hughes are back, and Varejao is signed, it will cut into the minutes that were previously available for guys like Brown and Newble. Or as was the case against Indiana, guard Devin Brown, who never got off the bench.

So how does Cavs coach Mike Brown expect the demoted players to deal with decreased playing time? The answer is simple. Just like anyone else, he expects his players to be disappointed.

"If I told you that you're not going to play, you wouldn't say 'OK, great,'" Coach Brown said. "So what you have to do is keep your mind and attitude in check and not make waves. Because if I'm a player and I make waves, I'm not only affecting me. I'm affecting the entire team."

Of course, every player can come up with a GOOD reason the coach SHOULD play him.

"The players have pressures -- their family, their friends, the media," Coach Brown said. "Everyone has their opinion of who should be out on the floor."

But in the end, it's the coach's opinion that matters.

"That's what I get paid for," Brown said. "I'm the guy who has to make those decisions."

NOTES

* Entering the season, the Cavs were an impressive 9-3 without James. This year has been a different story, and not just because they're 0-6 minus the King. "When LeBron was out before, we might have had one other guy out," Coach Brown said. This season, the Cavs were also without Hughes for all but one of those games, and Varejao for all of them.

* Even before he played in a game, Varejao showed signs of being his old charge-taking self. "We had (a flop) in practice the other day," Brown said with a smile. "When it happened, bodies were flying everywhere, and I think it was (assistant coach Dick) Egan who yelled, 'He's back!'"

* Cavs guard Eric Snow started and went 1 of 1 from the floor, equaling his total number of field goals made for the season. Entering the game, Snow had made just 1 of 14 shots.