When it comes to Tuesday's game one heartbreaking loss to the Celtics, some fans have taken the optimistic view, some the pessimistic. But the bottom line remains ... if we lose tonight, we need to win four out of five against the winningest team in basketball this season to avoid going home. It's a big game this evening Cavs fans. 7 PM on ESPN. And Jesse Lamovsky previews tonights tilt for us in this excellent column. GO CAVS!

When it comes to Cleveland's 76-72 Game-One loss to the Celtics, you can take the optimist's view or the pessimist's view, if you're a Manichean like that.

If you're an optimist, you'll say, *"LeBron played as poorly as he could possibly play, and we still damn near stole a win on the road. Since it's a 100 percent certainty he'll up his game on Thursday night, we've still got a great shot at coming back to Cleveland tied 1-1 and taking over the series from there."*

If you're a pessimist, you'll say, *"We held Ray Allen and Paul Pierce to a combined 2-of-18, Mr. Shuttlesworth took his first doughnut since early in Bill Clinton's second term, we turned the Celtics over 20+ times, and we still couldn't get a 'W'. No way does Boston play that sloppy in Game Two. We just blew our chance to steal one on the road. Woe is us."*

Okay, you might not use those exact words in either case. But you see what I'm getting at. In a game in which neither team- especially the superstars, with the notable exception of Kevin Garnett- performed up to expectations, what we're left with is a 1-0 Celtics series lead and a glass that, depending on your perspective, is half-full, or half-empty.

The question as we head into Game Two is this: which team will go the furthest toward correcting the issues it had on Tuesday night? Which team will fill the glass to the brim?

Boston: The main task for Doc Rivers going into Thursday is figuring out a way to get two-thirds of his Big Three straightened out. Paul Pierce, harassed all night by LeBron and the terminally-glowering Sasha Pavlovic (has Sasha changed his facial expression once since he got to Cleveland?) had more turnovers (six) than points (four) and clanked away at a 2-of-14 clip. Ray Allen took just four shots, missed them all, and finished with as many points as you or I. The Celtics managed to skate by anyway, but they're going to have a tough time winning this series unless they get more from these two.

The good news for the Celtics is that Pierce's performance looks like an aberration in light of what he's done so far in the postseason. He was a model of consistency in the first round against Atlanta, averaging 17.4 points (never scoring fewer than 14) and shooting a crisp 45.3 percent (including 12-of-25 from three-point range). He was good in the postseason before Tuesday, and from Boston's standpoint, there's every reason to believe he'll be good again before it's all said and done. Of course, that doesn't factor in the idea that the King has always been a royal pain in Paul Pierce's derriere. The two have a long-standing personal rivalry that's always been a little one-sided in the King's favor, and when Two-Three steps up his defensive intensity, he makes it tough for anyone to get going. Ask Kobe Bryant.

Mr. Shuttlesworth is a different story. He went two for his last 13 from long range against the Hawks and scored just seven points in Boston's clinching Game

Seven before his dreadful performance on Tuesday. No longer a finisher, he's now almost exclusively a long-range shooter. And Cleveland is solid at denying the three-point shot; they were tenth in the NBA in three-point percentage allowed at 37 percent, and they've been even better in the playoffs, holding opponents to just 30 percent from behind the arc. Wally Szczerbiak's slow-as-frozen-molasses feet shouldn't be too much of a hindrance against Ray Allen, because he isn't exactly a threat when he puts the ball on the floor. Wally can, however, use his strength and size to make the outside shot difficult. Mr. Shuttlesworth probably won't take any more doughnuts this series, but it's an open question as to whether he'll even come close to his season average of 17.4 points per game or his nearly 40 percent shooting from the Land of Three.

Cleveland: It isn't often that LeBron is forced to take the lion's share of blame for a Cavaliers loss, but that was the case on Tuesday. The mercurial supporting cast wasn't great by any means- they shot a combined 38 percent and were 4-of-12 from downtown- but had LBJ put on even a standard, below-average performance the Cavaliers would have won going away. Instead, he played arguably his worst game since his NBA debut in Sacramento in 2003. The symbol of LeBron's night of frustration was his point-blank lay-up attempt for the tie that rolled harmlessly off the rim, ending Cleveland's chance to steal the game.

Some credit has to go to Boston's rock-solid defense. The Celtics were superb in denying LeBron driving opportunities, keeping him out on the perimeter, invading the passing lanes, and crowding the paint to force turnovers. But LeBron gave them some help. He made a lot of poor decisions, got himself into foul trouble, and chucked up several ill-advised jumpers early in the shot clock. The Celtic D and LBJ's mistakes combined to create a perfect storm of badness, the likes we've never seen from the King.

By the way, for all the deserved accolades about Kevin Garnett keying Boston's defensive revival, the real force behind the improvement isn't a player- it is assistant coach Tom Thibodeau, the former Jeff Van Gundy sidekick who came from Houston and implemented Boston's air-tight defensive scheme.

Will the King improve on his horrible Game One performance? Of course he will. We may *never* see another 2-of-18, ten-turnover outing from LeBron, let alone again in this series. But Boston was statistically the best defensive team in the NBA this year for a reason, and it's likely the King will continue to struggle- by his standards at least- until the series comes to the Q on Saturday.

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The plights of Paul Pierce, Ray Allen, and LeBron James all had something to do with the play of their opponents, and the team that makes the proper adjustments first and best will have the advantage. What is almost a given is that this series will be long, ugly, and bitterly contested, and that despite its impressive record of bounce-backs from 0-2 deficits against Detroit in 2006 and '07, the Cavaliers will be in a spot of trouble if this goes to Cleveland with Boston up two games. The Celtics haven't had a four-game losing streak yet this season, and the last thing Cleveland wants is a Game Seven on the road. Getting the King off the schneid, and keeping Paul Pierce and Ray Allen on, is a must if the Cavaliers are to knot this thing up on Thursday.