We sent Sam Amico out to The Q last night to give our readers a first hand account of how the new look Cavaliers looked in their home opener against Charlotte. For the most part, Sam liked what he saw, and in this afternoon's piece, hits on a slew of topics related to the team, and also gives us some random observations from the thrashing of the Bobcats.

Random observations from the Cavaliers' 96-79 thrashing of Charlotte in Thursday's home opener:

* Anderson Varejao looks spectacular, better than ever. And that's saying something because Varejao has always been active around the basket and a pesky defender. But so far this year, there seems to be a little something extra to his game. He appears to have added a winning mentality to his wild ways. Rather than just running around like the Tasmanian Devil on Red Bull, Varejao has a purpose. He was the Cavs' most consistent player in the opening loss at Boston (9 points, 9 rebounds), and while his numbers weren't as good against the Bobcats, he didn't skip a beat when it came to energy.

* This is being written by someone who's never been much of a Varejao fan. I never really understood why Cavs coach Mike Brown was so obsessed with him. Yes, Varejao always hustled, but in the NBA, how valuable was hustle alone? Not that I didn't appreciate Varejao's charge-taking ways or fearlessness, but ... well, I just thought he hurt the team offensively. It didn't help that Varejao gave a less-than-average performance last year after inexplicably holding out for all of

training camp and part of the regular season. I wasn't the only one who soured on him. That said, I'll be the first to admit that he seems to have worked on his skills over the summer - and that, combined with his usual brand of feistiness, is really starting to win me over.

* LeBron James seemed particularly fired up for this game, playing with a ton of passion and displaying more emotion than usual with lots of fist pumps and high fives. Ain't it great to have a superstar on your team who really LOVES the game, and one who puts in the extra work in the offseason? It sounds simple, but sometimes guys with his contract and endorsements will mail it in once in a while. Not LeBron. Think about it - he practically had a triple-double (22 points, 9 rebounds, 9 assists) despite playing just 30 minutes.

* That said, the man could still use some work on his free throws. He missed a few biggies in Boston the other night and went 8 of 12 from the line against Charlotte. As a team, the Cavs were just 19 of 29 for the game (65 percent), and that's not gonna get it done in close games. Fortunately, there are still 80 to go in the regular season.

* One Cavs insider told me of LeBron's free throw woes: "I don't get it. When he's dialed in and focused, he knocks 'em down. But he's not dialed in and focused right now."

* It's easy to overlook the role of Ben Wallace, because he never makes more than a basket or two. But it's obvious he really benefited from his first full training camp and preseason in Cleveland. He swatted a whopping five shots and dominated Bobcats forward Sean May (o-of-6 shooting) so much that Larry Brown sat May for the entire second half. He also grabbed 10 rebounds in just 24 minutes.

* As a team, the Cavs blocked 11 shots. "They made all the hustle plays," Larry Brown told reporters after the game. "That's a huge

factor."

* Wally Szczerbiak is likely to be shipped out sometime before the February trading deadline. He looked completely out of place, taking just one shot and missing badly, and committing three fouls and two turnovers. The Cavs still might be able to get a decent big man for him no matter how poorly plays, simply because he has an always-valuable expiring contract. Either way, it looks like Wally will become this year's version of Damon Jones - a guy who will be used sporadically if another guard is in a slump.

* Speaking of semi-slumps, Delonte West still seems a little rusty. He wasn't bad, just not the Delonte West who Cavs fans fell in love with during last year's playoffs. He scored nine points and snared an underrated six rebounds, but is having a difficult time getting to the basket. That's not surprising when you consider it's only been a week since he tweaked his ankle in the final preseason game.

* Overall, the Cavs looked very good on defense. They scrambled and pressured the Bobcats point guards on the perimeter, and with 11 blocked shots, it's safe to say they did a nice job of protecting the rim.

* Perhaps the best thing so far about new guard Mo Williams is he gives James the opportunity to rest, without Mike Brown having to fret about it. Williams can drive, dish and bury the long-range shot. And when was the last time you could say all three about a Cavs' point guard?

* We should all be troubled by the fact that the Cavs have continued to come out FLAT in the third quarter. What, exactly, are they doing in the locker room at halftime? (One team employee told me it looks like they're stuffing themselves with turkey.) It was trend all of last season, then during the playoffs against Boston, then in this year's season-opener, and now the home-opener against Charlotte - which outscored the Cavs 26-18 in the third. I'm not ready to lay all the

blame on Mike Brown, but if the Cavs are serious about winning a championship, it needs to end.

* On an equally important note, it was considerably quieter inside Quicken Loans Arena than at any time during Dan Gilbert's ownership of the team. A team official denied that was the case, but I could actually talk to the person sitting next to me. That's never happened before - at least, not during Gilbert's reign. The Cavs also toned down the pregame introductions, which did not include fire coming out of the scoreboard. Wonder if any of it had to do with commissioner David Stern's speech in Cleveland last season about the overuse of pyrotechnics in NBA arenas.

* Actually, who needs fire on the scoreboard when Daniel Gibson is scoring 20 points in the first half (25 overall) and burying 10 of 14 shots (including 4-of-6 shooting on 3-pointers), as he did against the Bobcats?

* Speaking of 3-pointers, you know the game is over when Zydrunas Ilguaskas is launching a three from deep in the corner. Big Z missed it, but LeBron said the shot was not just for fun - that it's actually a new wrinkle in the Cavs offense. "He needs to knock those down," James said with a straight face.

NOTES

Former Cavs shooting guard Dell Curry is now the Bobcats director of player development. Apparently, Curry has a lot of work ahead of him. ... Another ex-Cav and former firs-round pick, Shannon Brown, is on the Bobcats' roster. He was inactive for Thursday's game, although I did see him devouring a slice of pizza in the locker room when it was over. ... The Cavs have never lost to the Bobcats at home (8-0), and have now won three of their past four home openers. ... Cleveland outrebounded Charlotte 46-34.

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