Turns out the loss Wednesday night in Detroit wasn't a precursor to a Cavalier collapse. Maybe instead of the Pistons game being a critical indicator of where the team stands amongst the NBA elite it was simply a loss to a quality team on their court after having played a ballgame the night before. There was no hangover Saturday night at

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There was no hangover Saturday night at ‘The Q'. The Cavs ran out to leads of 9-0 and 15-2 on their way to a 110-96 win over the Hawks.

Again it was a combination of ball movement, penetration and solid outside shooting that got the Cavs a lead they never relinquished. And if that wasn't enough the Cavs threw down some suffocating defense in the first half, holding Atlanta to 33% shooting and only 32 points, that allowed them to put it basically on cruise control after the intermission.

Most of the damage in the opening half was done without the scoring assistance of LeBron James. James scored five points in the first two quarters and seemed to be content with watching Mo Williams and Delonte West do most of the scoring damage. James also took particular interest in making sure Ben Wallace was fed enough touches to keep him interested and active on the defensive end and Big Ben responded with a couple crowd-pleasing dunks that energized the building.

On the night James did end up leading the Cavs in scoring with 24 points. He also grabbed 7 rebounds and handed out 8 assists. The nightly James highlight came late in the game after Atlanta had pulled within 11 when he went to the rim with purpose and threw down a wicked right-handed dunk that choked off any Hawks momentum.

Mo Williams added 23 points and 5 assists while Delonte West chipped in 19. Big Z also went for 17 points and 7 boards.

The Hawks were led by Maurice Evans and Acie Law who scored 21 and 20 points respectively off the Atlanta bench.

Takeaways

- The sword cuts both ways. The Cavs fell in Detroit on the 2nd night of a back to back set of games. The Hawks came into Cleveland after getting past Charlotte on Friday night. It was nice to see the Cavs come out immediately and set the tempo on both ends of the court. The Cavs again moved the ball very well in the first half and took advantage of some tired Atlanta legs. They also established early on that the Hawks were going to need to get points from someone other than Joe Johnson. The Cavs bodied Johnson all night long and just generally harassed Johnson into a 1/8 shooting night and 4 points on the evening.

- Perhaps it's because we've been watching poor point guard play for so long now, but I'm developing a serious crush on Mo Williams.

Williams isn't the pure point guard in the mold of a Mike Conley pass first guy but the man continues to make the right decisions when the basketball is in his hands. In a very short period of time he's demonstrated that he has an understanding of when to shoot the basketball and when to give it up. Furthermore, he's getting into the paint and penetrating more and more and he's either scoring the ball on the drive or distributing it to an open shooter.

- The Cavs are going to benefit greatly from the depth of this team. With LeBron, Ben, Z and Mo not having to carry the entire burden by themselves they can afford more downtime and rest for those guys without seeing games slip away in the process. Keeping LBJ under 40 minutes as often as possible is going to ensure he has the best chance to be healthy and fresh come playoff time. And he'll also have a little extra juice night to night if he's called upon to dominate late in a given game.

Same applies for Z and Ben and the others. Giving these guys a blow and saving what's left in the tank for when you really need it is an advantage the Cavs haven't had going to into the playoffs the last couple years.

- It's still hard to believe what I'm seeing defensively from this Cavs team. It's been a long time (since at least never) that I can recall a Cavs club that takes so much pleasure and pride on the defensive end. It's a game within a game with this team. They're pushing each other to see who can make the great defensive play, who can take a charge, who can challenge shots and who can deny an entry pass or a post move. One thing I'm seeing time and again am guys fighting to get over top of screens instead of backing off or going behind a screener. That eliminates a lot of open shots as well as clumsy switches that result in a guard trying to cover a big man or a guy like Z having to try and stay with a smaller shooter. Staying away from mismatches saves this team a few critical points almost every night.

They Got Next

The Cavs get a couple nights off to enjoy the win over the Hawks. On Tuesday they head to the Big Apple to visit the Knocks. New York is in the process of cutting some fat from their bloated roster but they are currently 7-6 on the season.

Get ready for the LBJ to NY talk for a good week.