118-82. And the Cavs did not have the 82. Does that tell you what you need to know? I could use words like domination, or slaughter, or pwned, and they wouldn't do justice to what happened last night at Quicken Loans Arena. The Cavs led by 11 after the first quarter, 26 at the half, and extended the lead even further during The Fourth Quarter Featuring The Tarence Kinsey Brigade. The Cavs are rollin' folks. John Hnat gives us The Good, The Bad, & The Summary from the latest Cavalier blowout.

THE SUMMARY:

For the second time in as many weeks, the Cavs and the Knicks played each other.

Also for the second time in as many weeks, much of the media focus was on the possibility of LeBron James going to the Knicks when he becomes a free agent in 2010.

Frankly, this story has already received too much attention, especially with that deadline looming so far in the future. On the scale of prematurity, "LeBron's plans when he becomes a free agent" ranks just below "14-year-old alone in his bedroom with Mom's Victoria Secret catalog".

So for the rest of this column, I am not going to discuss that story. I am not going to make any reference to that story. And just to be certain, I am not going to use the terms *LeBron James*, *Knicks*, or *2010*. Let's focus on last night's game instead.

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It's not like this blowout couldn't have been predicted. The Kni - I mean team that calls Madison Square Garden home were playing the tail end of a back-to-back. They had already been pummeled by the Cavs last week in New York. They've continued to play with a roster of eight players, which happens when you alienate a third of your roster (granted, it's the third that *should* be alienated). And most fundamentally, they suck.

Nike's leading pitchman (Non-Tiger Woods Division) led everybody with 21 points (despite playing only 28 minutes; he was done for the night before the third quarter had ended). Mo Williams added 16 (all in the first half), and Zydrunas Ilgauskas posted yet another double-double with 14 points and 10 boards. The visitors were paced by Al Harrington's 20 points, Anthony Roberson's 19, and David Lee's 16 points and 16 rebounds.

It's the NBA. Where a team raising a white flag for 48 minutes happens.

WHAT I LIKED ABOUT THE GAME:

Yes, I Know Thanksgiving Was Last Week, But: Lost in all of the talk about Gloria James's son and whether he will play basketball for the New York professional team in the year referenced in the sequel to the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey* is that this year's edition of the Cavs may be the best, and is certainly the most entertaining, Cavs team in

memory. (
Yes, that means ahead of the Price/Nance/Daugherty squads, and ahead of the Miracle of Richfield team. It's even ahead of the 2002 Darius Miles/Dajuan Wagner/Ricky Davis train wreck, although that team was entertaining for markedly different reasons.)

And I want to thank the entire Cavs organization for that - from Dan Gilbert on down to the guy who puts those little scented hockey pucks in the urinals at The Q. Professional basketball has never been more fun in this city (at least, non-playoff professional basketball). This Cavs team can do it all: shoot, score, rebound, play defense - and all with a great attitude and a sense that they all truly *enjoy* playing for this team.

Perhaps above all, this is a *smart* Cavs team. More than anything, last February's trade increased the team's basketball IQ by about a hundred points. Delonte West, Wally Szczerbiak, and Ben Wallace (to say nothing of the departed Joe Smith) know how to play the game. (Not to mention the addition-by-subtraction element. I'm still giddy over not watching Drew Gooden pick his nose

when he should be rotating on defense, or Larry Hughes pulling up for a covered 18 footer with 16 seconds left on the shot clock.) Add an equally-smart Mo Williams, and you have a team that is off to a 15-3 start (and a perfect 10-0 at home).

They Oughta Get Eight To Ten: Last night, that high basketball IQ was apparent in the Cavs' 18 steals (yes, 18). Eighteen steals does not just happen; nor does it result simply from athleticism. Time and again, the Cavs anticipated passes, filled passing lanes, and came away with the ball. One perfect example: Lee received an outlet pass at midcourt, took a couple of dribbles, then passed back to the point guard trailing him. West saw the entire play developing, stepped in front, and came up with an easy steal. It's much easier to win a game when you get 18 extra possessions.

The Boobie Meter: Finally! When I added this feature a few weeks ago, I visualized it as a way to compliment Daniel "Boobie" Gibson's play while taking the very real risk of providing links to curvy women wearing little more than glorified dental floss. (
Rule Number One: Know your audience.

) So what has Gibson done in that time? He has played like a basketball version of Juan Rincon (apologies to the toilet of TCF Indians writer Steve Buffum, which now contains a large quantity of vomit). And it has forced me to track down picture after picture of flat celebrities.

Fortunately for all of us, Boobie came to play last night. Thirteen points, 4-of-6 shooting from the field, five assists, three steals. In the second quarter, he had a nice drive to the hoop, got fouled, converted the and-one ... and then stole the ball from New York point guard Chris Duhon, leading to a foul and another pair of free throws (which he split). Perhaps his best play came early in the fourth quarter, when he blocked a layup by Duhon, saved the ball from going out of bounds, pushed the ball up the court, and found J.J. Hickson for an easy basket.

On behalf of everybody reading this column - at least, the men and the alternatively-lifestyled women - I'd like to thank Boobie for finally giving me reason to invoke Scarlett Johansson

.

Take That!: Early in the game, when the outcome was still in some doubt (in other words, the Cavs were up 4-2 at the time), Ben Wallace went up for a rebound of a missed shot by one of the members of the Atlantic Division's fourth-place team, but lost the ball to Duhon. Duhon tried to lay the ball back in; Wallace swatted it, in true AC "get that weak stuff outta here, young man!" form.

And There Was A Lot Of Weak Stuff: You name the hustle statistic, the Cavs won it. They out-rebounded (48-39), out-blocked (8-3), and out-stole (18-8) New York. They got to the free throw line 30 times, to New York's ten. Even late in the fourth quarter, in garbage time, the Cavs were still flying around the court, playing defense on the ball the entire way up the court, and not allowing a single uncontested shot.

When the Cavs put forth a full effort, there's nobody on the planet who can beat them. The key is keeping that effort level high for an entire game. They came about as close as you can come to playing that way for 48 minutes last night.

Remember When This Was A Problem?: The Cavs from the free throw line: 26-of-30, or 87%. For the season, they are shooting 77%. They are actually in the top half of the league in free throw shooting percentage; mastodons were roaming the earth the last time that statement was true.

Remember When This Was A Problem Too?: The Cavalier who falls between Darnell Jackson and Tarence Kinsey in the team's roster (alphabetical, by last name) made all ten of his free throw attempts. Don't look now, but he is approaching 80% from the charity stripe for the season.

WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE ABOUT THE GAME:

How can you criticize a team that has not only won nine of its last ten games, but has won all nine of those games by *double digits*? You can't. That's insane stuff. Northeastern Ohio Taco Bells are going out of business daily, crushing under the

weight of all those free chalupas.

So we're going to have to look to the other bench. You know, the one for the team owned by James Dolan.

This Is How You Get A Teammate Hurt: Early in the third quarter, the man who appears on a huge billboard outside The Q stole a pass (
again
) and drove to the other end for an easy basket. New York's Harrington grabbed him almost out of midair, a pretty dangerous play. He did get called for a Flagrant One foul. Maybe it's me, but the play seemed foolish (there was no chance of preventing the play aside from a pretty deliberate foul) and dangerous. Harrington's teammates should be thankful this morning. Thankful that none of the Cavs retaliated, that is.

NOT THAT YOU ASKED, BUT...

This Has To Be Some Kind Of Record. Has To Be: With about three and a half minutes remaining, the Cavs' Jackson got called for a three-second violation. There were 19 seconds on the shot clock (and the play had started at the other end of the court; it wasn't like there was an offensive rebound involved). Either Jackson would beat a light beam in a race down the court, or he was doing some high-quality cherry picking.

Aside To All Other TCF Writers (Especially The Browns Ones): Sorry, guys; I'm not willing to trade teams.

WHAT LIES AHEAD:

The Cavs remain at home to play Indiana tomorrow night. (Incidentally, if there's a tougher week on the schedule than Indiana's this week, I'd like to see it. They played the Lakers on Tuesday, then the Celtics in Boston last night, then tomorrow night's game in Cleveland, and they'll finish with a Sunday contest at home against Boston. That's four games in six days against the NBA's elite.)