It was a boring game for about three and a half quarters. With the exception of LeBron James having a very efficient night shooting from the floor and the free throw line, it felt like the Cavs were phoning it in. Then LeBron James exploded, TJ Ford made some shots of his own, and two of the most controversial calls you'll ever see were made. As it turned out, a 47-point outburst from King James wasn't enough to secure a victory.

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Synopsis

Except for a buzzer-beating three at the end of the first quarter by LeBron James, and a vicious block of TJ Ford (by -- you guessed it, LeBron James) you could basically fast forward to the last four or five minutes of this contest. The Cavs allowed the Pacers to hang around all game long, and the Pacers held a slim lead through most of the fourth quarter. With just under 3:00 to play, the Cavs trailed 88-82, and LeBron James had one of his transcendent dunks that make you appreciate how truly special he is. Danny Granger drained a three at the other end, and LeBron answered with a trey of his own to keep the deficit at four.

TJ Ford is a guy who always seems to give the Cavs fits, and last night was no different. The speedy Ford was toasting Mo Williams all night long, but LeBron played some stellar defense to cut Ford off in the lane on one of the game's final possessions. The Cavs had the ball, trailing by two, when LeBron drove and found Wally Szczerbiak wide open cutting to the hoop. Szczerbiak converted an easy layup and the game was tied at 93 with 20.8 seconds left. (Wally proceeded

to double-fist Gatorade on the Cavaliers' bench. Yes, really.) Indiana held for the last shot, and TJ Ford hit an impressive 17-foot fader with 0.8 seconds remaining to give the Pacers a 2-point edge. That's when things got strange.

Mo Williams inbounded to LeBron James, who was forced to go up for an alley-oop due to the time constraints. LeBron wasn't able to gain possession, due to what appeared to be some pretty solid defense by Danny Granger. *But wait!* A foul was called on Granger, giving LeBron two free throws, and granting the Cavs new life. James hit both freebies, and the game was tied with 0.4 seconds remaining. At that point my buddy Chris turned to me and said jokingly, "Just enough time for another foul." I might let Chris pick out some lottery numbers for me tonight.

On the other end of the floor, Danny Granger went up for a very similar alley-oop, only this time LeBron James, with the roles reversed, was called for the foul with the clock reading 0.1 seconds. Granger hit the first of two free throws, and missed the second intentionally, giving us the final margin of 96-95, and giving the Pacers a win by the slimmest of margins. That peculiar sequence of events translates better through video than text, so be sure to check out the highlights here.

Quick Hits

About those late whistles...

It's pretty clear what happened: the official who called that first foul on Granger immediately regretted the decision, and the refs decided to look for any excuse for a make up call on the other end.

Allow me to be blunt about the situation: if you think that Granger should have been called for that foul, you're a homer. Granger was playing good defense, and had position onLeBron. Neither foul should have been called in the first place, and the

Pacers should have won by two. You probably don't see either of those fouls called at any point during the game, let alone in the last seconds, when officials generally are a little more lax with their whistles because they don't want to decide the game themselves.

With that in mind, it's also a slippery slope for refs to issue blatant make-up calls during the course of a game. Basketball is the most difficult major sport to officiate, and mistakes are going to be made. But the mistakes are still relatively low, and they tend to even out during the course of 48 minutes. Although Granger's foul never should have been called, two incorrect calls don't equal a correct call, and the refs probably should have let the teams duke it out in overtime.

That call wouldn't have defeated Indiana, as they would have had a chance to win in overtime. Indiana would have had a legitimate beef, but now both teams feel like they were in some way wronged. Instead, the refs made another call which unequivocally decided the game. The foul on Granger was bad, but the foul on LeBron was worse. The way to rectify to one obviously lousy call is not to make a second, especially in that situation.

Well, that worked, so obviously we can't do that again

The Cavs got a key stop to set up Wally Szczerbiak's game-tying layup when LeBron James matched up with TJ Ford and negated his ability to drive into the lane. When guarding Ford, LeBron's body language screamed, "Not this time,

little fella." Given how Ford was torching the Cavs and how effectively LeBron defended him the last time, don't you put LBJ on him for what appeared to be the game's final possession? I don't know, I'm not a doctor.

Spread thin

With JJ Hickson playing just five minutes, Mike Brown essentially went with a seven man rotation for the second time in the last three games. One has to wonder if the Cavs are getting a little worn out, especially with injuries (Sasha Pavlovic, Delonte West) testing the vaunted backcourt depth. Sasha Pavlovic should miss most of what remains of the regular season, but Delonte West appears primed to return shortly after the All-Star break if all goes according to plan. The Cavs desperately need some reinforcements in their backcourt.

Defenseless

Speaking of the current lack of depth at guard, it's contributing to some defensive problems. With Delonte West still on the shelf and Sasha Pavlovic sidelined for the foreseeable future, the Cavs are left with Mo Williams, Wally Szczerbiak, and Daniel Gibson at guard. In other words, the Cavs are without their two best perimeter defenders outside of LeBron James.

It was way too easy for TJ Ford and Travis Diener (who?) to get to the rack last night, and the Pacers did a good job exposing the Cavaliers' current lack of depth at guard. Szczerbiak was never fast, but at this point in his career he's so slow that you

can only hope to hide him on defense. It's a well-known fact that Daniel Gibson's size --or lack thereof -- makes him a popular target for other teams, and his problems on defense have definitely cost him playing time with Mike Brown in the past. Mo Williams has been playing better defense since arriving from Milwaukee, but he's in the same boat as Gibson as far as being undersized, and he's never been known for his defense, either. The moral of the story is that Delonte West needs to get back on the floor as soon as possible.

No adjustments

The Cavs didn't do a very good job adjusting to what Indiana was doing offensively. The Pacers shot an absurd .478 from 3-point land. Maybe they didn't pay attention during a film session or something, but it looked like theCavs had no idea that Danny Granger and Troy Murphy, two bigger guys, were good three-point shooters. Granger and Murphy were a combined 7-of-12 from beyond the arc, and although Murphy was a particularly lethal 4-of-5, theCavs still managed to forget about him time and again.

Speaking of Troy Murphy, is anyone else continuously blown away by the size of that guy's nose? There's a picture of Murphy here, but it doesn't really do justice to that magnificent beak. Honestly, put Murphy out there in Indiana's road yellows, and you might think that you've stumbled onto an old episode of Sesame Street.

Big ups for Roy

If Roy Hibbert had entered the NBA draft as a junior, he probably would have been a lottery pick, and he probably would have gone in the top 10. Instead, Hibbert returned to Georgetown for his senior year in search of a national title. As happens frequently in such cases, Hibbert's stock fell, and he slipped to number 17 in last June's draft. Many supported the Cavs drafting Hibbert, and they may have if he had been available when they came on the clock at number 19.

Maybe it was all for the best, as Cavs fans are very happy with young JJ Hickson, but Hibbert looked good against the Cavs last night, and I'm glad to see him having some success. Hibbert looks slimmer than he did in college, and more mobile than I remember him. In fact, he was a very efficient 6-of-9 for 12 points. The former Hoya did most of his damage early, and the Pacers should have kept feeding him the ball. He probably doesn't have the tools to be a 20-and-10 guy, but 15-and-8 isn't out of the question.

Dan's the man

Due to playing for lousy teams in small markets, Danny Granger and Kevin Durant might be the two best-kept secrets in the NBA. Granger and Durant are fifth and sixth in scoring, respectively, and although Granger struggled shooting last night (5-of-18), the Cavs got a good look at his versatility, athleticism, and outside shooting ability that most guys his size simply can't match. This is only Granger's fourth season, and he's shooting nearly 40-percent from beyond the arc; scary for a guy his size.

Indiana has been in disarray ever since the Ron Artest debacle, but they've made some prudent decisions since then. Unloading Jermaine O'Neal when they did turned out to be a stroke of genius, and with a solid young nucleus of Granger, TJ Ford, Jarrett Jack, and Roy Hibbert, the Pacers may be able to right the ship sooner rather than later.

DiGiorno Pizza® Austin Carr Quote of the Game

"The Cavaliers have to wake up now! [Indiana] is starting to fill their Cheerios."

No words. Just no words.

Up Next: 2/11, Phoenix Suns, 7:00, Quicken Loans Arena

The Cavs will aim to avenge a two-point loss to the pre-Shaq Suns last January, in addition to getting their first look at the Shaqtus. Phoenix isn't the force that they've been in the past, treading water in the Western Conference at 28-22 and barely holding onto the 8th seed. It will be interesting to see how the Cavs handle the Suns' front line combo of Shaq and Amar'e Stoudemire, and whether or not they can slow down another small, speedy guard in Steve Nash.