No Ben Wallace, no Sasha Pavlovic, no problem. Especially when the opponent from Friday night was missing Tim Duncan and Manu Ginobli. Whether losing Wallace Thursday night in Houston had a galvanizing effect or whether just losing in Houston the way they did provided a wake-up call, the Cavaliers limped into San Antonio bloodied and banged up but they waltzed out with a big 97-86 win against the Spurs on Friday night.

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LeBron James had no issues assuming some of the ‘big man' minutes with Wallace watching from the seats with a broken leg. James not only led the Cavaliers with 30 points in just three quarter of play but he also hauled down 14 rebounds to go with four assists.

James got help Friday night from Delonte West who chipped in 17 points and 5 assists as well as from Zydrunas Ilgauskas who picked up a needed double-double with 10 points and 10 boards.

The Spurs had 5 players hit double figures in points but none of them scored more than eleven.

With LeBron doing more work down low the guards stepped up to help with some of the rebounding effort Friday night. Daniel Gibson, West and Mo Williams combined to grab 11 caroms and scored 36 points between them.

The bottom line is no one in a Cleveland uniform cares that Duncan and Ginobli were sidelined with injuries. Beating the Spurs is like beating the USSR in a Cold War era sport. San Antonio is mechanical, emotionally detached and incredibly disciplined and a win there is a win to be savored. Hell, with his full white beard and with his stoicism interrupted occasionally by bursts of anger, even Spurs coach Gregg Popovich reminds one of a soviet coach.

Takeaways

- It remains to be seen just how severe a loss Wallace will prove to be. Teams will often compensate for the loss of a starter and valuable contributor immediately following an injury. The long haul is where we'll see just how important Wallace is to this Cavs team. LBJ will feel the effects of banging with the bigger bodies not today, but more likely down the road. But short term compensation is fine for now. Let this team get through this four game trip at 3-1 or 2-2 and it'll have to be considered a success.

- Delonte West continues to prove he's nearly indispensable as far as the Cavs are concerned. Not only did he score his points on 6-9 shooting and contribute those 17 points, 7 rebounds and 5 assists but he also helped keep Tony Parker and Roger Mason in check throughout the night. West added two steals and a blocked to his stat line and was again fearless in taking the ball to the basket and throwing his body into the fray.

We obviously know whose team this is. As long as LBJ dons the wine and gold that's indisputable. But Delonte West, in this system and with the talent surrounding him, is the glue that keeps it all together.

- Good to see the Cavs get a win without a whole lot of help from Mo Williams. Williams scored only 9 points and dealt out just one assist on the night. Water bug-quick PGs like Parker tend to be difficult for Mo.
- 45-12 folks. That's where the Cavaliers' record sits after Friday night's win. That's the best record in the Eastern Conference and just two games off the pace when you look at the best record in the NBA. All while battling a series of injuries to 60% of their starters that would decimate lesser teams.

They Got Next

Joe Johnson, Josh Smith and Al Horford await the Cavs for a Sunday match up in Atlanta. The Hawks had lost their last three before getting a win against Miami on Friday night. Atlanta is long and athletic and is a tough out for anyone when they're playing well. They're 20-6 at home and 33-25 overall and one of those home wins came back in December against the Cavaliers.

After Sunday's game against Atlanta (8pm) the Cavs fly down to Miami for a Monday night game against the Miami Heat (730pm) that's going to be a test of endurance and concentration.

Cleveland finally comes home Wednesday night for a 7pm tip against the Milwaukee Bucks in a game that will be interesting from the perspective that the two teams came to literal blows last Friday night in Wisconsin.