It wasn't very flashy, and it wasn't filled with tons of SportCenter-type highlights, but the Cavs took care of the Pistons on Saturday afternoon in businesslike fashion. In fact, considering the playoff history that these two clubs share, the game felt surprisingly vanilla. However, the end result was a very convincing 102-84 wil that served notice to the Pistons, as well as the rest of the NBA, that the Cavaliers are the team to beat. Nick Allburn recaps the win for our readers.

It wasn't very flashy, and it wasn't filled with tons of SportCenter-type highlights, but the Cavs took care of the Pistons on Saturday afternoon in businesslike fashion. In fact, considering the playoff history that these two clubs share, the game felt surprisingly vanilla. The absence of Chauncey Billups has sapped the Pistons of much of their former potency, and perhaps equally important, much of their swagger.

But the Pistons deserve some credit for hanging with the Cavs for over three quarters. Even if they never really gave the Cavs reason to worry, they were always within striking distance, and always a 10-point run away from tying the game or taking a slight lead.

Both teams came out of the gates shooting uncharacteristically high percentages through the first half, although those numbers came back down to earth in the second half. But that's the difference between this incarnation of the Cavaliers and those of years past; while the playoff Cavaliers of the last three seasons had to win almost entirely with defense, the 2009 Cavs are good enough on offense to outscore most teams, too. So although they had what could be called on off-night defensively (Detroit shot 46-percent from the floor), the Cavs' improved jump shooting, solid depth, and the addition of a bona fide second scorer in Mo Williams provided the difference.

Final: Cleveland 102, Detroit 84

Box score

Quick Hits

It's good to be the King

For the first time during LeBron James' tenure in Cleveland, the Cavs are probably good enough to make the playoffs without him. That doesn't change the fact that this team is still fueled by number 23, and LeBron set the tone early with 10 quick points in the first quarter. James dropped 22 points in the first half, including an impressive 40-foot buzzer-beater to the end the second quarter, and he finished the game with 38 points.

This guy's clearly on a mission, and as he's mentioned, anything less than a title will be a disappointment. As many have noted, the Olympics last summer probably played a huge role in re-focusing LeBron, in addition to guys like Kobe Bryant (as if his focus needed improvement) and Dwyane Wade. Tasting victory probably didn't hurt LeBron, either.

Just one game, or reason to worry?

The Cavs are as good as any team in the NBA when it comes to perimeter defense, but they're a little softer inside. Zydrunas Ilgauskas will block some shots, but is a much better rebounder than he is a defender. Anderson Varejao is a terrific rebounder, but is better at filling the lane and team defense than he is individually. Off the bench, Joe Smith is average defensively and Ben Wallace is without question the team's best defender in the post.

The Pistons obviously had studied some tape, because they were working hard to pound the paint early, and it was fairly effective. Part of

that strategy probably stems from the fact that the Pistons traded away their most consistent three-point threat, Chauncey Billups, but they probably also noticed that the Cavs are a little softer inside. This game plan was a big reason why the Pistons shot 46-percent, significantly higher than the 41-percent the Cavs typically yield at The Q. We'll see how the Cavs adjust for game two. Having LeBron James guard the four more often might not be a bad place to start.

The wily vet.

Zydrunas Ilgauskas is the longest-tenured Cavalier by a full five seasons. The next guy in terms of length of service is LeBron James, who's been in C-Town since '03-'04. Ilgauskas has taken the floor with some really bad teams, including the 17-win team of '02-'03 that netted us The Ping Pong Ball. Nobody on this team has more appreciation for how far they've come, or how much LeBron James alone improved them. Considering that he'll likely only play one more season, it'd be great to see Z win a ring.

Big Ben's back in business.

Apparently that sprained tendon in his left knee wasn't too serious, because Wallace was back less than a week after he sustained the injury last Sunday against the Celtics. In just under 12 minutes, Wallace did his best to be a statistical non-factor, taking no shots and posting just 1 rebound and 1 assist. Still, it's good to know that Wallace is ready to go for the playoffs, as he could be a crucial role player in the later rounds, when the Cavs could face teams like the Magic and Lakers, who have dominant post players that Wallace may be charged with defending.

Boobie watching.

Daniel Gibson came off the bench and immediately knocked down a

jumper. Gibson only played 14:10, and was very selective, only taking three shots, and making two. This team has improved to the point where they don't need Gibson to be a volume scorer anymore. Instead of going out with the mindset of scoring 15 or 20 points, Gibson can be selective and wait for an open look, and if he can shoot his jumper in the mid-40s, percentage-wise, he'll have done his job. Yes, three shots is an extremely small sample size, but it was still good to see Gibson start these playoffs on the right foot.

Have I mentioned that I really like Joe Smith?

Joe Smith is the prototypical first or second guy off the bench. He's a veteran, fundamentally-sound player who can hit the mid-range jumper, rebound, and finish around the rim. Smith has shot nearly 50-percent since returning to the Cavs in early March, and he contributed a rock solid 13 points off the bench (including a three-pointer!), second on the team behind LeBron. Smith did most of his scoring early in the second quarter to help the Cavs maintain their lead and eventually stretch it out to 12 points by halftime.

The re-aquisition of Smith hasn't received much attention nationally, or even locally for that matter, and it's probably because Smith was on the team last season, too. With the exception of the Salmons/Miller to Chicago deal, you could argue that no move has been as important down the stretch, particularly when you consider how thin the Cavs were up front when Ben Wallace was on the shelf.

On a side note, the Joe Smith jersey is now one of the best values in Cleveland, as you can buy a Cavs or Tribe "Joe Smith" jersey and wear it to both games. Sure, basketball Joe and baseball Joe wear different numbers (32 and 38, respectively), but I think we can let that slide. You get extra points for buying two jerseys, splitting them down the middle, and sewing them together.

Another great value: the "LeBron, 23" custom Browns jersey. With the Cavs' success and the trading of one (and possibly two, depending on whether or not Braylon Edwards is moved) of the Browns fans' most-worn jerseys in Kellen Winslow, I've got a feeling we'll see scads of those LeBron jerseys at CBS next season. State Farm may have unwittingly become the biggest force for Browns jersey sales since the drafting of Brayden Tyler Quinn.

Playoff rotation revealed!

Mike Brown gave playing time to 12 guys, but Darnell Jackson, Tarence Kinsey, and Sasha Pavlovic all played less than 2 minutes. If the first game is any indicator, the bench players who are going to get the majority of the playing time are Daniel Gibson, Wally Szczerbiak, Joe Smith, and Ben Wallace. That shouldn't come as a surprise, as those four, with the exception of Gibson, have all been very consistent this season. There wasn't a goofy playoff surprise like Mike Brown mysteriously banishing Devin Brown to the bench in second round last year.

If the Cavs continue to win by wide margins, I'd like to see some of the guys on the bench take a few more minutes to keep the starters as rested as possible. That's reason enough to keep pouring it on as the series continues.

Detroit's only chance.

Mark Jackson and Jeff Van Gundy made a good point about the Pistons' defense -- they were actually playing LeBron James too tight on the perimeter. If they were to give James a little more of a buffer and an open look at the hoop, it might encourage James to take a few more jumpers, which has to be your goal if you're trying to slow down LBJ.

I'll take that a step farther: opposing teams should sag off LeBron outside the arc, and be ready to double-team him inside, basically goading him into taking threes. Like most athletes, LeBron is a competitive guy, and if you are, in essence, daring him to beat you with his jump shot, he might just try it. As humble as LeBron seems, there's a big ego there, as there is with all athletes who are at the top of their respective games. It might not be a bad idea to try using that ego against LeBron, especially because double-team or no, you're not stopping that guy when he decides he's going to drive to the rack.

Mo for sho'.

Speaking of Jackson and Van Gundy, they were poking fun at the fact that Mo Williams listens to Phil Collins' " In the Air Tonight " before every game to get pumped up. (That's right, Jeff Van Gundy: purveyor of cool.) Mike Breen was the only one who would stand up for "In the Air Tonight" as a pump up track.

Personally, I couldn't be happier that Williams listens to that particular tune before taking the floor, as it's the final track on my Race Day mix, and it helps me get in the right frame of mind for competition. It's almost meditative, and it slowly builds to the rollicking drum solo. I'm willing to bet that 95-percent of the population plays the air drums for the solo at the 3:40 mark (check the YouTube link), and I'm also willing to bet that you don't want to associate yourself with the the 5-percent. Keep on rockin' it, Mo.

Up Next: 4/21, Game two, Pistons at Cavaliers, Quicken Loans Arena, 8:00, ESPN

The only chance the Pistons have is to win all three of their home games and steal a game at The Q. It's not going to happen. Part two of the four part beat downtips off Tuesday night. Be there or be square.