If the Cavaliers' second round goes as easily as the first, we might be facing another nine-day layoff while the Celtics and Magic duke it out in the other Eastern Conference semifinal series. But that's probably not going to happen. The up-and-coming Atlanta Hawks will have a lot more fight in them than the down-and-out Detroit Pistons. We asked our panel of writers how they thought round two would play out, and reveal those opinions in our latest roundtable.

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But that's probably not going to happen. The up-and-coming Atlanta Hawks will have a lot more fight in them than the down-and-out Detroit Pistons. To boot, they'll be coming into Tuesday's Game 1 with their first round Game 7 triumph over the Heat still fresh in their minds. For the Hawks, it was a significant accomplishment. The franchise hadn't won a playoff series in 10 years.

The Hawks have the firepower of Joe Johnson and Mike Bibby, the athleticism of Josh Smith and the inside presence of Al Horford and Zaza Pachulia. But the Cavs have the now-reigning league MVP in LeBron James and the best defense in the league.

How will this series shake out? Our writers, once again, weigh in.

Jerry Roche

Cavs in 5

In the first round, the Hawks exhibited excellent ball movement, enabling them to get wide-open shots from all over the court. But the Cavs play defense at a whole different level than the Heat.

While most observers might point to the battle inside, this series will be won around the perimeter. Atlanta's guards -- Mike Bibby and Joe Johnson -- present three problems: the skill to hit three-pointers, the quickness to drive, and the intelligence to drive and dish. How well guards Mo Williams and Delonte West handle Bibby and Johnson will determine the Cavaliers' fate.

In Atlanta's only victory against the Cavs (in Atlanta), Zydrunas Ilgauskas was absent. In the other three games, Z averaged 16.67 points and 7.33 rebounds. Additionally, Williams' inspired performance against the Hawks during the regular season (23.25 ppg) will help.

So with LeBron, Z and Mo leading the way (no surprise), the Cavs should take the series in five. In all five games, first to 100 wins.

Erik Cassano

Cavs in 5

When this series opens on Tuesday, the Cavs will have gone nine days without playing. In the NBA, that's toeing the line between "break" and "sabbatical." It's almost like stopping the season and having to start it up again. No matter how extensively the Cavs have prepared over the past week, there might very well be a rust factor in Game 1, when the Hawks will still be running on the adrenaline of their Game 7 win over Miami on Sunday.

But if the Hawks somehow steal Game 1, don't think that the Cavs are doomed to an embarrassing second-round exit. The Hawks showed a lot of maturity and improved execution during their series win over the Heat, but they showed a lot of inconsistency and immaturity as well (Josh Smith's bush-league attempt at an under-the-leg dunk comes to mind).

The Hawks are still far enough away from the Cavs' level of play that Cleveland will have a margin-for-error cushion. This is going to be the final round in which the Cavs can get away with a sloppy game or two, because in the end, the Cavs are just going to be too much for the Hawks. Too much defense, too much LeBron James, too many playoff-tested veterans, too many shooters spacing the floor and too much Z for the Hawks' big men. To boot, Al Horford, Atlanta's stellar young big man, will likely play the series on a bad ankle after injuring it against Miami.

The heart of the Hawks' attack lies primarily in their backcourt with Mike Bibby and Joe Johnson, two dynamic players who can put the ball on the floor, set up their teammates and shoot with range. The burden will fall primarily on LeBron, Mo Williams and - in particular - Delonte West to check the Hawks' dynamic duo and minimize the damage they create. Off the bench, former Cav Flip Murray is capable of binge scoring with the best of them. If he heats up, he could provide a stiff test for the Cavs' second unit.

It wouldn't shock me to see the Hawks take Game 1, but I'd still think their best chance to pull out a win would be in Atlanta, in Game 3 or 4. The Hawks were 31-10 at Philips Arena this year, and a mere 16-25 on the road. I'll bank on the Cavs finding a way to take a 2-0 series lead, split the next two in Georgia and

close it out with a Game 5 win in Cleveland, earning the Cavs their second conference finals berth in three years.

Hiko

Cavs in 6

Predicting an ill fate for the Cavs this year has brought me nothing but joy. I predicted the Cavs would have less than 50 wins this season - that was happily a dud. I predicted the Cavs would be extended to 6 games by the woeful Pistons - that was a pleasant error. So I will continue my pessimistic ways.

Mo Williams will bump his head and get amnesia. Z will contract the swine flu. Varejao will play badly on purpose, cashing in on illicit funds supplied by the Freemasons and the Brazilian Mafia. And LeBron will be abducted by Venutian colonists for 3 games, returned only after offering them a lifetime supply of Cocoa Puffs to take back to their planet.

So it will take the Cavs 6 games to win the series.

Jesse Lamovsky

Cavs in 5

In some ways, the Cavaliers and Hawks are mirror-images of one another. Both teams have a designated go-to guy (LeBron for Cleveland , Joe Johnson for Atlanta); both have shoot-first point guards (Mo Williams for Cleveland , Mike Bibby for Atlanta) and both have foreign-born provocateurs in the frontcourt

(Anderson Varejao for Cleveland , Zaza Pachulia for Atlanta .) But there the similarities end. While the Cavaliers were the picture of consistency all season, never losing more than two games in a row, the Hawks were a mercurial bunch. They were 31-10 at home, but only 16-25 on the road. They were dominant in their four victories over Miami in the first round, winning by an average margin of 16 points. They were awful in their three defeats, losing by an average margin of 23 points. Atlanta is a young team, and like a lot of young teams, they're prone to wild swings in mood, confidence and performance.

They also might be afflicted with a touch of "Happy to be There Syndrome." Atlanta's seven-game victory over the Heat was the first postseason triumph for the franchise since 1999, and it's reasonable to assume that the preseason goals for the Hawks- a winning record and advancement in the Playoffs- have already been fulfilled. The Cavaliers, of course, are after bigger game. The Hawks may also be a little fatigued, while Cleveland should be fresh as a daisy after nine days off. The Cavaliers have almost all the edges- experience, size, rest, defense, and of course, newly minted MVP LeBron James. Atlanta's athleticism can be a problem, and make no mistake- this is not a dying team waiting for the coup de grace, as the Pistons were. The Hawks will fight, especially in the Phillips Arena. In the end though, Cleveland will have too much of everything for Atlanta to overcome.

Prediction: Cavaliers in five. Also, Zaza Pachulia will be the most hated man in Cleveland by this time next week.

Mansfield Lucas

Cavs in 5

Call me arrogant. Call me complacent. Call me foolish. But when even John Barry is predicting a sweep, I'm still supremely confident in the Cavs' ability to dominate this round. Atlanta remains the "best of the rest" in the conference, just

as they were all season. But they aren't one of the three big boys, and this series will once again prove that.

Joe Johnson is a legitimate NBA superstar at this point in his career, and they have Mike Bibby and some supporting talent, but we are talking about the Cavs and LeBron James. Josh Smith is a nice player, but we are very, very deep at power forward. I can't see him hurting us enough to free up Joe Johnson and Bibby to cause us any real grief. I love how we match up with this team.

As always in a series mismatch, I'll give the home team a puncher's chance to win a game on emotion, but this one should go no more than five as the Cavs get ready for the start of the real playoffs. Focus, health, and a bounce or two will lead to a sweep. If the Cavs go six, they underachieved. Bring on Boston or Orlando and let's get this party started! After all, *"our economy is based on LeBron James."*

Brian McPeek

Cavs in 5

The Atlanta Hawks will present the Cavaliers a more difficult challenge than did the Detroit Pistons. Then again, a Huffers & Puffers team at the local YMCA would also present the Cavs more problems than did the Pistons.

The Hawks are young and athletic and have some legitimate threats in Joe Johnson , Josh Smith and Mike Bibby , but they are also out of the kiddie pool and into the deep end for the first time with this group. They're prone to the occasional blow-up and they can lose focus, especially on the road.

Nine days
off will not dull the focus and the intensity of the Cavaliers. The Cavs win this series 4-1.

Tony Lastoria

Cavs in 6

After dispatching of the rapidly declining Detroit Pistons in a four game sweep what feels like a month ago, the Cavaliers title run officially kicks into gear with the very dangerous Atlanta Hawks coming to town. Say what you will about the Hawks, but this is a team that should not be taken lightly and one that will come into this series looking to take up the upset bid.

The Hawks are very athletic, a solid front court, and most importantly have a star in Joe Johnson as well as some nice complementary pieces to match up with the Cavaliers. They also have proved themselves in the playoffs the last two years, taking Boston to sevens games in their playoff series last year before losing and then beating Miami in seven games this year. They also should come into the series tip on Tuesday night with a lot of momentum and running on all cylinders, whereas the Cavaliers could come out sort of groggy from their 9-10 day layoff and celebrating LeBron Jame's MVP Award on Monday.

That all said, the Cavaliers will still win this series, though it will be much closer than some think. Game 1 is a dangerous setup considering the amount of time the Cavaliers have been off and all the time spent the past week on award ceremonies for the team, where it may take them a half of basketball to get their bearings straight. In the end, this Cavaliers team is just more talented and too deep to drop this series unless they have a serious injury to one of their key players or the Hawks are just unconscious shooting the ball from the perimeter. The Cavs split at home, then go to Atlanta and split there to setup a big Game 5

matchup where LeBron dazzles again when the stage is big leading the Cavaliers to the win in Game 5 and then they close the Hawks out at their place in Game Six.