Well, so much for rust. After a nine day layoff, round two of the NBA Playoffs FINALLY started last night, and the Cavaliers picked right back up where they left off, dominating the second half en route to a 99-72 blowout win over the Hawks in game one last night at The Q. The building was rocking, as King James was awarded his MVP trophy before the game, and LeBron came out of the gates quick, scoring 22 first half points. Nick Allburn recaps last nights win.

Due to a combination of their dominance of the Pistons and the duration of the Miami/Atlanta series, the Cavs hadn't played a game since the second day of the NFL Draft. The players and fans were clearly anxious for round two to begin. But with the exceptions of the MVP ceremony at the start of game and the extraordinary and palpable energy level at The Q, this felt more like a regular season game than a playoff game.

After the Hawks led for much of the first quarter, the Cavs took the lead late in the first quarter and never lost it. The Cavaliers really stretched out their lead in the third quarter, and the final period was smooth sailing.

Before we get too excited, it should at least be noted that the Cavs were playing at home and were well-rested, whereas the Hawks finished off the Heat just two days earlier. But even with that in mind, it's tough to find fault with much of what the Cavaliers did.

It's a scary thought that the Cavs won by 27, and weren't even hitting on all cylinders for several stretches during the game. The Hawks have their work cut out for them if they want to make this a series.

Final: Cleveland 99, Atlanta 72

Box score

Quick Hits

It's good to be the King.

LeBron James cleaned up in the MVP voting, hauling in 109 of 121 first place votes, and 1,172 total points (Kobe Bryant, last year's MVP, was second with 698 points). As was well-publicized, James went back to St. Vincent-St. Mary High School in Akron to accept the award. We say it all the time, but it's still easy to take for granted how grounded, loyal, and humble James is; he gave his family, friends, and teammates more credit for the MVP award than himself.

On the court tonight, James set the tone with a dunk on the first possession after being freed by a Delonte West pick. LBJ dropped 22 in the first half and finished with 34. James' assist numbers were down (only 3), but he grabbed 10 boards and racked up 4 steals.

LeBron came out of the gate with great focus and such a scoring emphasis that it felt like he was going to deliver a signature playoff performance. That never really came to fruition, as the Cavs opened a big lead in the second half and James only played 34 minutes. It would have been nice to see LeBron go for 50 points, but we still have plenty of playoff games left for something like that to go down, and it's good that LeBron got some solid rest in the fourth quarter again.

Turning(over) point.

You might notice in the box score that the Cavs didn't shoot that much

better than the Hawks (.468 and .438, respectively), and didn't take that many more trips to the free throw line. The two keys to the Cavs' blowout win were turnovers (17 to 7) and offensive rebounds (15 to 6).

There was some lousy ball handling and plenty of errant passes in this game, but fortunately the Cavs were the beneficiaries of the Hawks' mistakes more often than the opposite. Anderson Varejao also deserves extra points for being very active around the rim, and although he struggled to make baskets, he corralled five offensive rebounds.

Speaking of Varejao...

Zydrunas Ilgauskas struggled from the field, also. Ilgauskas and Varejao combined for just 11 points (4-of-17). Varejao is no great shakes offensively, but he couldn't even get his normal tips and layups to fall, and Ilgauskas' trademarked jumper was off the mark. Fortunately for the Cavs, the back court picked up the slack.

LeBron James' 34 points were matched by another 34 from Mo Williams and Delonte West, and the starting guards were able to cover the mistakes of the struggling bigs. West also quietly added nine assists. It's hard to believe that not too long ago, the starting back court was a combination of Larry Hughes, Daniel Gibson, and Sasha Pavlovic.

Hawkish strategy.

It was clear from the word "go" that the Hawks were hoping to run on the Cavs. It's not a bad concept; Zydrunas Ilgauskas isn't exactly fleet of foot, and although Anderson Varejao isn't slow, he crashes the offensive boards so frequently that you might be able to

catch him out of position for a fast break.

Unfortunately for Atlanta, they didn't do a very good job executing their strategy, and they squandered several opportunities for easy points with careless (and often unforced) errors.

The real threats?

Entering the series, the two Hawks who scared me the most were Al Horford and Joe Johnson. Horford appeared to be dangerous because athletic bigs can take advantage of the Cavs' front court (and I maintain that the weakness of that defense is on the interior). Johnson, well, he just always seems to go off against the Cavaliers. Horford and Johnson didn't do much damage in game one, and the pair posted just 4 and 11 points, respectively.

The two guys who did most of the damage for Atlanta were Mike Bibby and Josh Smith. Bibby abused the Miami Heat in round one, and he poured in 19 while shooting an impressive 5-of-7 from deep. Josh Smith was getting to the rim way too easily early, and he finished with 22.

Smith is a genetic lottery winner like LeBron James (although to a slightly lesser degree), and he can create his own shot. Also like James, you want to defend Smith by forcing him to use his jumper, which is below average. It will be interesting to see how Mike Brown and the Cavs adjust to account for Bibby and Smith in game two.

Up Next: 5/7, Game 2, Quicken Loans Arena, 8:00

This is a pivotal game in the series. If the Cavs come out and take care

of business, they have a good chance of making this a short series. However, if they lose the second game at home, they cede home court to the Hawks and considering that the Hawks were 31-10 at home this year, the series might turn into a dogfight.