The Cavs did get pushed a bit and did get tested during Game 3. Atlanta overcame some large Cavalier leads and actually took a couple leads of their own throughout the night. That qualifies as big news in this series as the Hawks hadn't led in either of the first two games at any point later than five minutes into the first quarter. The end result was still another double-digit blowout playoff win though. The Cavs won 97-82, and Brian McPeek tells us about it.

The Cleveland Cavaliers were tested occasionally Saturday night by the Atlanta Hawks. The end result was still another double-digit blowout playoff win.

If nothing else, you have to credit the Hawks for, at the very least, not being the disinterested and passive Detroit Pistons. The Hawks were engaged at various times throughout the night, played with some pride and with some passion, but still wore a 97-82 beating for their effort.

The Cavs did get pushed a bit and did get tested during Game 3. Atlanta overcame some large Cavalier leads and actually took a couple leads of their own throughout the night. That qualifies as big news in this series as the Hawks hadn't led in either of the first two games at any point later than five minutes into the first quarter.

But the Hawks do not have the backcourt depth that he Cavs do. They don't have the frontcourt depth that the Cavs have. And they do not have the NBA Most Valuable Player to take over when it's called for. LeBron James answered nearly every single Hawks run with extended minutes of near-perfect basketball on his way to 47 points, 12 rebounds and eight assists on the night. LBJ went to the rim at will, he hit 12-16 free throws after drawing numerous hits and fouls and he also locked in from behind the arc, shooting 5-10 from three-point land.

Zydrunas Ilgauskas chipped in 14 points and eight rebounds and Delonte West and Mo Williams combined for 23 points and five assists in support of James.

Joe Johnson scored 21 points on a sprained ankle for Atlanta while Josh Smith had 18 points and nearly as many ill-advised shots.

Takeaways

- If you're looking for a statistic that embodies just how aggressively the Cavaliers are playing offensively, look no further than the Game 3 free throw statistics. The Cavaliers made nearly twice as many free throws as the Hawks attempted Saturday night. Cleveland was 21-29 from the stripe while the Hawks were just 7-11. There were a couple of long, scoreless droughts for the Hawks in the fourth quarter where their normally partisan crowd was booing and jeering the shot selection of Josh Smith and the rest of the Hawks who seemed to be willing to settle for contested jumpers rather than venture into the paint for a higher percentage attempt. Having the life drained out of you in a ‘must-win' game will have that effect on a club.

- You can't help but look at nearly every Cavaliers playoff game right now as a continuing parade to a coronation as opposed to a fiercely contested basketball game. Such is the dominance this Cavaliers team has displayed throughout the playoffs thus far. Seven games, seven

double-digit victories, barely a nervous moment.

Sooner or later the opposition will stiffen and offer this Cavalier team some adversity to face. That's why it was nice to see the Cavs respond like they did to what little adversity did offer up Saturday night. It wasn't much, but you can only play the cards you're dealt. In a raucous Philips Arena against a team that didn't immediately lie down and play dead like Detroit did, the Cavs responded with maturity, patience and intensity to the Hawks mini-challenge.

Having that guy in the #23 jersey truly doesn't hurt either.

- Something for the record books:

The Cavs 7th straight double-digit playoff victory breaks the NBA record previously held by the Indiana Pacers who ran off six straight 10+ point wins in 2004.

That has to especially deflating to the Hawks who played easily their best game of the series and were doing so on their home court.

Before we start planning the parade based on that statistic, understand that the Pacers did not win a title that season.

Maybe the Hawks will take solace in the fact they kept the final deficit under 20 points. After all, Cleveland had won their last three playoff games by at least that margin.

- If you can't build playoff mettle forged in close, competitive games the next best thing is to get through the series quickly and in good health. The Cavs have a chance to grab some more important rest and relaxation if they can take care of business Monday night in Atlanta when Game 4 tips off. You don't let off the accelerator now. Not when the opponent is talking to themselves and looks to be mortally wounded. The Hawks are ready to lie down and go to sleep and the Cavaliers can send them off into the sunset if they come out with the same focus and intensity they've displayed thus far. And you get the feeling this team is ready to put this series in the books and get ready for Boston or Orlando in the Eastern Conference Finals.

They've Got Next

Tip-off for Monday night's Game 4 in Philips arena is set for 7pm on TNT. Before that one jumps you can do a little ECF scouting by watching the Celtics and Magic go at it Sunday evening at 8pm on TNT. Orlando is up 2-1 on Boston as they head into their Game 4 in the Magic Kingdom.