The Cavaliers are on life-support in this Eastern Conference Final, there's no way around it. Roughly 96 percent of teams that have taken three-games-to-one leads in a best-of-seven NBA Playoff series have gone on to win. Only eight teams- four percent- have come back from a 3-1 deficit to win. These are long, long odds. Still, there is basis for thinking the Cavaliers can defy those odds. It's difficult to overcome a 3-1 deficit, but not impossible. Jesse profiles the eight teams that have done it and tells us why the Cavs can become the ninth.

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Still, there is basis for thinking the Cavaliers can defy those odds. It's difficult to overcome a 3-1 deficit, but not impossible. The four percent are out there. Let's take a look at the eight series in which teams bounced back from 3-1 down to win, just to see if there are any trends to hang our hats on, as the Cavaliers gear up to pull off a near-miracle.

1968 Eastern Division Finals: Boston (54-28) 4, Philadelphia (62-20) 3

Story: Philadelphia had snapped Boston's string of eight straight titles the previous year and was one win away from beating the Celtics in the postseason for the second consecutive year. They never got that win. Boston won the last three games of the series, including two in the Spectrum, and completed their rally with a 100-96 Game Seven triumph. The 76ers were done in by a late-series shooting slump and an injury to Billy Cunningham that knocked the star sixth man

out of action for the finale.

Fun Fact: Cunningham would go on to coach the 76ers team that again blew a 3-1 lead against Boston, this time in the 1981 Eastern Conference Finals.

1970 Western Division Semifinals: Los Angeles (46-36) 4, Phoenix (39-43) 3

Story: The Suns were only a second-year expansion team, but at first they looked like seasoned postseason veterans against the two-time defending West Champion Lakers, who were still adjusting to Wilt Chamberlain's return to the lineup after missing most of the season with a knee injury. With Connie Hawkins and Paul Silas flustering Chamberlain, the young Suns drove to three straight wins after a Game One loss. Then Wilt finally got comfortable, and the roof caved in on Phoenix. The great center poured in 36 points in Game Five, swatted away 12 shots in Game Six, and put together a monster 30-point, 27-rebound, six-block effort in L.A.'s 129-94 Game Seven thrashing.

Fun Fact: 36 years later, the Suns would turn the tables on L.A., roaring back from a 3-1 deficit to topple the Lakers in seven.

1979 Eastern Conference Finals: Washington (52-30) 4, San Antonio (48-34) 3

Story: The highest scoring team in the NBA, San Antonio crushed the defending-champion Bullets 118-97 in Game One and moved to their 3-1 lead with back-to-back victories in Hemisfair Arena. But Washington proved impossible for the Spurs to finish off. The Bullets squeezed out a four-point victory in Game

Five, stole Game Six in Texas, and with Bobby Dandridge hitting one clutch shot after another, overcame a ten-point fourth-quarter deficit (and 42 points from George Gervin) to win Game Seven at the Capitol Centre, 107-105. The Spurs would have to wait another twenty years to finally reach the Finals, this time as a member of the Western Conference.

Fun Fact: San Antonio nearly blew a 3-1 lead in the previous round, spotting Philadelphia victories in Games Five and Six before narrowly subduing the 76ers in the finale, 111-108.

1981 Eastern Conference Finals: Boston (62-20) 4, Philadelphia (62-20) 3

Story: Second-seeded Philadelphia stole Game One in the Garden, moved ahead 3-1 with their tenth and eleventh consecutive wins over the Celtics at the Spectrum, and led Game Five by six with 1:30 to play. But Boston somehow came back to win that game, overcame a 17-point deficit to win Game Six, then completed the comeback on the parquet with a heart-stopping 91-90 Game Seven victory. The 76ers arguably had better personnel, but their poor outside shooting and lack of a consistent half-court offense doomed them time and again down the stretch against a Boston team that made every play it had to make.

Fun Fact: The teams met the following year in the East Finals (for the third straight time) and again the Celtics bounced back from a 3-1 deficit to force a Game Seven in the Garden. This time however, despite being counted out by everyone up to and including their owner Harold Katz, the 76ers trounced the Celtics 120-106 to win the series.

1995 Western Conference Semifinals: Houston (47-35) 4, Phoenix (59-23) 3

Story: The Rockets looked to be in an impossible situation after falling behind 3-1 to the Suns: after all, they had to win twice in Phoenix in order to take the series. But they took Game Five in overtime, rocked the Suns in Game Six, then completed the comeback in America West Arena with a 114-110 Game Seven win, a victory punctuated by Mario Elie's "kiss-of-death" three-pointer with seven seconds remaining. Houston went on to win its second consecutive NBA Championship.

Fun Fact: The previous season against Phoenix in the same round, the Rockets lost the first two games at home, but came back to win the series in seven.

1997 Eastern Conference Semifinals: Miami (61-21) 4, New York (57-25) 3

Story: The first of four consecutive postseason meetings between the East Coast rivals, this one turned on a bench-clearing brawl late in Miami's 96-81 Game Five victory. Three Knicks were given a one-game suspension for leaving the bench during the fight, including Allen Houston and Patrick Ewing. Miami beat the short-handed Knicks in Game Six at Madison Square Garden and finished them off with a 101-90 Game Seven victory in South Florida.

Fun Fact: New York defeated the Heat in the postseason the next three years, winning the decisive game in Miami each time.

2003 Eastern Conference First Round: Detroit (50-32) 4, Orlando (42-40) 3

Story: After four games and three victories , it looked as if the Magic were going to be the third eighth seed to topple a top seed in the first round. Orlando's Tracy

McGrady thought as much, ruminating after Game Four on how great it would be to finally reach the second round. Only he would never find out. Detroit turned the tables with a crushing 98-67 Game Five victory and hammered the Magic by fifteen points in Games Six and Seven, putting Orlando's (and McGrady's) second-round dreams to sleep. The Pistons would go on to the first of six straight appearances in the Eastern Conference Finals, while the Magic would collapse to 61 losses the following season, and the rebuild that brings them to the brink of the Finals today.

Fun Fact: Tracy McGrady still hasn't reached the second round as an active player- not that you didn't know that already.

2006 Western Conference First Round: Phoenix (54-28) 4, L.A. Lakers (45-37) 3

Story: A one-man band if there ever was, the Kobe-centric Lakers were given little chance to defeat the explosive Suns. But L.A. jumped out to a 3-1 lead, with Kobe stunning Phoenix in Game Four with the game-tying lay-up in regulation and the game-winning jumper in overtime, the latter at the buzzer. The stage looked set for a "Battle of Los Angeles" in the second round between the Clippers and the Lakers. But the Suns flipped the script. They stayed alive in Game Five with a 114-97 win, won Game Six in overtime (despite fifty points from Kobe) and with Bryant basically quitting on his teammates in the second half, finished off the Lakers with a 121-90 Game Seven rout.

Fun Fact: This was the second time the Suns overcame a two-game deficit to beat the Lakers in the Playoffs. Phoenix lost the first two games at home to L.A. in the first round in 1993, than swept the final three games of the best-of-five to take the series.

Some observations:

- Five of the eight aforementioned series were between evenly matched opponents, while three (L.A.-Phoenix in 1970 and 2006; Detroit-Orlando in 2003) featured a clear favorite coming back to beat a clear underdog. No clear underdog has ever overcome a 3-1 deficit to defeat a clear favorite.

- Six of the eight teams that came back from 3-1 down enjoyed home-court advantage with the critical Game Seven in their building. Only two- the 1968 Celtics and the '95 Rockets- managed to come back despite not having home-court. Both of these teams had superb pedigrees: the Celtics still had the core that had dominated the league like no team before or since, while the Rockets were the defending NBA Champions and had defeated Phoenix in the Playoffs the previous year.

- Just about every one of these series involved a certain amount of regression to the mean. Battles between evenly matched opponents rarely produce one-sided results, even if one team dominates the early stages. Teams like the '68 Celtics, '79 Bullets, and '81 Celtics were too good and too close to the level of their opponents to get trampled in short order. They were almost bound to come back. In a sense, the comebacks weren't as much of an oddity as the fact that these teams fell behind 3-1 in the first place. In the end, none of these series could be classified as an upset.

So...

All is not lost quite yet. The Cavaliers have some serious match-up issues in this series, issues that are augmented by the fact that Orlando is playing out of its mind right now. The Magic are flying high, playing with a boatload of house money

against a team they have owned for the better part of three years. But let's not lose sight of the fact that two of Orlando's three wins could have gone either way. The Magic hit 17 three-pointers in Game Four, shot 50 percent, were playing at home, and still needed overtime to win. They're winning this series right now, and deservedly so. They've made all the plays they've had to make. But like the '79 Spurs, the '81 Sixers and the '95 Suns, their margin for error isn't all that great.

All it takes is a Cavaliers victory in Game Five to turn the tide of this series. And just winning Game Five, while obviously necessary, won't be enough. I'm not talking about last-second heaves or eleventh-hour rallies. Cleveland needs to dominate, not just win. A decisive victory might plant the seed of doubt in the mind of Orlando, might make them realize that the Cavaliers can beat them on the basis of something other than sheer luck. It would turn Game Six into a must-win for the Magic, because they don't want to have to come back to Cleveland for Game Seven.

All series Orlando has played free and easy. They haven't been under pressure. Win Game Five impressively, and for the first time the pressure- pressure to finish off the Cavaliers- would begin to mount on the Magic. Maybe then the shots will become a little bit rushed, the ball movement would become a little bit hesitant, and the exhortations of Stan Van Jeremy would become a little bit shrill. Is there a lot of blind hope in this scenario? Absolutely. But it's hope with a precedent. It's been done before. It can be done again.

A final plea to all of you who will be in the Q for Game Five: Now is not the time to indulge in Cleveland fatalism and angst. Get loud, get crazy, and get behind your team as best you can. The Cavaliers need your voice and need your support if they're going to dig themselves out of this hole, starting Thursday. I know it's easy, given the circumstances, given our history, to lose hope. But there's no sense in carrying that attitude through the turnstiles. It won't do us any good. Let's raise our voices like there is no tomorrow. Because there very well might not be.