Mike Brown's work-in-progress traveled north of the border a night after losing to the Celtics in the season opener and walked right into the lion's den. The Toronto Raptors, behind Andrea Bargnani's 28 points, thumped the Cavaliers 101-91 Wednesday night to further erode the self-esteem of a staggered Cleveland fan base. The Cavs, a year after going 66-16, are now 0-2 on the young season. Brian McPeek recaps last night's loss.

Well, that's not the start to the 2009-2010 season the Cavs or their fans were hoping for.

With the Indians in the clubhouse after not coming close to making the cut and the Browns embarrassing Northeast Ohio every weekend there was a desperate longing for this Cavaliers season to kick off so people could cheer on a winner and have something to feel good about.

Might be time to wonder if anyone invited the Cavs to the party.

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The Raptors ran the Cavs ragged for the better part of the night. Any missed Cavalier shot (and there were plenty) and any Cavalier turnover (and there were plenty) resulted in a jailbreak toward the Toronto rim and usually ended up in points for the Raptors. That's what you do to a tired team with immobile post players playing the second night of a back-to-back set and the Raptors executed the plan to near perfection.

The Cavs did make a spirited 3rd quarter run to erase an 18-point halftime lead but they were gassed afterward. Toronto pushed the lead back out into double digits and limped the boat to the dock to win their season opener.

LeBron James had the quietest triple double of his career with 23 points, 11 rebounds and 12 assists but only Shaquille O'Neal shot 50% on the night for the Cavs and he went 3-9 after knocking down his first three attempts of the game. As a team the Cavs shot 34% and turned the ball over 14 times on the night. Mo Williams scored 16 while O'Neal, Anthony Parker and Daniel Gibson added 12 points each for the 0-2 Cavaliers.

Chris Bosh backed up Bargnani nicely with 21 points and 16 boards for the Raptors.

Takeaways

- If nothing else the first two games did reveal a few things about this

Cavaliers club. Namely that they need to make good use of any practice time and also that there's a long way to go before these guys look like a cohesive team.

There are a number of new pieces and parts looking to figure out their roles and learn their new running partners. The offense looks unsettled and the defense has been left scrambling toward open shooters all too often. It's spooky actually. The Celtics and the Raptors made the Cavaliers look a lot like that team that couldn't find a defensive answer in the Eastern Conference finals last June.

Maybe it's because Hedo Turkoglu just seems to play against the Cavs every night of the season.

The positive in that is that it truly does look to be more of a familiarity issue than an athleticism issue. Case in point: Turkoglu had a pedestrian night after he gave the Cavaliers fits in the playoffs last year. He was 3-7 from the field. Part of that is the Raptors don't look for Turkoglu to start their offense nearly as much as Orlando did but part of it is he also found the going tougher against Jamario Moon, Anthony Parker and the taller Cavalier wing defenders than he did against the size-challenged Delonte West last season.

- Anthony Parker is going to be a really nice addition to this team when he learns everyone's names much less their tendencies. The guy is a basketball player. He's constantly moving and cutting and he's doing while actually looking for the ball. He was paid off a few times against the Raptors on cuts to the rim and that will only occur more and more when the Cavs start to come together.

- The schedule maker did the Cavaliers no favors this October.

Back-to-backs against the Celtics and the Raptors is a rough go for anyone. It's even worse for a team unfamiliar with each other. Where is the back-to-back with the Grizzlies and the Bobcats when you need to kick off a season?

- Make no mistake about it; the struggles in the first two games aren't all just the schedule and the general lack of familiarity between the Cavaliers on the court. There are a few worrisome tendencies that still exist from last year and as well as a couple new ones. Namely, the Cavs need to get production from Daniel Gibson if he's going to see the floor, Anderson Varejao still thinks he can shoot and Mo Williams is still disappearing for stretches of important time. Add in the fact that O'Neal looks like he ate a Chrysler and Delonte West is still unavailable and suddenly a team that improved over the summer is vulnerable.

- I do have to laugh at the people questioning the moves made by Danny Ferry over the summer though. Suddenly after a rough start against a couple of pretty good teams there's complaining that Ferry sat on his ass and took the easy way out.

Stop it.

He turned Sasha Pavlovic and the ashes of Ben Wallace and Wally Szczerbiak into Parker, Jamario Moon and Shaq. If you don't think that's a significant improvement then you should probably just concentrate on the NFL mock draft season that began here in Cleveland back in September.

Give it some time. This team is going to look completely different, regardless of the quality of the opponent, 15-25 games down the road.

And they'll continue to get better from there as the season progresses.

Getting Delonte right and back in the fold will help even more. He brings too much to the table to not bolster the strength of whatever unit he's running with.

Relax. Let it happen.

They Got Next

It's not the Grizzlies and Bobcats but it may as well be. Friday night the Cavaliers head to Minneapolis to face the Timberwolves in an 8pm tip (FSNOhio) and then they get the Bobcats Saturday night at 730pm at ‘The Q' (FSNOhio).