There's your glimpse of the future Cavalier fans. It's nowhere near where it needs to be yet but Tuesday night gave you a look at what this basketball team can and needs to do to win difficult games and demoralize opponents. And my God, it was fun to watch. The Cavaliers, down by 18 points to the Washington Wizards after just 15 minutes of play, turned to the Big Diesel down low and rode Shaquille O'Neal for the next 33 minutes, outscoring the Wizards 83-53 the rest of the way. Brian McPeek recaps the Cavs 102-90 win.

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Truth be told, all the Cavalier big men attacked the basket and Washington had no answer. Wizard big men Brendan Haywood, Fabricio Oberto, JaVale McGee just couldn't stand up to the punishment that O'Neal and the Cavs inflicted on them. Haywood and McGee were in foul trouble not long after the Cavs decided to feed the beast underneath and Oberto was simply not a factor at any time.

And just when the Wizards started collapsing down low to defend the rim Daniel Gibson decided to show up and knock down some shots. Gibson took advantage of some wide open looks that the Wizards were forced to give up and hit his first four triple tries. Mo Williams also got in on the act, hitting three of four three-point shots on the night.

That LeBron James fellow doesn't need a ton of space to do what he does. LBJ, as usual, led the Cavaliers in scoring (27) and assists (6) while also hauling down eight rebounds. Anderson Varejao was about the only Cavalier who actually responded to the sound of the horn that signals the start of the game. AV went for a double-double with ten points and ten rebounds and pretty much kept the Cavs in the game early on.

Gilbert Arenas and Caron Butler each scored 22 points to lead the Wizards. The problem for those boys was they had to hoist 36 shots to total those 44 points (both Butler and Arenas were 7-18 from the floor).

The Cavs have won three straight after dropping their first two games of the season and inducing a near panic in the empty streets of Cleveland.

Takeaways

- I am not Red Auerbach, John Wooden nor even Don Delaney when it comes to basketball strategy. But I can see a physical mismatch when it's sitting in front of me. And it was clearly sitting in front of me on

Tuesday night. Brendan Haywood is a playground bully. He's a bad man when he's matched up against a center like Zydrunas Ilgauskas who relies more on hitting open jumpers and finesse than on playing a physical, low post game.

But Shaquille O'Neal is an entirely different puzzle.

And Brendan Haywood was as quiet as a church mouse while being used and abused by Shaq, right up to the moment Haywood fouled out of the ball game.

The Cavs utilized O'Neal perfectly Tuesday night. The big man played 29 effective minutes and was a dominant force. He backed down the lighter Haywood and Oberto at will, scored when the opportunity presented itself and passed out of the post to open cutters. He even knocked down 7 of the 10 free throws he attempted when the Wizards figured out they had no chance to stop him legally. That approach helped whittle that 18-point Wizard lead down to just four points at the half and the writing was on the wall: the Wizards were in for a long second half.

It was a lesson in fundamental basketball. The Wizards learned it Tuesday night. But more promising for the Cavaliers is that ***they*** learned it on Tuesday night.

- I'm not a Daniel Gibson guy.

Yes, I appreciate the 2007 ECF as much as anyone. The kid was magical. But since then all he's done is frustrate the living hell out of me. Against 95% of the PGs in the league he's a defensive liability

(thankfully Gilbert Arenas fits in that 5%). He can't handle the ball or actually play the PG position (which is often a problem for a PG) and for the last year and a half his one skill has been absent more often than it's been present.

But on Tuesday night the kid again provided an energetic jolt and some much needed offense.

I'm willing to give Gibson that same 20 game window that I'm giving the team in general to show me some chops. He was hurt last year and never did find a groove. But a one-dimensional player like Gibson has to provide that one dimension more often than he doesn't to have any value to this club.

On Tuesday he did that. He's going to have a lot of open looks with Shaq commanding a double team down low and LeBron commanding a double team coming out of the locker room.

Knock down the open looks Daniel. It'll make you a lot of money and it'll make the rest of us a lot more willing to overlook the deficiencies in your hair style....err...game.

- Delonte West does not live in my neighborhood. That guy can ride motorized tricycles while strapped to the teeth with guns, ammunition and a marine platoon's allotment of K-Bar knives as far as I'm concerned. Because on the court that man is THE man.

Insensitive? Short sighted? Selfish on my part? Maybe so. But whether you want to admit it or not, West is critical to the success of this team. The energy the Cavs played with when West was in the game was palpable. And after that first quarter energy was severely lacking.

I heart Delonte West. Stay right young man.

- Does anyone else enjoy watching the Cavs beat the Wizards as much as I do? Washington is just unlikable. I don't know if it's DeShawn Stevenson or Haywood or what, but they just grate on me. I just enjoy the fact the Cavs-Wizards means so much more to them than it does to the Cavs and they usually end up on the wrong side of the scoreboard.

They Got Next

Thursday night the Chicago Bulls visit The ‘Q for an 8pm tip on TNT. Jesse Lamovsky will do the honors here at TCF.