Now that's what we're talking about. It's becoming 2008-09 all over again. The Cavs ran the table last week, winning all three of their games. They've won four in a row, seven of their past eight, and are back on top of the Central Division. The week included a HUGE 102-93 win at Orlando, exorcising some demons from last season. Mo Williams had a big stretch for the Cavs. And J.J. Hickson served up a heaping helping of crow to our own John Hnat, who was critical of J.J.'s play in last Tuesday's piece.

THE SUMMARY:

Now that's what we're talking about.

It's becoming 2008-09 (Pre-Eastern Conference Upset) all over again. The Cavs ran the table last week, winning all three of their games.

They've won four in a row, seven of their past eight, and are back on top of the Central Division.

The week started with a bit of a surprise: a 102-93 victory at Orlando. The main reason for that win? Mo Williams showed up.
His 28 points (on 12-of-20 shooting) backed up LeBron James and his 36 points nicely.

The week continued with another small surprise: on the second night of a road back-to-back, the Cavs again prevailed, this time a 111-104 win at Miami.

And then the week ended with perhaps the biggest surprise: the Cavs were actually losing in the final minute at home against a Deron Williams-less Jazz squad.

But having The Best Player On The Planet allows you some leeway, and James responded by scoring the Cavs' final eight points, including a three-point play to give the Cavs the lead for good with 28 seconds remaining.

That week leaves the Cavs with a 7-3 record, and as we'll see later, a very favorable schedule for another "that's what we're talking about" week.

THE GOOD:

Would You Like Your Crow Rare, Medium Rare, Or Well Done: Last time , I wrote that J.J. Hickson had not earned his promotion into the starting lineup.

I also wondered on this site's message boards whether Hickson would ever get it, or if he were doomed to be another reason why we should never expect the #19 pick in a draft to be an impact player.

(No, I don't have a link.

I'd like to say that it is because "if you miss one day of the message boards, you miss a lot," and that I am encouraging you to visit the boards.

Really, though, I couldn't find it, despite upwards of
three seconds
spent searching for it.)

J.J. spent last week making me look like an ass.

Last Thursday against Miami, Hickson scored 18 points, tying his career high. That personal best lasted about 48 hours; he scored 20 against the Jazz on Saturday.

Oh, he also was all over the floor, rotating properly on defense, and only once (by my count) did he Braylon a pass.

A play early in the second half of the Utah game illustrates just how much J.J. has developed. He received a pass and drove to the hoop.

A Utah defender stepped up, positioning himself between J.J. and the basket.

Last year - hell, two weeks ago - J.J. continues barreling to the hoop, smacks into the Utah guy, and it's an offensive foul.

Last week ... he passed to a wide-open Zydrunas Ilgauskas under the basket for an easy basket.

The Cavs really need another young player to step up besides LeBron. I'm not ready to say that J.J. is that guy yet.

I am ready to say that after last week, he's a lot closer to being that guy.

Without him, the Cavs slip and fall to Utah, and they probably don't get by Miami either.

The First Rule Of The Cavs: I would like to propose **The Mo Williams Principle**, which is this: *As goes Mo, so go the Cavs*
.

Obviously, Mo is not the most important player on the team; but he is clearly right behind LeBron.

He gives the Cavs their other legitimate scoring option, a guy who can light it up for 30 (or more) when his shot is falling.

Until last week, Mo had been kind of lackluster. Against Orlando, we saw the Mo that we wished we had seen against Orlando last May:

aggressively driving to the hoop, hitting those little floating shots from the lane, and firing away from three-point range.

Many Cavs fans wring their hands over the lack of a second star behind LeBron. He's already here - it's Mo.

No, he is not going to play Pippen to LeBron's Jordan; but the whole point is that he is the one other Cavalier who can make his own shots and carry the team for stretches.

(Besides, circumstances have a way of creating stars.

Scottie Pippen wasn't
Scottie
Pippen until the Bulls had won a couple of rings.

If and when the Cavs get their trophy, the collective view of Mo will probably shift quite a bit, even though he has been the same player all along.)

When Mo is on, the Cavs are damn near unbeatable.

Look! The Bench *Isn't* Nailed To His Ass!: Jamario Moon spent the first couple of weeks of the season auditioning for **The Jawad Williams All-Stars**
, that crew who spends their time at the end of the bench, just hoping that it will be a 30 point blowout in the fourth quarter so that they can
finally
get into a game.

Moon's position within
TJWAW
was puzzling - the Cavs pursued him pretty heavily during the free agent season, and you typically don't do that to a player just so you have another guy who can wave towels and pat teammates on the rear going into a time out.

This past week, Moon saw significant playing time in all three games (including a season-high 30 minutes against Miami), and the Cavs won all three. Coincidence? Perhaps. Jamario will never be a star - there's a reason he bounced around the basketball world for years before finally landing in the NBA a couple of seasons ago - but he does do a few things very well (hound opposing players on defense, hit the occasional three-pointer), and those happen to be strengths that the Cavs can use.

(Besides, I like seeing somebody other than LeBron soar above the rim on occasion.)

Plus, more Jamario means less of ... wait, let's give it its own heading:

Things We Saw Very Little Of This Week: Ilgauskas and Shaquille O'Neal playing side-by-side. Yes, the idea of two seven-footers on the floor at the same time has some appeal; and yes, it makes sense in very small doses or when the matchup dictates it (like the Orlando game, when the Magic played giants Dwight Howard and Marcin Gortat). But both of them are so slow ... let's just say that continents drift faster.

Actually, I praise Coach Mike Brown for experimenting so much with his personnel. The Cavs' roster has a lot of new parts - Shaq, Moon, Anthony Parker - and it's up to Brown to determine how those guys can play together.

In all honesty, if that experimentation means losing a couple of early season games to the Torontos and Chicagos of the league (not to disparage either of those teams, but ...well, I guess I just did, so there you have it), that's fine.

He's figuring out what works and what doesn't, and that's what we as fans should want to see three weeks into a new season.

Welcome To The Association: Cavs' second-round pick Danny Green made his NBA debut against the Heat. Yes, it was a mere 31 seconds of playing time; and yes, the only reason he was out there was because half the Cavs' team was in foul trouble; but still, breaking the seal on your NBA career gets you into the good side of the ledger.

THE BAD:

Well, Maybe Not A *Complete* Ass: While Hickson did have the best week of his career thus far (and that statement actually means something, unlike "Coby Karl had the best week of his career thus far"), he still has parts of his game to work on.

Three of them that come to mind are rebounding, rebounding, and rebounding.

J.J. pulled down a total of 14 rebounds last week.

For a starting power forward in the Association, less than five boards a game won't cut it.

And Not Everything I Wrote Last Week Was Wrong: Last week, I singled out the Cavs' rebounding as a problem area. This week, I am again singling out the Cavs' rebounding as a problem area.

They were outrebounded by the Heat (barely) and Jazz (significantly), and that's a tough way to win games.

(That last paragraph on Hickson just flows right into this one, doesn't it?)

4-19 Is The Answer: Now let's see if you can guess the question:

1. What career coaching record can Eric Mangini only hope to have when he is fired as the Browns' coach?
2. What did Zydrunas Ilgauskas shoot from the field this past week?

Granted, either question works here. But you already know that B is the correct answer.

We know that Ilgauskas is not the player he once was. We know that he's not going to bang opponent big men under the hoop for 40 minutes a night.

We know that his feet contain enough hardware to make it a very, very bad idea to get behind him in line at the airport security gate.

But if he is going to be a glorified shooting guard at this point (and he is; he is taking more 20-foot jumpers than ever before), he needs to *make* a fair number of his shots in order to be useful.

RANDOM THOUGHT WHILE WATCHING THE BROWNS GAME:

Out of all the rules in the NFL rulebook, the "Tom Brady Rule" - the new NFL rule that says that a defender who is on the ground cannot hit the quarterback below the knees - is approximately the dumbest.

If you don't want football to be a violent game, then make it two-hand touch already, and let's move on.

THE DANIEL GIBSON WATCH:

In case you were wondering, Gibson took 13 shots from the field last week. Ten of them were from three-point range.

THE PLAY OF THE WEEK:

We're not homers here. (OK, *complete* homers.) If the Cavs are playing awful basketball, this column will say they're playing awful basketball.

If their offense has become LeBron And Four Guys Waiting For A Bus, I'll point it out.

And when the play of the week is made *against* the Cavs rather than *by* the Cavs, it'll still make it into this space. That brings us to Dwyane Wade posterizing Anderson Varejao in the first quarter of the Cavs-Heat game.

(Anderson doesn't mind.

The Cavs won the game.

It's the
White Men Can't Jump
question:

would you rather lose and look good, or win and look bad?)

BOLD PREDICTION TIME:

O'Neal missed the Utah game with what was described as a "shoulder strain." (The Cavs never bothered to mention which shoulder, incidentally.)

He's listed as doubtful for tonight's game against the Warriors.

I will go out on a limb and say that Shaquille's shoulder (or his back, or his knees, or the hangnail on his left pinky finger) will have a tendency to flare up against the league's lesser lights. In other words, if the Cavs were playing the Lakers tonight, Shaq would be in uniform and on the floor.

Frankly, I miss the days of the phantom injury. Presently, the NBA allows teams to carry rosters of 15 players, and they may activate any 12 of those players for a particular game.

It wasn't always that sensible.

In prior seasons, the NBA still allowed an active roster of 12 players, but also allowed teams to carry up to three injured players.

So if a team wanted to carry a young player who wouldn't play much right away but showed promise for the future, he would suddenly come down with "shoulder soreness."

Or a "strained chest muscle."

Or something equally fictitious.

The Cavs were especially good at the "lower back strain."

Gund Arena (that's what they called it back then) must have looked like a casting call for

"The Hunchback of Notre Dame," what with so many players bent over.

WHAT LIES AHEAD:

The dreaded four-games-in-five-nights gauntlet. Golden State comes to Quicken Loans Arena tonight, then the Cavs hop on a plane to the nation's capital to face the Wizards tomorrow evening. Then Friday and Saturday bring games at Indiana and then home against Philadelphia.

Those four teams are 13-22 on the season thus far.

We don't want to be greedy here ... wait, yes we do.

There's a pretty good chance the Cavs will be working on an eight-game winning streak the next time we talk.

Have a good week.