Not a pretty picture. The Cavs put together by far their worst effort of the season, getting outsmarted, out-hustled and out-muscled for the final two-and-a-half quarters. They for all intents and purposes stopped playing around the middle of the second period, as a 17-point lead disintegrated into a 17-point loss in a welter of poor offense, poor defense, and rebounding that went way beyond poor and into the realm of crap-tacular. The result was a 108-91 Washington runaway. Jesse recaps the loss for our readers.

This one leaves kind of a bad taste.

The Cavaliers and the Washington Wizards entered Wednesday night's proceedings at the Verizon Center on markedly different paths, Cleveland at 8-3 and riding a five-game winning streak; Washington at 2-7 and mired in a six-game losing streak. When these two teams get together, though, you can usually throw out the records. Washington seems to approach every game against the Cavaliers as if it's Game Seven of the Finals, and Wednesday night was no exception.

The way the Cavaliers played, the opponent didn't really matter anyway. Cleveland put together by far its worst effort of the season, getting outsmarted, out-hustled and out-muscled for the final two-and-a-half quarters. They for all intents and purposes stopped playing around the middle of the second period, as

a 17-point lead disintegrated into a 17-point loss in a welter of poor offense, poor defense, and rebounding that went way beyond poor and into the realm of crap-tacular. The result was a 108-91 Washington runaway.

Started Out Okay: The early portion of the night's proceedings gave little clue of the disaster that was to become. Moving the ball beautifully on offense, the Cavaliers jumped out to a 32-22 lead at the end of the first period and, with LeBron watching from the bench, upped the advantage to 41-24 with 7:26 remaining in the second. It was at this point that Cleveland licked it, stamped it and mailed it in- and a disturbing trend began to define the game.

Beat Down on the Boards: The Cavaliers went into the game without their two best frontcourt players in Shaquille O'Neal and Anderson Varejao. Washington took advantage of their absences by hammering the offensive boards. Nine of their final twenty points of the first half came via the second chance as the Wizards sliced their 17-point deficit down to a manageable seven at 51-44 by the halftime break. Washington would finish the night with 16 offensive rebounds, part of a 49-35 overall edge on the boards. Not having Shaq or Varejao hurt; so too did shoddy perimeter defense that continually allowed penetration that created put-back opportunities.

Stop That Girl! He may look like a WNBA star with his long hair and ponytail, but Mike Miller was all man Wednesday night. He kick-started the Washington comeback with back-to-back three-pointers after Cleveland had taken that 41-24 lead, and his put-back early in the third period gave the Wizards a 54-53 lead, wrapping up a 30-12 run he'd started. The former Florida Gator and perennial rumored Cavalier trade acquisition finished the night with 17 points, eight rebounds and six assists on 7-of-11 shooting.

Cleveland Boy, Cleveland Killer: There are some guys that, regardless of the circumstance or the time, always seem to kill your team. Earl Boykins, the 5'3" dynamo from Cleveland Central Catholic, is that guy for the Cavaliers. He has always torched Cleveland, who has had trouble with small quick guards

ever since roughly the Miracle of Richfield and he gave them fits again on Wednesday in just his second game for the Wizards. Playing twenty minutes, Lil' Earl carved up the Cavaliers for nine points and three assists, and those numbers don't reflect how foolish he made Mo Williams look at times. Meanwhile, the Cavaliers made only a half-hearted try at exploiting Boykins on the defensive end, where he shouldn't be able to guard anyone.

Speaking of Mo: Six points on 2-of-13 from the field, and oh- he also played non-existent defense. Check that; his defense did indeed exist, and it was bad. Let us not speak of Mo again, at least not on this night.

Fizzled: J.J. Hickson came into Wednesday's game riding a streak that saw him establish career scoring highs in four consecutive outings. That happy little string came to a sour end in Washington. Hit with early foul trouble, J.J. spent much of the first half on the bench and never really got involved, scoring six points and grabbing two rebounds in twenty forgettable minutes. His opposite number Antoine Jamison came back after missing several games with a shoulder problem and went off with 31 points and ten rebounds.

LeBron's Line: 34 points on 12-of-20 from the floor, nine assists, two rebounds and two steals. It was a nice line, but LeBron's performance left quite a bit to be desired. He hogged the basketball excessively at times- especially during Washington's extended comeback- committed six turnovers, took foolish hero shots, was ineffectual on the boards and played substandard defense on Caron Butler, who finished with 19 points. Turnovers were once again a problem for the Cavaliers; they committed 16 on Wednesday, leading to 23 Washington points.

Stagnation: For a time, Cleveland masked its defensive and rebounding deficiencies with good ball movement and shooting. The Cavaliers racked up 17 assists on the first half on the way to their seven-point halftime lead. After the break the offense fell apart right along with the defense and board work; Cleveland had just four assists in the second half as their once-fluid attack degenerated into a series of stopped-ball, aimless-dribbling, desperation-heaving

possessions.

Lost at the Line: Washington's dribble-penetration not only led to second-chance opportunities- it also led to the free-throw line. The Wizards took 35 free throws Wednesday night as opposed to Cleveland's 15, and it wasn't because the officials were favoring the home team; Washington was just that much more aggressive than the Cavaliers, who were content to passively chuck up jump shots for most of the night. Between attempts from the field and free throws the Wizards took 26 more shots at the basket than the Cavaliers. That disparity creates a very small margin for error, and Cleveland was not inclined to overcome it.

Wish it Was May: The Cavaliers have lost five straight regular-season games at Washington and haven't won in Our Nation's Capital since April 26, 2007. They are 4-1 in the Playoffs at D.C. in that span, including two series-clinching victories.

Next: Friday night at 7:00 when the Cavaliers visit the resurgent Indiana Pacers in Conseco Fieldhouse.