The Cavaliers managed to beat Philadelphia, 97-91, at Quicken Loans Arena on Saturday night. Lebron James was his usual magnificent self, and the emergence of guys like J.J. Hickson and Jamario Moon has continued to result in good things. But it wasn't always pretty. Reminiscient of last year's playoff series with Orlando, the Cavs blew a 20-4 first quarter lead, and actually trailed 81-75 in this one before rallying late to win. Sam Amico was there, and recaps the win for our readers.

CLEVELAND - First, the good news. The Cavaliers managed to beat Philadelphia, 97-91, at Quicken Loans Arena on Saturday night. Lebron James was his usual magnificent self, and the emergence of guys like J.J. Hickson and Jamario Moon has continued to result in good things.

Now for a small dose of big-picture reality: The Cavs can't keep blowing huge first-quarter leads.

Honestly, folks.

When you're playing a run-of-the-mill team like the 76ers at home, and jump out to

a 20-4 advantage, you need to dig your heels into their chest, place your foot on their throat, and put them out of their misery.

You certainly shouldn't allow them to methodically chip away to the point where they lead by six points after three quarters as the Sixers did (81-75).

Actually, I should clarify that. It's actually OK to allow a team like the Sixers to get back into the game. But it's only OK if it happens once in a while. It shouldn't happen all the time. It shouldn't become a regular thing. Not if you're an elite team, a team like the Cavs say and believe they are.

Think about it.

The Cavs built a big lead against Boston in the season-opener ... and lost. They did the same thing the other night in Washington ... and lost. They did it a few other times this season and won ... but that doesn't make it OK.

Perhaps it wouldn't be so troubling if the Cavs hadn't followed this exact pattern in last year's defeat to Orlando in the Eastern Conference finals. I hate to bring it up, but in that particular series, the Cavs played their best basketball when it meant the least. Namely, in the first quarter.

Things have been eerily similar this season, when LeBron and company have often been scoring better than 30 points a game in the first 12 minutes. Against Philly, they scored 36. So how on earth did they only end up with 97 for the game?

Remember, we're not talking about the Lakers here. We're talking about a team with a new coach and a new starting point guard that is trying to learn a new

system.

We're talking about an ugly trend that is rearing it's hideous head time and time again. And that just shouldn't happen.

Think I'm overreacting? Well, just listen to Sixers coach Eddie Jordan, who was far from disappointed after the game. In fact, Jordan was considerably happier with his team's performance against the Cavs than he was with its play in a blowout loss to lowly Memphis the previous night.

"I have no problem with a lot of things we did tonight," Jordan said. "We rose to the challenge in a tough environment. I like the way we executed, I like the way we talked. It was a different team from what we saw [Friday]. We just didn't win the game."

Added Sixers guard Andre Iguodala: "It was just a matter of not being able to make shots."

For the Cavs, it shouldn't come down to that. It shouldn't just be a matter of the other team simply missing shots. Not when the Cavs are putting up 36 points at the end of the first quarter, or 66 at halftime, as they did in Friday's win over Indiana. Not if they are gonna talk about winning a championship.

What's worse is the fact the Cavs couldn't seem to do anything right in portions of games against the likes of the Sixers and Wizards -- yet the Sixers were manhandled by the Grizzlies and the Wizards were walloped by Oklahoma City. Yes, there's a basketball team in Oklahoma City, and the Thunder ripped the same team the Cavs had trouble scoring against to the tune of 127 points.

Obviously, the bottom line in this business is your overall record. And no matter how you spin it, the Cavs are 10-4. That's the third-best record in the East, behind only Atlanta (11-3) and Orlando (10-3).

They also still have James, who has emerged from the weekend with an average of 36 points per game, scoring 32 against Philly and 40 against Indiana. He also passed for nine assists and grabbed seven rebounds against the Sixers.

Hickson (14 points on 6-of-10 shooting), Zydrunas Ilgauskas (13 on 6-of-10) and Mo Williams (18 points, eight rebounds) were also impressive. The same goes for Moon, who is slowly growing more comfortable in his role at both ends of the floor, his energy and defense providing major lifts at crucial moments.

But we expect more from the Cavs, and if they're being honest, they expect more from themselves.

The good news is they have been winning anyway. The best news is they are still getting familiar with each other and understand there is room to improve.

Just don't call it fabulous, title-winning basketball -- because right now, that's not what it is. At least, it isn't yet.

And it won't be until the Cavs finally start putting people away.

Sam Amico covers the Cavaliers and NBA for NBA.com, and is a regular contributor to SportsTime Ohio and The Cleveland Fan.