Playing games on back-to-back nights generally isn't regarded as a good thing in the NBA. But sometimes, after a disheartening loss, it's nice to get right back out there and wipe away a bad memory with a solid effort. Such was the case on Saturday, when the Cavaliers bounced back from a frustrating defeat in Charlotte with a 111-95 victory over the Dallas Mavericks. It was Cleveland's fourth consecutive triumph against the boys from the Metroplex and it lifted the Cavaliers to 12-5 on the young season- not bad, all things considered.

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Heavenly Half: In terms of offensive basketball, Cleveland's first half on Saturday was about as good a twenty-four minutes as we've seen from the squad this season. In taking a 68-55 lead at the break the Cavaliers shot 68 percent- including 7-of-8 from behind the arc- scored 28 points in the paint, out-rebounded

the Mavericks 20-10, and dished out an astonishing 23 assists. Only the expected scoring of Dirk Nowitzki, the hot shooting of Jason Terry, and the off-the-bench contributions of little J.J. Barea (damn those small guards!) kept Dallas within reach at half.

Shades of the Price/Nance/Daugherty Teams: Cleveland's first-half team play was exemplified by a sequence in the final seconds of the second period. Coming down court after a rare Jason Terry miss, Mo found LeBron camped in the post. When the double team arrived LeBron fired a pass to Anthony Parker in the near corner. With Jason Kidd draped all over him, Parker went back to LeBron in the lane. Shut off by Shawn Marion, LeBron passed out to Delonte, who one-timed it over to Mo on the far side of the floor. Mo drove, was shut off, and went back to LeBron, who skip-passed it back to Mo, who went under the hoop, fired it out to Jamario Moon, who fired it back to Mo, who buried a three-point shot. Ten Cavaliers touched the basketball during the sequence, which jacked Cleveland's lead to 68-50 just before intermission.

Hot Mo: That three-pointer at the end of the aforementioned dazzling sequence was just a small part of a great night for Mo Williams. The Mississippi Marksman was on fire all night long, ripping cord for 25 points on 9-of-12 shooting, including a perfect 7-of-7 from downtown. Mo's deadeye shooting bankrupted the defensive strategy of Dallas coach Rick Carlisle, who at one point switched over to a zone but had to abandon the tactic when Mo and his friends shot right over it. With the zone out of the equation the Mavericks had to stick to man-to-man defense, which the Cavaliers exploited with dribble penetration. Dallas really missed Josh Howard, an athletic perimeter defender who could have come in handy for the Mavericks on this night.

LeBron's Line: 25 points on 10-of-20 from the field, 0-of-2 from beyond the arc and 5-of-7 from the foul line with 12 assists and five rebounds. Eight of those assists came in the first quarter along. LeBron's shot was a little off tonight, but he played with intelligence and energy, hitting the floor for loose balls and showing excellent effort on the defensive end- a far cry from the pouty, sluggish performance he put on Friday in Charlotte.

West is the Best: Delonte West played on Saturday night. And he wasn't the ghostly presence who flitted in and out in a few ineffectual minutes. He was *Delonte*
, full-bodied, full-blooded, smart, aggressive, active- the man we came to know and love last season. Playing a season-high 28 minutes, the Cavaliers' glue man had ten points, ten assists and four rebounds. He found the open man on the drive; took advantage of the smaller J.J. Barea with the post game and played tough defense on Jason Terry, who almost single-handedly kept Dallas in the game early.

A Night to Forget: If J.J. Hickson ever becomes a superstar in this league and commissions a "Come Fly With Me"-type documentary, well... let's just say they're going to leave Saturday's game on the cutting room floor. J.J. couldn't have been expected to play any sort of defense on Dirk Nowitzki- and he didn't- but he did a lot more harm than good on the offensive end as well. By the time he was mercifully pulled for good early in the third quarter, J.J. had four points, one rebound, three personal fouls and two turnovers (I could have sworn he had four or five.) In the last two nights he's had nine points and two rebounds, a regression from his strong play earlier in November.

Varej-Wow: Fortunately, Anderson Varejao was right there to pick up the pieces left by Hickson- and did he ever. The Brazilian dreamboat was simply magnificent, pouring in a season-high 15 points on a perfect 7-of-7 shooting night with nine rebounds and his usual harassing defense on Nowitzki, a player he has always matched up well with. Varejao was at his energetic best in the third quarter, going for eight points and four offensive rebounds and, more than anyone else, enabling the Cavaliers to stay ahead of a Dallas team that had cut an 18-point Cleveland lead to seven and seemed on the verge of getting right back into it.

The Bench: Cleveland couldn't have gotten the win without the contributions of West, Varejao and Jamario Moon (13 points, versatile defense on Shawn Marion and Dirk) who combined for 38 of the 40 points the Cavaliers got off their bench.

Nice Offense: The Cavaliers finished the night shooting 57.7 percent from the field, 9-of-13 from downtown and dished out 33 assists. Granted, Dallas isn't a particularly good defensive team, but those numbers command respect regardless. Cleveland also pounded the undersized Mavericks on the boards, 39-24.

Next: Wednesday night at 7:00, the Cavaliers tip off the December portion of their schedule at the Q against the Phoenix Suns.