Coming off a disappointing loss to the Carmelo-less Nuggets Friday night, the Cavs needed a win last night in Portland to kick start the road trip they find themselves on. Mission accomplished; although the 106-94 victory wasn't as easy as it looked from the outset. Cleveland had the game won early in the second half but had to win it back down the stretch as the Blazers rallied from a 17-point third-quarter deficit to tie the game late I the fourth. It took a brilliant individual effort by LeBron James and some stalwart performances by the supporting cast to subdue Portland and, hopefully, turn another Western swing in the right direction.

The Cavaliers entered Sunday night's match-up at Portland with a two-game winning streak in the Rose Garden and a five-game overall winning streak in the series between the teams. They started their current road trip in much the same fashion in which they started their last one, losing to a good team missing its best player. They bounced back resoundingly the first time against Phoenix; they hoped to bounce back the same way this time against the Blazers, who have withstood a rash of misfortune en route to their current spot in the thick of the West playoff race.

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LeBron's Line: 41 points on 13-of-19 from the field, 3-of-4 from three-point range and 12-of-14 from the line with 10 rebounds and 8 assists. LeBron has been a one-man wrecking crew against Portland of late, averaging 30.6 points, 9.2 assists and 8.6 rebounds and getting triple doubles in two of Cleveland's five consecutive wins over the Blazers, and he made himself right at home in the Rose Garden early, hitting for 20 first-quarter points on 8-of-8 from the field. Finger-rolls, lay-ups, turnarounds, mortar shots from way outside- it was a little of everything from LeBron, who powered to 31 first-half points as the Cavaliers sprinted to a 64-49 lead at the break.

Getting His Bernard King On: LeBron got kick-started down in the post early Sunday night and then went outside, the way he should all the time. For whatever reason, LeBron seems more comfortable in the post against Portland than most other teams; he has hurt the Blazers badly from the block the last couple years. LeBron also played 45 minutes, staying in the game at the start of the second period and logging the entire second half. He didn't exactly look winded when his monster night was done- but Portland certainly did.

The Big Foul Vacuum: With Greg Oden and Joel Pryzbilla on the shelf for the duration, the Blazers have a distinct doughnut look to them. Manned the pivot for Portland was dusty old Juwan Howard, and the Cavaliers wasted no time putting their own elderly center to work. Shaq posted early and often and got Portland's front line in early foul trouble on the way to 11 points, 11 rebounds and a nifty 5 assists in 24 minutes of work. Blessed with the overwhelming size advantage, the Cavaliers owned the boards, beating the Blazers on the caroms 42-32. Shaq provided a whimsical moment when he tumbled into the seats behind the basket and wound up in an embrace with "Homicide" alum Daniel Baldwin, who was wearing a Blazers jersey that was a bit too small for his beefy frame.

Hot Half: Cleveland loped out to its 15-point halftime lead on the strength of 65 percent shooting, a 22-13 advantage on the boards, and a five-minute stretch in the second period in which they held the Blazers without a basket. The defense triggered a 12-0 run that extended the Cavalier lead to 15 and turned the normally boisterous Rose Garden into a veritable library. Unfortunately, the Blazers didn't decide to just be nice and go away.

It Got Interesting: With three minutes gone in the third period the Cavaliers were bumping merrily along, leading 70-53, when Portland suddenly got hot. Brandon Roy was the catalyst, hitting for 9 points in a 21-6 spurt that got the crowd back into it and got the Blazers to within two at 76-74. Portland drilled eight consecutive field goals during the run, including back-to-back three-point daggers by Martell Webster. Anderson Varejao helped the home team's cause with two misses on point-blank lay-up attempts during the Portland surge. The Brazilian would redeem himself later, however.

Ouch: Brandon Roy: 34 points on 14-of-23 from the field. Anthony Parker: 2 points, 1 rebound and 4 fouls.

One Step Not Made: Portland got to within two points of the Cavaliers three separate times late in the third quarter and tied it twice midway through the fourth. But the Trail Blazers were never able to get over the hump and take the lead over their wobbling visitors.

Jawad Some? St. Ed's alum Jawad Williams got major burn on Sunday night, playing 17 minutes and spending much of it guarding Brandon Roy. He did a passable job on Roy, who wasn't feeling very defensible anyway, but Jawad's biggest contributions came on the offensive end. He canned a desperation three-point to give Cleveland an 85-78 lead at the beginning of the fourth period, and knocked down another triple during the decisive run that put the game away at the end. He finished with a career-high of 10 points, including 8 in the fourth period.

Brazilian Wax: Anderson Varejao had his slapstick moments during Sunday night's game- namely, those two blown lay-ups that aided Portland's third-quarter comeback. Varejao still managed to score 12 points with 8 rebounds, and he still made the needed plays when they needed to be made. He contributed two steals, a forced turnover when he harassed Brandon Roy into dribbling the ball off his foot, and the back-tap that led to the biggest shot of the game for the Cavaliers.

Biggest Shot of the Game For the Cavaliers: Mo Williams had a tough evening, hitting just 5-of-15 from the field, but he knocked down the shot that mattered most when, with 4:21 to play, he rolled off a LeBron James screen and buried a three-pointer to make it 95-89 Cavaliers. There was still time left for Portland to pull it out, but the Blazers were fresh out of comebacks. Cleveland tacked on Jawad's second three-pointer and a hero swish from LeBron to cap off the 11-0 run and make it 100-89, and it was goodnight, Portland.

Offensive Renewal: The Cavaliers cleaned up their turnover problems and were extremely efficient offensively, shooting 50 percent and logging a 22-to-7 assist-to-turnover ratio. Even with LeBron going video game, five Cavaliers scored in double digits.

Nice Stat: LeBron scored fewer points in the fourth period (6) than Jawad Williams (8), yet the Cavaliers outscored the Blazers 24-16 to break open a close game and win. Aggressive in the first half on the way to that 31-point blockbuster, LeBron was content to sit on the post and find his teammates down the stretch, and his teammates made the shots. Cleveland's offense never really stagnated around LeBron, as it did Friday in Denver; he had his outrageous first half within the flow of the game and he was content to let the guards do the lion's share of the ball-handling in the second half. Sometimes LeBron has nights that remind you he's great. This was one of them.

Nicer Stat: LeBron's average line during Cleveland's six-game winning streak over Portland: 34 points, 9 rebounds and 9 assists on 49 percent shooting. I hope we see the Trail Blazers in the Finals, but that probably isn't going to happen.

Just a Thought: The Cavaliers were wearing their blue late ‘80s throwbacks in Portland Sunday night. They've donned the blue togs for a couple of home games as well. Perhaps the Cavaliers should think of breaking out the *w hite* version of those uniforms at some point? Either that or come through on my favorite possible combination: a Wine-and-Gold take on the

"paint-splatter" uniforms of the Terrell Brandon-Chris Mills-Bobby Phills era.

Next: Tomorrow night at 10:30, when the Cavaliers invade Oakland to take on those wild ‘n wooly Golden State Warriors.