If you put your brackets away for a couple of hours Friday night and tuned in the Cavaliers-Bulls game from the United Center in Chicago, you saw the game's best closer do what he does on most nights: completely dominate the final minutes of a close game and lead the Cavaliers to a hard-fought win.

Mariano Rivera, Joe Nathan and Trevor Hoffman have nothing on LeBron James.

James, getting a bit more rest than usual as Mike Brown seeks to save some wear and tear on his starters, came off the bench with about seven minutes in a close game and, like against Indiana on Wednesday night, immediately started knocking down shots, dishing out assists and grabbing nearly available rebound.

LBJ scored 12 points in the last seven minutes, helping turn a one point game into a double-digit lead and ultimately a 92-85 win over the under-manned Bulls.

Chicago was playing without the services of Joakim Noah, Derrick Rose and Luol Deng but they played hard and stayed with Cleveland throughout the game. If not for James being James in the final minutes they likely would have snapped their 10-game losing streak at the expense of the Eastern Conference leaders.

James finished his night with 29 points, 11 rebounds and 7 assists. He needed all of it in a game where Antawn Jamison took just four shots and scored only two points. Jamison did grab nine rebounds and handed out two assists.

Mo Williams continued to shake off the rust that accumulated while he rehabbed a bad shoulder. Williams went 6-10 from the field and scored 18 points, including the first 10 points of the night for the Cavs who moved to 55-15 on the season and increased their lead for home court advantage over Orlando to a full six games.

Jawad Williams, getting all of Jamario Moon's minutes Friday night, added 10 points in 20 minutes and Delonte West also chipped in 10 points and six rebounds.

The Bulls were led by Taj Gibson and James Johnson who scored 20 and 16 points respectively while old friend Flip Murray (who is apparently on some sort of odd quest to play for every single NBA team) added 12 points and Kirk Hinrich scored 10.

Takeaways

· Special thanks to Bulls guard Jannero Pargo who consistently worked himself into taking and missing some of the most difficult shots one can attempt. Pargo came down the court on more than one occasion with nothing but shooting on his mind. Come hell, high water or three bigger defenders Pargo missed six of the nine shots he took and often those misses led to Cavaliers run-outs and fast break points.

I don't know much, but I do know that the quickest way to Bills' Head Coach Vinnie Del Negro's heart is not through forcing up shots when you're shorthanded and playing the club with the best record in all of basketball.

· My eyes are bouncing from all of the basketball I've watched over the last 36 hours. At one point tonight, while switching between the Cavs-Bulls and NCAA action, I saw a cutaway of Ohio State guard Evan Turner on the screen. When I sat there for a minute and wondered why the hell Turner was in Chicago watching the Cavs game (he was actually in the stands in Milwaukee awaiting the start of the OSU-UCSB game) I knew it was time to get up and walk away from the television for a few minutes.

· Just three more days before Zydrunas Ilgauskas is eligible to sign with and rejoin the Cavaliers. And when 'Z' gets back a crowded front court with few available minutes is going to get even more crowded.

Mike Brown is already juggling Jamario Moon and Leon Powe for the minutes available behind J.J. Hickson and Anderson Varejao depending on the opponent's style and 'Z' is only going to add to the mix. Expect Brown to continue to mix and match depending on what style of play and what match ups the Cavs are facing on a given night. Against the slower and more plodding clubs 'Z' will get some run. Against teams that go smaller and faster Powe should expect to see the floor. Moon will likely become a match up specialist as the regular season winds down, being utilized when his length and athleticism is needed against the quicker small forwards in the game.

I don't even want to think about the rotation when injured center Shaquille comes back and is ready do battle in the playoffs.

· The Cavs, for one night anyway, also reversed a trend from the free throw line by hitting 24-28 freebies against the Bulls. That could be anomaly but more likely it's the result of a team looking to sharpen up their shortcomings over the final few weeks of the regular season.

James in particular has noticeably slowed down his pace at the free throw line. His pre-shot routine over the past couple of games has been slow and methodical and on Friday night he was 11-12 from the stripe. Combine that with Wednesday night's 8-10 effort and James is shooting a nifty 86% from the free throw line in his last two games.

The Cavs as a team are shooting just about 80% over that same time period. Helping the Cavs cause Friday night was that Jamison didn't get to the line. He's been struggling terribly with his free throw stroke since the Cavs acquired nearly a month ago.

· James became the youngest player to reach 15,000 career points in the first quarter Friday. He also moved into fourth place in the Cavaliers career rebounding annals, moving ahead of Jim Chones.

They Got Next

The Cavs have Saturday off and then hit ‘The Q’ for a 6pm FSN Ohio tip against Detroit on Sunday. On Monday Ilgauskas should be back in the fold and he’ll have a couple days to practice with his old mates before the Cavs head to New Orleans and to San Antonio next Wednesday and Friday.