The Cavs welcomed back their 7'3" prodigal son Wednesday night in New Orleans and then proceeded to take the court and roll over the New Orleans Hornets.

Zydrunas Ilgauskas rejoined the only franchise he's ever known after 33 days in basketball purgatory. He basically joined a season-long win streak already in progress and coming back to a 105-92 over the Hornets is pretty much where the Cavs were when Z was dealt to Washington at the NBA trade deadline.

Ilgauskas played 17 minutes and was noticeably rusty. The big man scored just a single point while grabbing three rebounds and handing out two assists.

The Cavs weren't in great need of his offense.

Facing a size-challenged Hornets front line that features David West and Emeka Okafor as pseudo-centers the Cavs dominated the interior Wednesday night. They outscored New Orleans 58-36 in the paint and shot 57% from the floor to win their eighth straight game and run their record to 57-15 on the season.

And while Z was getting his feet wet and his wind back the man who started at center for the Cavaliers had a big night. J.J. Hickson scored 20 points while knocking down nine of his eleven shots from the floor. Hickson scored on a dizzying array of slashes to the basket, dunks and finger rolls against the sputtering Hornets and their porous defense. Hickson came up just one rebound shy of a double-double, finishing with those 20 points and nine rebounds.

LeBron James also played a little bit of ball Wednesday as well. James tossed in 38 points while also dishing out nine assists and grabbing six rebounds. It's odd to commend James for his floor game on a night when he scored 38 points, but early on LBJ was content to set up Hickson and other teammates while scoring just enough to keep himself engaged.

James and his mates asserted themselves in the third quarter of what, at the time, was a close game. Leading by just four halfway through the third quarter the Cavaliers blitzed the Hornets with some solid defense and some easy hoops to run their lead from four points to 15 points in seemingly just a couple minutes.

After that run there was no looking back.

Delonte West scored 15points while Antawn Jamison quietly scored 11 points and collected 11 rebounds; just another double-double for Jamison.

The Hornets were led by Marcus Thornton's 20 points and West's 16points and seven boards. Chris Paul, in just his second game back off a leg injury that sidelined the Hornets for a few weeks, was a non-factor. Paul took just eights shots and scored five points for New Orleans who fell to 34-39 on the season. The Hornets have lost 13 of their last 17 games.

Takeaways

- The Cavs win combined with the Orlando Magic's loss in Atlanta gives the Cavs a full seven game lead over Orlando with just ten games remaining for each squad. That race for the Eastern Conference's top seed is done and over.

- A 13-point road win over the Hornets is impressive in its own right. A 13-point road win over the Hornets in New Orleans on a night when Mike Brown's rotation is again in flux is even more impressive. Ilgauskas knows the offense and the defensive rotations so there wasn't a great deal to be done as far as acclimating Z to the system, but it is another distraction the Cavs were forced to face. It speaks to the focus of the squad that they seemingly adjust to whatever is thrown at them and continue to pile up wins.

When you consider that at various times this season they've lost Mo Williams and Shaquille O'Neal to injury, Delonte West to issues of the mind and the body, traded away Ilgauskas in a deal that introduced Jamison to the rotation and then saw Z return a month later, you can make a pretty solid argument that this is Brown's best coaching job.

Yes, owner Dan Gilbert and GM Danny Ferry have given Brown an incredible arsenal of talent to use as he sees fit. But Brown has melded it all together, at times with bubble gum and bailing wire, and has never wavered from his principles or his ability to collect wins.

- It may have slipped by some folks who were focused on Z's return and LeBron's continued dominance, but Delonte West may have played his most efficient game of the season Wednesday night. In 26 minutes Redz was 7-11 from the floor for his 15 points. Those seven shots came from all over the court. West backed his man down for short jumpers, got to the rim for lay ups and dunks and also sweet-stroked a three-pointer. For my money the guy is still clearly the best low post player on the roster and may also be one of the most underrated players in the game.

Not only does Delonte have the ability to score from anywhere this side of the time line, but he can also capably run your offense from the point, efficiently and productively play the two guard spot and you also know you're going to get a tooth and nails defensive effort from him every night.

They Got Next

The Cavs are off Thursday night before facing off with Tim Duncan, Manu Ginobli and the San

Antonio Spurs Friday night. FSN Ohio has the game starting at 830pm.