ESPN analyst Jon Barry may have put it best after the Cavaliers' 93-88 win over the Atlanta Hawks Friday at 'The Q'.

Barry said the Hawks were doing a nice job for three and a half quarters in climbing the mountain against Cleveland, a team they've had massive trouble with for the last few years. And then, with about eight minutes left in a game the Hawks led by two points, they simply let go of the rope.

And when Atlanta let go of that rope it led directly to the Hawks plummeting to yet another grisly death against the Cavaliers as Cleveland won their 60th game of the season Friday night against just 16 losses.

The Cavaliers compressed the game into just a few meaningful minutes in that fourth quarter. As has been the case all season they did just enough when it absolutely had to be done to escape with the victory. The rest of the night was spent just staying in the game, not getting too far ahead and never getting too far behind.

Why do insist on listening to analysts like Hubie Brown and Jon Barry do Cavaliers telecasts when I have the choice of them or the Cavs' crew? Because they do their homework and they understand and explain (in actual English) what they see. Barry noted early in the game that LeBron James had just three points but six assists after a quarter of play. He then noted that LBJ would likely end up with somewhere around 29/9 and 9.

He was really close. James scored 27 points while grabbing 13 rebounds and collecting those six assists. Barry knew that early on James would look to get his teammates the ball in scoring position and would then look for his offense as need be.

Mo Williams got into the act Friday and looked like the 2008-2009 version of Mo. Williams poured in 24 points on 7-14 shooting that also included a 3-7 effort from behind the arc. Antawn Jamison scored 12 points and had seven rebounds before leaving the game early in the fourth quarter with a stinger in his left arm that was the result of a collision near the Hawks basket.

Delonte West added nine points and J.J. Hickson dropped in eight to support the Cleveland cause.

The Hawks got 20 points from Josh Smith and 15 from Marvin Williams. Joe Johnson and super-sub Jamal Crawford combined for 30 Hawks points but it took them a combined 35 shots to get there as the Cavs were determined to force the action inside as opposed to letting Johnson and/or Crawford go off from the perimeter.

The reason the Cavs wanted everything inside was that even without Anderson Varejao (hamstring) and Shaquille O'Neal (thumb) available they had a huge advantage there against Atlanta's athletic but light front line. The Cavs won the rebounding battle 55-36, including a 14-9 advantage in the offensive rebound department.

Takeaways

- I said it earlier in the year and I'll say it again: Atlanta is simply not yet ready for prime time. They lack a true leader, they lack any type of killer instinct and they lack bulk and attitude down low. Josh Smith is a fine player down on the blocks but he's not a marquee NBA player

that you build a championship team around. He's that #2 guy on a contending team that plays off a true marquee player. The problem for the Hawks is that their go-to guy would have to be Joe Johnson who's also better suited to be a #2. They are athletic, they keep getting better and they are a dangerous opponent in a seven game series, but Atlanta's time, if it does come, is still a ways on down the road.

- I heard it mentioned during the telecast and I actually noted it while doing some research on another column but LeBron James is currently 6th in the NBA in assists with 8.5 per game. If he finishes the season with that number he's going to break Larry Bird's record for assists per game by a forward by nearly a full assist per game.

He's ahead of such point guards as Russell Westbrook, Baron Davis, Devin Harris and Derrick Rose. He's ahead of point guards Brandon Jennings and Tyreke Evans. He's ahead of Chauncey Billups and Mike Conley. And yes, he's ahead of his own club's point guard Mo Williams. True, a lot of assists are incumbent upon teammates cashing in the opportunities presented to them. But Westbrook and Billups both play with guys challenging LBJ for the scoring title and not all of Kevin Durant's or Carmelo Anthony's buckets come from them taking guys off the dribble. And for a forward to be in that rarified air in terms of assists is sick.

- I know I'm ready to dispense with the last six games of the season and get down to playoff business. I think the Cavs are thinking along the same lines. At press time the Spurs were beating the Magic which, if it holds, would mean the Cavs have clinched the #1 seed in the Eastern Conference. The Lakers are also about six games back for all intent and purpose in regard to home court advantage throughout the playoffs. The race is over. And while you don't want to develop any bad habits between now and two weeks from now when the second season begins, it's time for Mike Brown to consider rest and rehab as much as he considers knocking out a few more wins.

They Got Next

The Cavs have a trip to Chowd-Town for a 1pm tip with the Celtics Sunday on ABC. Nothing would provide as happy an Easter as the Cavaliers laying one on the Celtics, with or without resting key players. In fact, if Mike Brown wants to start resting guys starting Tuesday against Toronto I'd be just fine with that decision.