With all of their heavy artillery either on the bench or in street clothes the Cavaliers put up a brave fight in Friday night's meaningless encounter with the Indiana Pacers. The effort wasn't quite enough, however, as Indiana overcame a six-point fourth-quarter deficit to send the Cavaliers to their second consecutive defeat, 116-113. Not that it matters- with home-court advantage throughout the Playoffs sewn up Cleveland just needs to stay healthy, and regardless of the scoreboard, they did just that on Friday.

Where's the D? It's probably foolish to read too much into the back-to-back losses in Chicago and at home to Indiana, but it would be nice to see this team tighten up somewhat on the defensive end. The night after coughing up 109 points and 51.8 percent shooting to the Bulls, Cleveland's defense allowed 116 points and 50.6 percent shooting to the Pacers. Offensively the Cavaliers looked darn good both games, scoring 108 and 113 points and racking up a total of 52 assists, including 29 on Friday night. But an inability to get stops on the defensive end has led to back-to-back defeats while topping the 100-point mark- the first time that has happened to the Cavaliers since November of 2007.

Defensively- and everywhere else, of course- this team misses LeBron James. To be sure, LeBron's on-ball defense has not been as consistent this season as it was last season. But he's still a brilliant help defender, a guy whose mere presence alters the approach of opponents- and most importantly, he's the middle linebacker of the Cleveland defense, barking out assignments,

making adjustments and adding suggestions in the huddle. We see the highlight-reel blocks, but a lot of what LeBron contributes to this defense- the leadership- goes a little under the radar.

Classy Bassy: One of the benefits of the “high-level practices” as Mike Brown has dubbed these late-season games, is that we get to see extended minutes out of guys who are usually on the bench flashing goosenecks instead of playing. Case in point: Sebastian Telfair, who has been a minor revelation these last two games. Hard on the heels of his 8-point, 3-assist performance in Chicago Telfair was even better against Indiana: 21 points, 4 assists and 3 rebounds in 29 minutes off the bench. Maligned for his jump shot, Telfair is now 12-of-21 in the two games, many of those shots coming from outside. More impressively, he has displayed speed and an ability to turn the corner, get into the lane, and set up teammates for quality looks.

Indeed- and this isn’t overstating it- Telfair looks closer to a true point guard than anyone we’ve had on this team during the entirety of the LeBron era. I wonder if this young man shouldn’t get a close look as a rotation player next season in place of Daniel Gibson. Much as I like Gibson, a tough kid, a clutch shooter, a gamer, he’s a bit redundant on this squad- an undersized shooting guard on a team fully stocked with those. Telfair might just bring something unique to the table.

Still Dyno-Mite: It’s always good to see J.J. Hickson excel, especially when LeBron isn’t there to set the table for him, and he certainly excelled Friday night. The jumping jack from N.C. State had a terrific game offensively, pouring in 21 on 8-of-11 shooting- including at least one outside jumper- going 5-of-5 from the free-throw line and adding 10 rebounds. It’s amazing to see how this kid has progressed over the course of the season, on both ends. But the Playoffs are the crucible; we’ll have to see what kind of minutes J.J. gets in the postseason and more importantly, what he does with those minutes.

Solid Peripherals: Even with Shaquille O’Neal, Antawn Jamison and LeBron James out of the lineup Cleveland out-rebounded the Pacers 47-35. The Cavaliers also had a solid 29-to-13 assist-to-turnover ratio and hit 24-of-28 from the free-throw line. Most nights those are winning numbers.

Play of the Night: Thanks to a 10-0 run Cleveland led 99-93 with 6:47 to play and was

seemingly in control when Indiana's Mike Dunleavy threw up an off-balance three-pointer as he was being whacked by Anderson Varejao. The shot went in and the subsequent four-point play turned the game around. The Pacers wound up outscoring the Cavaliers 23-14 in the last seven minutes to pull the game out of the fire.

They're Bumping Death Cab for Cutie in the Escalade: What's with NBA players and their affection for emo glasses on off nights? LeBron has favored the black-rimmed specs in the past and last night Mo Williams wore a pair that made him look as if he was going to a poetry slam after the game. The most notable of the artsy-glasses-wearing set is New Jersey head coach Kiki Vandeweghe; of course, if you had to watch the Nets play every night you'd probably be a little emo as well.

Situation Report: The Cavaliers themselves might be limping a bit down the home stretch, but there are no worries when it comes to the East bracket, which could not be shaping up much better from Cleveland's standpoint. As of Saturday morning, April 10th, here's how things look from 1-9:

Cleveland (61-19)

Orlando (56-23)

Atlanta (50-29)

Boston (49-30)

Milwaukee (45-34)

Miami (44-35)

Charlotte (42-37)

Toronto & Chicago- Tie (38-41)

Not only are the Cavaliers guaranteed to avoid their nemesis from Charlotte, the Bobcats are now virtually locked in to a first-round series with Orlando- which means at least one of Cleveland's major match-up problems will be out of the competition early. Charlotte, with its size and skill on the perimeter and depth and agility inside, is capable of at least making the Magicians sweat. And as it stands right now Cleveland's second-round opponent will be either the mummified Celtics or a Bucks team depleted by the loss of Andrew Bogut. The problem children- athletic Atlanta, Wade-powered Miami and the dreaded Bobcats- are all on the opposite side of the bracket. Hopefully things will stay pretty much as they are for the next five days or so.

Next: Sunday afternoon at 1:00 when the Cavaliers host the Orlando Magic in what should be a preview of the Eastern Conference Finals.