A quarter-and-a-half of good basketball got it done for the Cavaliers in their 101-93 victory over Boston in Game One of the Eastern Conference Semifinals. Outfought, outthought and outshot by the Celtics for most of the evening, Cleveland found some heart and some defense down the stretch, roaring back from an 11-point third-quarter deficit to take the game and a 1-0 lead in what promises to be a long, bitterly fought series. This was a game the Cavaliers had to have- and they took it, although Boston didn't make it easy on them.

2-0, 2-0, 2-0, 2-0. If Cleveland goes up 2-0 in every series it plays, it will win the NBA Championship- because no one will beat this team four out of five in any series. We're halfway to that goal in the Eastern Conference Semifinals. The Cavaliers can secure that decisive 2-0 advantage on Monday night at Quicken Loans Arena. Hopefully doing so will be a little easier than it was on Saturday.

Mondo Rondo: You don't need me to tell you that the Mo Williams defensive match-up on Rajon Rondo doesn't work. It didn't work last season, it hasn't worked this season and it definitely didn't work on Saturday night- especially in the first half. Blowing by Mo with the ease of a hurried commuter pushing through a subway turnstile, Rondo got to the rim at will throughout the first half. Everything was falling for the Boston point guard: a notoriously spotty

shooter from the foul line and the perimeter, Rondo knocked down all six of his free throws in the half and buried his only attempt from downtown, a buzzer-beating rainbow at the end of the first quarter. At halftime Rondo had 19 points on 6-of-7 shooting with 8 assists- and not coincidentally, the Celtics had a 54-43 lead. Things did not look good for the Cavaliers at that point, to say the least.

Uh-Oh: Cleveland's only postseason loss to date, the Game Three first-round defeat at Chicago, started with a welter of unforced errors by the Cavaliers- and so did Saturday night's Game One. With the score tied at 2-2, Mo Williams threw away an inbound pass and Paul Pierce quickly converted it into a lay-up to give Boston the early lead. The Cavaliers would commit six first-half turnovers which, along with Mo's non-existent defense on Rondo, was a major factor in enabling Boston to build its first-half advantage. The Celtics went out in front at the 3:13 mark of the first quarter and would remain in front until the end of the third.

Bench Bunch: A couple of non-starters helped keep the Cavaliers in the game during the first half. Delonte West, who always shows up at Playoff time, struck for 8 second-quarter points. J.J. Hickson added 7 in the period. The two combined for nine consecutive points to cut Boston's 10-point lead to three at 32-29 midway through the first half. Cleveland is a deeper team than the Celtics and it showed Saturday night, as the Cavalier reserves outscored Boston's subs 26-12. Delonte and J.J. combined for 19 of those points on 9-of-13 shooting. Hopefully Game One will convince Mike Brown to shelve Zydrunas Ilgauskas for good in favor of Hickson. Playing five first-half minutes, Big Z put up zero points to go with zero rebounds.

And a Note to Zydrunas: Z, we love you. You're a Cavalier legend and I'm going to be there when that #11 goes into the rafters. You carried this franchise for a long time with class, honor and dignity at times when precious little of any of those commodities were present in the organization. But now it's time to let the franchise carry you to a Championship. So chill on the bench, rest those feet, and let the lively legs of young Mr. Hickson do the work. Thanks, big man.

Play of the Night: You have to give Mo Williams credit. After being humiliated by Rajon Rondo throughout the first half the Mississippi marksman kept his head on straight, kept plugging away and put together a brilliant, 16-point second half. With the Cavaliers trailing 69-58 midway through the third quarter Mo ripped off ten straight Cleveland points to narrow the gap to five. Included in the spree was the aforementioned Play of the Night. With Cleveland down nine at 69-60, Mo stole an errant pass from Rondo and took off down the floor with Paul Pierce in hot pursuit. Instead of attempting a standard lay-up the Cleveland point guard rose up and, reminiscent of Delonte West's facial on Josh Smith early in the season, smashed home a dunk

right in Pierce's catfish grill. It was the first stuff shot of Mo's Cleveland tenure and it seemed to wake up the team and the crowd. From then on it was a dogfight- and the Cavaliers had the bigger teeth.

Took Him Long Enough: Mo's second-half offensive explosion might have been triggered by a long-overdue coaching maneuver by Mike Brown. The Cavalier head coach switched Anthony Parker onto Rondo after halftime and although the move was only marginally successful- Rondo had 8 second-half points and was limited as much by foul trouble as by Parker's defense- but something had to be done. And freed from the responsibility of pretending to guard Rondo, Mo went off.

Takeover Time: Cleveland finally seized command of the game late in the third quarter. In the last six minutes of the period the Cavaliers outscored Boston 21-9 and took a one-point lead at the buzzer on LeBron's spectacular, acrobatic lay-up in traffic.

LeBron's Line: 35 points on 12-of-24 from the field, 3-of-6 from downtown and 8-of-11 from the foul line with 7 rebounds, 7 assists, 3 steals and 2 blocked shots. Seemingly hampered in the first half by the World's Most Famous Sore Right Elbow, LeBron went off for 21 in the second half, 12 in the fourth quarter, including three massive baskets down the stretch:

- A put-back lay-up that made it 94-91 Cavaliers with 3:25 left,

- A runner in the lane that made it 96-93 Cavaliers with 1:48 left

- And the coup-de-grace: a three-point bomb that made it 101-93 with 22.9 seconds left.

The Big Foul-Giver: To say the least, Shaquille O'Neal was off on Saturday night. The massive center shot a lowly 4-of-12, missing a bushel of chip-shots around the rim. Of more importance to the cause than the shooting line was the pair of massive fouls Shaq dealt out to Rajon Rondo. The second, a cross-body block with 4:30 left in the fourth quarter and the Cavaliers leading 92-90, sent the Boston point guard to the floor in a heap and seemed to take a little life

out of the men in green. Rondo hit only one of the two free throws to keep Cleveland ahead by one; in the remainder of the game following the foul Boston scored two points and went 1-of-9 from the field. To give Shaq credit, he had two major baskets down the stretch: a lay-up that put the Cavaliers ahead to stay at 92-90 with 4:46 left and a follow shot that made it 98-93 with 1:02 left and put Boston in permanent scramble mode.

Finally, Defense: After doing basically whatever it wanted for the first three quarters Boston had its water shut off in the fourth. The Celtics scored just 15 points in the final stanza, shooting a chilly 5-of-19 from the field. One of the NBA's most turnover-prone teams, Boston committed 16 miscues on Saturday night. Paul Pierce never got going, shooting 5-of-17, committing four turnovers and finishing with a game-worst -14.

Next: Game Two, Monday night, 8:00 at the Q.