If the NBA season was a movie script, the Boston Celtics and the Miami Heat are clearly projected to have bigger roles than the Cleveland Cavaliers in the third act. But as far as opening scenes go, it couldn't have been written any better for the Cavs.

On Wednesday night, the Cavaliers defeated the Boston Celtics 95-87 in Cleveland's home opener. It came just one day after the Celtics spoiled LeBron James' first game with the Miami Heat.

But it was even more perfect than just the Cavs beating the opponent that the Heat lost to. On Tuesday night, LeBron didn't get enough help from his new "chosen" cast, while the teammates that he apparently deemed "not enough" were able to pull together to knock off the Celtics the following night.

Yes, the Cavs were rested, while the Celtics were on an home/away back-to-back, but the resiliency and grit the Cavaliers showed against one of this year's "elites" should be more than enough to show Cleveland that this team is going to be one to watch this season, win or lose.

The stars of the game for Cleveland were J.J. Hickson and Daniel Gibson . . . specifically, J.J. in the first half and Booby in the second. The difference-maker, not surprisingly, was Anderson Varejao, who played as he always does . . . as if it's the most important game of his career.

J.J. finished with 21 points (on 8-of-11 shooting) with six rebounds. He was on fire right out of the gate, scoring 10 points in the first six minutes of the game.

For the first three-and-a-half quarters, Gibson was 0-8 with two turnovers. And then, beginning with 3:30 left in the third quarter, he began his assault. From that moment on, Booby scored 16 points with no turnovers, and hit all six of his clutch free throws. Booby finished the game with 16 points (on 4-of-14 shooting) with eight assists, four rebounds, a block, and just those two early turnovers.

(It should also be noted that the team as a whole excelled with Gibson on the floor. He had a game-high plus/minus of +11.)

But Andy was the monster that won this game. If you thought he might turn it down a notch because he's not playing on a title contender with LeBron . . . well, you were wrong. He was all over the place, pulling down strong rebounds, forcing jump-balls on rebounds after *free throw shots* , deflecting passes (I counted four of those, and I wasn't even intentionally keeping track), and he had a huge "get that weak stuff outta here" block that sent the ball into the crowd.

Late in the game, he played some gritty defense down low, which was non-existent for the entire team for most of the game. (Honestly, if it weren't for all the easy lay-ups and dunks that the Celtics got out of blown coverages low and weak interior defense in general, it may have been a blow-out.)

Andy finished with eight points (on 3-of-4 shooting) with 10 rebounds, four assists, a steal and that statement block. As you can tell from those numbers, his shot selection was tight . . . with one major exception. With four minutes left - and the Cavs down two - Andy air-balled a *three pointer* . There was only a second left in the shot clock, but there's no reason Andy should've been outside the arc. At that point, the Cavs were in danger of losing the game; they hadn't scored

in three-and-a-half minutes.

But he made up for it two possessions later when he made my Key Play of the Game. With 3:15 left, Andy ran after a long defensive rebound. He got control of it and started leading a fast break. After crossing mid-court, he threw a bounce pass to J.J., who was streaking down the open court. J.J. laid it in, putting the Cavs up 86-84. The Cavs never reliquished that lead.

The Cavs were in it the whole game, with the exception of a long rough spot in the third quarter. With 3:48 left in the third, the Cavs were down 11. From that point on, they doubled the Celtics' output, 38-19.

By the way, the Cavs did all this without one of their stars. Mo Williams was held out of the game. Coach Byron Scott said it was just a precaution, and it seems like he could play this Friday in Toronto. He's day-to-day while he recovers from a groin pull.

But for the Cavs who were playing, it was a total team effort. Cleveland had *six* players score in double-figures. Aside from J.J. and Booby, Ramon Sessions had 14, and Jamario Moon, Anthony Parker and Ryan Hollins scored 10 apiece.

The defense as a whole wasn't good, but both Moon and Hollins had great moments. Sessions had an uneven game offensively, but showed a lot of potential for getting to the basket once the offense gels. (I say uneven because he was forcing his game at times. The whole team just needs to get a better handle on the flow. They looked great when they were passing the ball and pushing it up court. They looked lost when they started dribbling too much or trying to go one-on-one.)

One of those moments happened with 2:30 left in the game, when Booby couldn't find anyone open to pass to and eventually called a timeout with one second left on the shot clock. But in a semi-miraculous twist, the ball was inbounded to Parker who immediately threw-up an off-balance three. It went in, and that proved to be the dagger.

If there was one concern, player-wise, it was the lack of involvement from Antawn Jamison. For

whatever reason, he seemed a little out of it . . . and the Cavs weren't finding him shots. He only had four points (on 2-of-6 shooting) but all his points came in two back-to-back running jumpers when the Cavs needed them most, in the middle of the fourth quarter.

So what does this win mean?

Well, maybe nothing. But it should give the Cavs, especially the returning players, the conidence to know that they *can* compete on any given night without LeBron, if they're able to put forth the effort to compensate for their weaknesses, talent-wise. And I think there's also a message to the fans in there, too.

This team may not win a lot of games, but the organization is committed to righting "The Ship that LeBron Rocked" . . . and in the meantime, it really looks like they're going to be pretty exciting to watch. So go ahead and embrace the situation. You won't regret it.

My brother put it best: He said, "If they make every important game this close, I don't care if they go 10-72." And that's essentially what a Yahoo columnist predicted when he said the Cavs would go 12-70 this season . . . or, I guess, 11-70 from here on out.

It's funny though. Cleveland fans don't seem to mind. Because on Wednesday night, there were 20,562 people at The Q . . . and they definitely weren't acting like they were only there because they were screwed over by LeBron.

They welcomed their team - the players that are still excited to be in Cleveland - with a sustained roar. They spent the entire game relentlessly cheering the Cavs on. There was a standing ovation at almost every timeout. And yet, they still had something extra for late in the third quarter when the Cavs were mounting their comeback, and for the fourth, when the team fed off their energy to pick up the defensive stops they needed to outscore the Celtics 27-14. 27-14!

For a team that many outside of Cleveland are predicting to be a lost cause this season, the fans at The Q (and likely countless others at home, myself included) were cheering like it was *a*

freakin' playoff game
. The playoff game against the Celtics that we
should
have had back in May. And regardless of whatever happens throughout the rest of this season, regardless of how the script plays out, and regardless of whether or not the Cavs can win 13 games,
your Cavaliers gave you that playoff game
. And it was awesome. And it came without LeBron James. So, take it easy in Miami, bro.

The Cleveland Cavaliers may not have any expectations this year. But I don't have a problem with that. Do you?