How many times did I hear "It's over!!!" in the post-game wrap-ups? Fifteen? Twenty? Hell, the NBA home page even ran a red banner: **"BREAKING NEWS: Cavs hold off Blake Griffin, Clippers in overtime to snap 26-game losing streak."**
This was big news from Maine to California, by doggies!

So the record-setting string is over. Professional and amateur sports pundits from all over the nation will now have to find some other reason to deride the city of Cleveland, and the Clippers will have to continue their trip through the East hanging their heads after doing what 26 teams before them failed to do: they lost to the Cavs, 126-119.

Oh, the humanity.

Antawn Jamison capped a 35-point night by hitting a three-pointer from the left wing to give the Cavs a 123-119 lead with 22.1 seconds remaining in overtime. And then he skipped off the court as Clippers head coach Vinny Del Negro called a much-needed time-out. At this point, every Cleveland basketball fan in the world was asking, "How are they going to blow this one? What's it gonna be this time, Lord?"

Seconds later, when Randy Foye's three-pointer rattled the rim like a pinball stuck between two mushroom bumpers and then popped out, J.J. Hickson -- one of the night's real heroes -- grabbed the rebound and it was as good as over.

"It was halfway down, and the rim spit it back out!!" exclaimed Cavs TV play-by-play man Fred McLeod. "The basketball gods are smiling on the Cavs tonight!!" said an apoplectic Austin Carr,

who plays Lou Costello to McLeod's Bud Abbott. (Apoplexy: a sudden, usually marked loss of bodily function due to rupture or occlusion of a blood vessel; a hemorrhage into an organ cavity or tissue.) Carr was hemorrhaging all right -- wine- and gold-colored blood.

Moments earlier, Cavs head coach Byron Scott had been biting his lip on the sidelines with 1:15 left in the OT and the Cavs holding a 120-114 lead. At that point, given what has transpired on the hardwood during the past two months, Scott knew his team was not out of the woods yet. Sure enough, Eric Bledsoe scored on an offensive put-back; Foye blocked a Mo Williams jumper; and Foye hit a three-pointer in transition to narrow the gap to 120-119 with 44 seconds remaining.

Nobody ever said winning was easy, but this has been a ridiculous ride through Povertyville. In a span of 38 games going back to November 30th, 2010, the Cavs have won exactly two games -- both in OT.

This was a night when the players that Cavs management envisioned as team leaders did indeed lead. Besides the 34-year-old Jamison's 35 points and nine rebounds in 44 grueling minutes of play, good old J.J. had a coming-out party.

In the hours before the game, talk radio hosts who shall remain nameless were taking bets on whether the Cavs would have anyone who could stop the Clippers' Rookie-of-the-Year candidate Blake Griffin. Well, J.J. didn't exactly stop him, but he out-rebounded Griffin, out-blocked him, and almost matched him point-for-point. Hickson finished with 27 points on 12 of 19 from the floor. His 14 rebounds included eight on the offensive end. He blocked four shots, including two Godzilla-like facials of Griffin in less than a minute of the fourth quarter.

And lest we forget, J.J. went a foot over the rim on the last play of regulation to swat a Baron Davis drive to the hoop into the upper bowl as the buzzer sounded, ensuring overtime.

Observers agreed that it was Hickson's best effort as a Cavalier on both ends of the court. And it was -- like, by a factor of 100.

Meanwhile, Mo returned after spending the last 13 games on the injured list. All he did was score 17 points and hand out 14 dimes against the defenseless Clips. Mo's jab-step, fade-away jumper from the left wing with 6.3 seconds remaining in the fourth quarter tied the score at 110 and forced the OT. In the final three minutes of regulation and the entire overtime, Mo pretty much directed traffic and lent greatly needed leadership.

For the record:

>> The game was tied 16 times, and the lead changed 22 times. Biggest lead was 8 for the Clippers, 6 for the Cavs.

>> Griffin finished with 32 points and 13 rebounds, but he needed 26 field goal attempts while being hounded by Hickson all night.

>> The Cavs had 34 assists (not a misprint.)

>> The Cavs shot 50% from the field to 44.8% for the Clippers.

>> The Cavs had 58 total rebounds to 54 for L.A. They had 12 offensive boards, but allowed the visitors 17.

Never has a mid-season victory been so celebrated by Cavs fans, who were "on their feet!" for the entire overtime period. In 30 years, old fogeys will be telling their grandsons that they were in the Q the night the Cavs snapped an NBA-record losing streak. Fans who missed the game will remember exactly what they were doing when J.F.K. was assassinated -- oops -- when the Challenger exploded -- oops -- when they heard the Cavs broke the losing streak.

And now begins a return to reality. Will Byron's Boys be able to mount a two-game winning streak, or will they start another 26-game losing streak? Find out Sunday when the Washington Wizards try to win their first road game of the season at the Q.