

On Any Given Night: Cavs Shock Lakers

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A little more than a month ago in Los Angeles, the Lakers handed the Cavaliers perhaps their biggest humiliation in a season chock-full of them. That 112-57 wipeout was the most lopsided loss in franchise history, which is saying something considering this franchise's history.

So there was no way the rematch at the Q Wednesday night could turn out a whole lot differently. Sure, the Lake Show was belching blue smoke coming into the last game of a seven-game roadie, fresh off lopsided losses in Orlando and Charlotte. But so what? The Cavaliers, after all, were losers of 37 of their last 39 and had just served up the first road victory of the season for the Wizards. They lost by a double-nickel to L.A. five weeks ago. The Forum Blue & Gold were going to pop into town, get healthy at the Q and head into the All-Star Break (which they're hosting) ready to make up ground on the leaders in the Western Conference playoff chase.

But something really strange happened on the way back to Tinseltown. Playing the two-time defending World Champions, the Cavaliers stumbled as if by accident into the same magic that invaded the Q on Opening Night against Boston. Answering every Lakers challenge and getting a huge performance out of Ramon Sessions, Cleveland clawed and scratched to a stunning 104-99 victory over an L.A. team that looked very old, very slow and very yesterday's news nearly all night long. It might not have been a Cavalier winner as much as a Lakers loser. But that does mean the Wine & Gold didn't earn it. They did- so give credit to their 10-46 asses.

Give special credit to Ramon Sessions, who climaxed a good couple of weeks with a great night on Wednesday. Sessions entered the game for the first time with 8:42 left in the first period, replacing Mo Williams (who took his one missed shot, one turnover and two fouls to the bench, never to return.) When Ramon jammed home his first points 38 seconds later, his brilliant night was on. The fourth-year man from Nevada poured in sixteen first-half points- including his first three-pointer of the season- to lead Cleveland to essential control of the contest- a control they never really relinquished.

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All told, Ramon Sessions ripped home a career-high 32 points, hitting 9-of-16 from the field and 13-of-14 from the line and adding eight assists and three steals. But he was far from the only contributor to this most unlikely upset.

Antawn Jamison logged a double-double 19 points and ten rebounds before coming up lame on the final play of the game when he landed on Jamarion Moon's foot. Anthony Parker hit a bushel of clutch jumpers on the way to 18 points and nine assists. J.J. Hickson shot just 6-of-18 but competed gamely against the big L.A. frontline, racking up 13 points and 15 rebounds. And Christian Eyenga (who with his wrinkled face and receding hairline looks about a decade older than his tender age of 21) shot 5-of-7, played energetic defense on Kobe Bryant and electrified the Quicken Loans crowd with a baseline jam after the Lakers cut Cleveland's lead to one late in the third quarter.

It was a game of Los Angeles runs made- and answered. The Lake Show never led in the second half and trailed for most of the third. They stayed within striking distance but every time it appeared Phil Jackson's veterans were ready to take over down the stretch, the Cavaliers had a response:

- The first big response came near the end of the third quarter with Los Angeles down by one, having outscored the Cavaliers 15-4 in the previous five minutes. With less than a minute left in the stanza Eyenga drove baseline and [hammered home a stuff shot](#) to make it 74-71 Cleveland. Christian's throw-down helped the Cavaliers go into the fourth quarter with momentum- and the lead- after L.A. had looked like L.A. for the first time all night.

- The second and response came midway through the fourth. After Derek Fisher drilled his third three-pointer to tie the score at 82-82, Israel Sports Legend Anthony Parker, who drained big shots all night, drained his two biggest. His tough turnaround and wide-open three put Cleveland back in the lead to stay and opened up a 9-0 run that made it 91-82 with 3:52 left.

- Cleveland needed one more response to make it a night. Or, more precisely, L.A. made the response for them. After the Lake Show closed to within three with 43.5 seconds left, Shannon Brown committed a foolish backcourt foul on Ramon Sessions, who dropped a pair to make it a two-possession game. Ten seconds later, with the score 98-95, Derek Fisher again committed a backcourt foul when good defense would have given Los Angeles a chance to

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steal a game they had no business winning.

The Lakers, happily, were awful. They committed 19 turnovers, shot 5-of-23 in the first period and didn't do what a two-time World Champion is supposed to do- beat a bad opponent while not playing at a World Championship level. Only Pau Gasol (30 points, 20 rebounds) and Derek Fisher showed up- and Fish was filleted defensively by Ramon Sessions beyond his 19-point contribution. Kobe Bryant drowsed through an 8-of-24 performance and Andrew Bynum was downright appalling- six points, six boards, five fouls and 2-of-12 from the field. A seven-foot man shooting 16 percent in a basketball game is bad enough; getting outplayed by Ryan Hollins (eight points, 4-of-5 shooting) is worse. That's a shame a lifetime of Irish Spring can't wash away.

I haven't watched many Lakers games. I'm going to go out on a limb and say this was their worst game of the season.

But let's not dwell too much on Los Angeles. The Cavaliers were the more aggressive team, owned the pressure points when the outcome was in the air and plain outplayed their opponents. They earned their tenth win of the season. The crowd at the Q got its money's worth in the effort and rocked the house down the stretch like it was 2009 all over again. It was spring-like weather and a victory over the Los Angeles Lakers- there have been worse days.