You know; if an NBA game was twelve minutes long the Cavaliers might just be in the thick of things. It's the remaining three quarters that are the problem. Such was the case in Cleveland's 110-90 loss to the Bucks at the Bradley Center Wednesday night.

For the second consecutive game the Cavaliers got the early drop on their opponent, only to see the other shoe drop with a vengeance. Tuesday night it was Golden State- specifically its backcourt tandem of Monta Ellis and Stephen Curry- turning a twelve-point deficit at the end of one into a ten-point cruise at the end of four. Wednesday night it was Milwaukee's turn- and again it was the guards that stole the show, and the game, from the Cavaliers.

Cleveland led 27-21 late in the first period when the Bucks began to rally in earnest. Their leader was the bantam-sized Clevelander who always plays large against his old team- Earl Boykins. The tiny man from Central Catholic, Eastern Michigan and a host of professional employers got things going with five points to end the first period. He added fifteen more on 6-of-7 shooting to spearhead a Milwaukee second-period blitz which saw the Bucks pour in 39 points on a scorching 70 percent from the field. By the time 'Lil Earl scored the half's final points it was 62-49 Bucks and the game, for all intents and purposes, was over.

Milwaukee lead guard Brandon Jennings made sure it stayed over. After scoring a docile four points in the first half, the brash kid from Compton ripped for twelve in less than five minutes,

part of a 16-4 run that blew things wide open for good. Cleveland never got closer than eighteen again. All told, Boykins and Jennings combined for 36 points on 15-of-19 from the field, 4-of-6 from three. Milwaukee didn't miss much in general. The Bucks fired a combined 55.1 percent and dropped 6-of-11 from downtown in the victory.

Meanwhile, with Baron Davis off attending to family matters, Cleveland's backcourt continued to bring back cold-sweat memories of the Darnell Valentine-Steve Kerr dynamic duo of 1990-91. Ramon Sessions and Israel Sports Legend Anthony Parker combined for 21 points on 8-of-19 shooting along with defense that can be charitably described as "hellish." Sessions would be pretty good if he could shoot a lick or play a lick of defense, just as the Cavaliers would be good if they played twelve-minute games.

By the way- J.J. Hickson, the destitute man's Darryl Dawkins, came up strong with four points on 2-of-10 shooting. And there you have it.

Race for the Ping-Pong Balls: At 12-52 the Cavaliers own a three-game lead over the Timberwolves, who are 16-50 after beating the Pacers Tuesday night. Washington and Sacramento are four-and-a-half out; Toronto is five behind the mean pace Cleveland continues to set. After their brief flirtation with competence the Cavaliers have wronged the ship with three consecutive defeats, all by double digits.

Next: Sunday at 1:00 when the Cavaliers host Oklahoma City, just the kind of team to extend losing streaks.