Baron Davis decided to show up and play, and wouldn't you know it, the Cavaliers won a basketball game Friday night. Led by Davis, who shows up sometimes in body, and J.J. Hickson, who shows up sometimes in mind, Cleveland built an early lead and kept it nearly the entire way on the way to a 97-91 victory over their erstwhile playoff rivals, the Detroit Pistons. The win moves the Cavaliers to a glossy 14-57 on the season.

Detroit took an early 2-0 lead on Richard Hamilton's jumper with 11:22 remaining in the first period. The Pistons would hold that advantage for a total of ten seconds and despite staying within striking distance all night, they would lead only once more. Cleveland owned the pressure points of the contest, repeatedly getting buckets and stops that helped them maintain control. After Anthony Parker put the Cavaliers ahead 54-53 with a long jumper forty-five seconds into the third period, Detroit closed to within one on three different occasions. Each time Cleveland responded. The Cavaliers never led by more than nine down the stretch, but more importantly they never trailed.

That Cleveland held down its narrow edge is due in large part to Baron Davis. The oft-traveled veteran from UCLA scored ten points in the last five-and-a-half minutes of the game and finished off the Pistons with a clinching three-pointer with ten seconds left. Overall Davis compiled 16 points with five assists and four rebounds in 24 minutes of work. He nailed 4-of-7 from three-point range as well.

Hickson, for his part, dominated the first half. The mercurial kid from N.C. State crashed around for 16 points and nine rebounds in the opening two stanzas and finished the night with 24 points and 15 boards on 9-of-13 from the field and 6-of-6 from the line. Hickson's effort keyed a 55-51 advantage on the backboards for the Cavaliers, who ripped down 19 offensive rebounds against Detroit's substandard front line.

Cleveland also got big contributions off its bench. Led by Davis, the reserves accounted for 44 points and twenty rebounds. Luke Harangody chipped in with ten points and nine rebounds; Ramon Sessions dished out six assists and Samardo Samuels had a sturdy nine-point, four-rebound night. As a team the Cavaliers shot 46.3 percent, hit 15-of-20 foul shots and compiled 21 assists. Aside from the 17 turnovers it was a relatively efficient outing for the Cleveland offense.

The defense wasn't so bad either. Detroit shot just 42.5 percent on the night. Normally one of the top three-point shooting teams in the league in terms of percentage, the Pistons hot on a marginal 4-of-13 attempts from beyond the arc. No Piston scored more than fifteen points. Detroit has now lost three straight and is a sorry 25-47 on the season- a far cry from the days not too long ago when the Pistons were the class of the East (at least until May.)

Race for the Ping-Pong Balls: Despite the win and Minnesota's loss at Oklahoma City, the Cavaliers are still two games ahead of (or behind, if you will) the Timberwolves for the league's worst record. Washington, which lost in Denver Friday night, sits at 17-54, three games off Cleveland's fearsome pace. No one else is within range.

Next: Sunday evening at 6:00 PM when the Cavaliers host the slumping Hawks, who are 3-8 in their last eleven and will be on the second half of a back-to-back. Can you say, "winning streak?"