King James Out-duels Pierce In Epic Showdown

In what was one of the most amazing one-on-one battles I've ever seen, LeBron James and the Cleveland Cavaliers held off Paul Pierce and the Boston Celtics 113-109 in double overtime last night at the Fleet Center in Boston.

James registered his fifth triple-double of the season, erupting for 44 points, 12 rebounds, and 11 assists. It was the eighth triple-double of his career. James also blocked 4 shots, had 2 steals, and committed just 2 turnovers all evening. Pierce became the first Celtic since Larry Bird in 1989 to score 50 points in a game, and added 8 rebounds and 7 assists for good measure.

The Cavs and Celtics have a lot of bad blood, and a rivalry has developed between the two teams over the last three seasons. It's clear that James and Pierce dislike each other, perhaps stemming back from an incident in the pre-season last year where Pierce allegedly spit at James. The two went back and forth last night, at times, turning the game into a one-on-one battle with the eight other players on the court with the best vantage point in the house.

James would have the last laugh. Pierce fouled out attempting to guard James on a drive to the basket with a minute remaining in double overtime. James hit one of the free throws, and then scored on another drive to the hoop on the next possession to seal the win.

The Cavs had great chances to win this one both in regulation, and in the first overtime. Zydrunas Ilgauskas missed two free throws with seven seconds left in regulation that would have sealed it. And James missed a driving layup at the end of the first overtime that also would have won it.

The Cavaliers made just 25 of 40 free throws on the night, and continue to free-fall in the league rankings in that category after leading it about a quarter of the way through the season. The missed throws by Z left the Cavs up just two, and Paul Pierce drew a very questionable foul from LeBron with 0.2 seconds left. Pierce hit both attempts from the charity line to send the game into overtime.

The Cavs head into the All-Star break with the exact same record as last season, at 31-21. Of course, last years team collapsed down the stretch, missing the playoffs by a game. The team is off until Tuesday, when they host the Orlando Magic.