In a head-to-head showdown of 2011 top ten picks, #1 Kyrie Irving (9-for-16, 25 points, 7 assists) thoroughly emasculated #9 Kemba Walker (6-for-21, 14 points, 4 assists) on Monday, as the Cavaliers turned around a 14-point third quarter deficit to beat down the Charlotte Bobcats, 102-94.

Appearing in the twelfth game of his pro career, Irving has already officially surpassed the total number of games he played collegiately at Duke, where a Sweet Sixteen loss to Arizona last March robbed the Blue Devils of a showdown with eventual National Champions Kemba Walker and UConn. Now, in an MLK Day matinee in Charlotte, it was time to prove that-- while all men are created equal— the same cannot necessarily be said of rookie point guards.

“I got a message for all you fans who thought the Cavs would be better off drafting Derrick Williams and Kemba Walker,” Irving didn’t actually say after the game. “Bow down, fools! Kneel! Grovel before your new basketball lord!"

For the Bobcats (3-11), this was the second game of coach Paul Silas’ new little-man backcourt experiment, inserting the 6’1” Walker into the starting line-up alongside 6’0” leading scorer D.J. Augustin. The pairing had worked out quite nicely on Saturday in a 112-100 win over Golden State, but the Cavs (6-6)—who already own a win over Charlotte earlier this year in Cleveland—seemed up to the challenge early. Paced by 7 points from Irving and 9 from Antawn Jamison, Cleveland led by a 30-23 count after one quarter. The next twelve minutes, however, would prove considerably less friendly.

With the Cavs' forced to turn to their pratfall comedy team of Semih Erden and Daniel Gibson off the bench (performing as the duo "Boobie and the Tall Guy"), Charlotte stormed back, led by a spree of buckets from the always dangerous Augustin (24 pts, 8 asts, 4 rbs) and the surprisingly relevant ex-Buckeye 7-footer Byron Mullens (9 pts, 12 rbs). The Bobcats eventually ran off 11 straight points and outscored Cleveland by 18 in the second quarter, taking a 57-46 lead into the locker room.

Making matters worse, Cavalier starting shooting guard Anthony Parker was ruled out of the second half with back issues, forcing extra minutes out of an ice cold Boobie (0-5, 2 points) and Ramon Sessions (1-4, 4 points). Somebody besides Irving and Jamison was going to need to step up. But who????

Smelling blood at this point, Charlotte extended their lead to 14 points on a Walker lay-up with 9:22 to go in the third quarter. …And that's when it happened. The mythical shot-making beast known as "the Omri Casspi" finally emerged from its long slumber!

"Rawwwwwrrr," cried the groggy creature from the Dead Sea. "I can only score points in the amount of three! …But my lobs from the magic arc never go where I want them to be. What oh

what can I do to score my three?”

“There is another way, Young Casspi!” yelled Coach Scott, from one knee. “There is another way to score your three!”

And suddenly, like clouds parting over a field of light bulbs, the Omri Casspi remembered, at long last, that it could take the ball to the effing rack. And so it did, and much hacking did occur—leading to not one, not two, but THREE “and-one” three-point plays in the third quarter for the beleaguered small forward out of Israel (part of a refreshing 14 point night).

An Alonzo Gee three (the 23-foot variety) capped the Cavaliers’ solid comeback rally, tying the game at 77 with 50 seconds to go in the third. Cleveland would then establish an 8 point lead of their own on an Irving triple in the fourth, but Charlotte would battle back to regain the edge at 94-93 with two minutes to go. In the end, it took a pair of pretty Anderson Varejao lay-ins to spark a 9-0 Cav run to close out the ballgame.

For all the focus on Kyrie (certainly deserving with five straight 20+ point games), let us not overlook the contributions of Varejao (14 pts, 12 rbs), and Jamison (20 pts, 7 rbs, 5 asts)—two veterans who were on the shelf during the majority of last season’s march of despair, and who could very well be moved before the end of this season. Wrapping up a very tough early season 7-game road trip at 3-4, and sitting at 6-6 despite playing 9 of their first 12 on the road—there’s a lot to feel good about with the character of this club so far, and that starts with the vets. Even if you’re a bigger fan of lottery balls than victories, you can’t possibly dislike your new franchise player learning about professionalism and hustle from these guys.

Anyway, it’s right back to it on Tuesday night as the Cavs finally return home to host the Warriors. On a related note, there are A LOT of crap teams in the NBA this year, people. So you lottery-ballers might want to reconsider your focus for this season and try to remember how enjoyable mediocre-ish #8 seed basketball can really be.