The Game in 300 Words or Less

The Cavaliers rolled into Miami with Anthony Parker, Daniel Gibson, and Tristan Thompson all on the shelf. Handling Wade, Bosh, and Number Six on the road is difficult enough, but without a full deck it's almost impossible for a mediocre team like the Cavs.

Unfortunately for the Cavaliers, the final score doesn't really reflect how hard they played for the first three quarters. Despite the obvious talent gap between the two rosters, the Cavs simply didn't quit. This has become a theme for the Cavs over the last two seasons – they tend to play the Heat tough.

There were three times in the first half when the Cavs fell behind by eight points or more and the game could have spiraled out of control, but it didn't. It wasn't until the last few minutes of the third quarter that the Cavs really fell behind for good, as the Heat simply overwhelmed them.

As disappointing as the final 16-point margin is, this game actually should be viewed in a

positive light, as the Cavs managed to hang with arguably the best team in the league without their best two shooting guards and one of their three best bigs. This is a team that can play with anyone if they bring their A-Game, and that's a huge improvement from what we saw for so much of the 2010-2011 campaign.

Irving Watch

Despite scoring 16 points and notching half a dozen rebounds and assists, Kyrie struggled tonight. He was an uncharacteristically inefficient 5-for-15, and turned the ball over 5 times. Miami is a sound defensive team and their hard traps were causing problems for many of the Cavs, not just Irving.

Ultimately, games like these are going to teach Kyrie just as much as victories. Once in awhile a 19-year old rookie needs a game to remind him that he's still a 19-year old rookie, and that's exactly what Irving got tonight. Kyrie looked very much like a rookie forcing some ill-advised shots and at times being careless with the basketball. It is pretty amazing that he's already earned enough trust with fans that games like these are considered disappointing.

Big game for the Tawn-Tawn

It will be interesting to see if the Cavs get any substantial offers for Antawn Jamison, but I won't be surprised at all if they keep him. Jamison was most responsible for keeping the Cavaliers in the basketball game, scoring 25 points (11-for-22), grabbing 9 boards, and delivering timely buckets that always seemed to come just when the Heat were building momentum. Twenty of Jamison's points came in the first half when the Cavs managed to match the Heat blow-for-blow.

Man, did I hate Jamison when he used to play with the Wizards, but I've really grown to respect him. In fairness to Jamison, I hated him because he was actually good, unlike say, DeShawn

Stevenson.

Jamison is cashing in roughly $15 million this season, turns 36 this June, and clearly has diminishing skills. It would be easy for him to play out the string at 70% effort or moan about playing for a rebuilding team, but he's done neither. Instead, the guy brings is every night, sets a great example for the younger players, and once in awhile turns into his former self with a performance like we saw tonight.

Aside from Kyrie Irving, Jamison is the only guy on the roster who is an true threat to go for 20-25 points each night. If someone offers the Cavs some value for Jamison (i.e. a first round pick or a potential long-term piece) then they obvious have to consider the deal, but don't think it's a given that the Cavs will trade him just because he's pricey, on the last year of his deal, and in the twilight of his career. (Plus, remember that the Cavs would have to take back a similar cap figure.)

Are the 2011-2012 Cavs a success?

I suppose the answer to that question depends on your metrics, but I came into this season looking for three things from the Cavs…

1) Don't embarrass me.

Losing 26 games in a row was embarrassing. Losing roughly 158-13 against the Lakers was embarrassing. Being spurned on national television by an overgrown teen was embarrassing.

Nothing this season has come close to even a sliver of last year's embarrassment, and that in and of itself is a win.

2) Show consistent effort.

To a degree this is just an extension of number one, but it would just be nice to see these guys play hard every night for 48 minutes even if they're losing more games than they win. So far Byron Scott has delivered exactly that. There will be growing pains on what is largely a very young, rebuilding squad, but as long as nobody's mailing in games I can live with those struggles.

3) Give us some hope for the future.

Done, done and done. Kyrie Irving looks like he could be a top-15 (or better) player. Anderson Varejao is in the midst of a career year and has been the team's most valuable player. Alonzo Gee looks like he can develop into a solid sixth or seventh man, and possibly a starter. Tristan Thompson has already had his SWAT team application accepted.

In short, there are more than enough guys who should be back in '12-'13 and beyond to make this season seem like a building block for the future.

Regarding the fringe players.

I'm not sure what suddenly gave Byron such unyielding faith in Luke Harangody, but Harangody was Jiri Welsch levels of awful tonight. Okay that might not be fair – after all, there will never be another Jiri, but two points on 1-for-9 shooting, including 4 misses from beyond the arc just won't cut it. In his best season, Harangody only shot 37% from three at Notre Dame, so it's tough to figure out his newfound affinity for the long ball.

Luke, you're a power forward buddy – how about standing under the basket, throwing your weight around, and setting up for some rebounds instead of mindlessly chucking treys? This was clearly a night when the often-overlooked Samardo Samuels should have received the minutes that went to Harangody.

The other guy who deserves a plug is Christian Eyenga, who in just his second appearance of the season reminded us all why Danny Ferry made him a first round pick. When healthy, the only true NBA-caliber shooting guard on the roster is Anthony Parker (Gibson is undersized), and the only guy at the two or the three with serious athleticism is Alonzo Gee.

With that in mind, Eyenga needs to see regular minutes unless he becomes a total black hole on offense. Eyenga is club-controlled at a friendly cap number for a few more seasons and has the raw talent to develop into an NBA starter, or at least a solid defensive role player. In this developmental season, the Cavs need to give him every opportunity to do so.

Up Next: Vs. Los Angeles Clippers, 2/8, Quicken Loans Arena, FSN Ohio, 7:00