The evening began with a bad sense of deja-vu for the Cleveland Cavaliers. Once again, fan-favorite Anderson Varejao will miss extended time with an injury. Because the team did not have a shootaround this afternoon, the news came late and shortly before tip-off. I believe that the mood of a team has a big impact on how it performs. For example, the Cavs were a respectable 7-10 before the Miami Heat made their first post-Decision visit to Cleveland. The wheels fell off after that and they managed to only win 12 games after that.

The Cavs had little hope on Saturday night with the bad news of Anderson Varejao, Kyrie Irving still out with a concussion and the Philadelphia 76ers coming into town. Every year, there appears to be a team that makes the jump from a bottom seeded playoff team to one with home court advantage. The Doug Collins coached 76ers are playing that role this season.

The Philiadelphia squad is winning by having a balanced scoring attack and by playing hard-nosed defense. Much like the Denver Nuggets, Philadelphia does not have a singular star. On the year, they are holding opponents to 51.9% shooting (which is 3rd best in the NBA). They are also winning games by an average of 8.9 PPG, which is good for 2nd best in the league. The 76ers are a team that values the basketball. They are committing a league-best 10.7 turnovers per game.

The 76ers are a team that has a balanced attack, has an elite defense and who doesn't turn the ball over. When a lottery-bound team who is missing its two best players face them, they need to play a near-flawless game. Instead, the Cavs shot 36.9% overall and made a total of 3 three-pointers on 21.4% shooting. Tom Reed of the Cleveland Plain Dealer had the Tweet of the night when he pointed out that the Cavs had as many airballs as the 76ers had turnovers.

Philadelphia dominated the Cavs throughout the entire game. Their biggest lead was by 21 points compared to the 2 for Cleveland. The real turning-point for the game was when the 76ers out-scored the Cavs 37-22 in the 2nd quarter. Under normal circumstances, the Cavs would have been able to withstand that assault. They scored their 22 points on 42.9% shooting and they had 6 assists in the process. The issue was that Cleveland played poor defense and gave up 57.1% shooting. It should be noted that the 76ers won by 15 points. In other words, the Cavs may have had an opportunity to win this game if they played better defense in the 2nd quarter.

Ramon Sessions continued his streak of performing well as a starter (19 points, 8 assists) as did Antawn Jamison (20 points, 8 rebounds). Other than Alonzo Gee, who had 17 points on only 8 shots, no Cavalier scored more than 7 points. Considering that the two best players on the Cavs were unable to play in this game due to injuries, the bench needed to produce more and with better efficiency if the Cavs had wanted an opportunity to win the game.

Interestingly enough, the Cavs did not feel Anderson Varejao's absence in the rebounding department. The Cavs out-rebounded the 76ers 52-40. One thing to look out for moving forward without Varejao is how the team rebounds without him. Before the 76ers game, the Cavs were pulling down 42.7 rebounds per game.

The Cavs are going to have a tough time staying in games without Varejao. The team is not deep at the center position. Byron Scott is going to have to consider starting Ryan Hollins, Semih Erden or Samardo Samuels until Varejao is back from his injury. The Cavs slim chances at making the playoffs are all but gone with the news of Varejao's fractured wrist.

The Good: Kyrie Irving has resumed cardiovascular activity, which is indicative that he will probably be ready to play on Wednesday. With the recent injuries, the Cavs are seriously deficient in talented players. Irving's presence will help this team immensely, even if they are still without talented big men.

The Bad: What happened to the Omri Casspi that Sacramento traded to the Cavs? I do not remember Casspi being so awkward offensively earlier in his career. Missing shots is one thing, but NBA fans do not expect a professional to airball 3 shots in a single game. Casspi has the talent to be better than this.

The Ugly: The Cavs do not have a lot of depth in the big man department. Semih Erden has big shoes to fill and he does not have the talent or experience to do so. Plugging in Erden into the starting lineup is all but guaranteed to not be pretty. Erden failed to even meet the smallest of expectations. He had 0 points, 3 rebounds and 4 fouls in 13 minutes. If Erden, Samuels and Hollins cannot improve, it might be time for Byron Scott to get creative and to start thinking about a small lineup.