Wow, what a clunker last night. The Cavs self-imploded, losing at home to the Hawks ... a team they have dominated over the last couple of years. The talented John Hnat was there live last night, and checks in this morning with his thoughts on the Election Night debacle down at The Q.

My, my, my, my, my. What a mess.

No, you're not reading last week's review of the Bobcats game again. Same quote, different day.

THE SUMMARY:

The Cavs lost to the surgent Atlanta Hawks, 104-95, in overtime. LeBron James had what cogent observer Tony Lastoria (more on that in a minute) described as the quietest 34 point game you'll ever see. Drew Gooden backed up LeBron with 21 points and 14 rebounds (7 on the offensive glass). Other than Donyell Marshall's dozen points (which gave him 10,000 for his career), the entire Cavs bench scored a grand total of three points. Joe Johnson led the Hawks with 25 points, and Zaza Pachulia (isn't that a type of candle?) and Certified Cavs Killer Tyronn Lue each chipped in 19 points.

WHAT I LIKED ABOUT THE GAME:

1. Free tickets to the game. I knew that writing this column would pay off sooner or later. Not to mention that it was LeBron retro bobblehead night (in case you missed it, there are already 61 of them for sale on eBay; that number will probably increase by the time you read these words). Fellow site writers Tony Lastoria and Erik Cassano also attended the game. Good guys, lots of good Cleveland sports discussion. I'd definitely recommend going to a game with those gentlemen any time.

2. Drew Gooden is figuring it out game by game, with yet another strong performance. He is fast becoming the Cavs' best big man; his 14 rebounds led the team again, and most of his rebounds do not come on his own missed shots ([cough] Zydrunas [cough]). He also seems to be picking up the finer points of Brown's defense, as he is not out of position nearly as often as he used to be.

3. Larry Hughes is continuing his rebound from the disappointing 2005-06 campaign. His numbers were not the greatest – 17 points on 4 of 12 shooting – but he was a perfect 8-of-8 from the free-throw line and played scrappy defense.

Once again, after three positive points from the game (one of which affected only me personally, so you probably don't give a rat's sphincter about it), I'm already out. Let's get to the dark side…

WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE ABOUT THE GAME:

This column is getting easier and easier to write, as the same shortcomings keep popping up game after game after game. I'm basically at the point where I can use a template for a lot of these criticisms…

1. Zydrunas Ilgauskas. Hey, big guy, the season's [NOTE TO SELF: ENTER TOTAL NUMBER OF GAMES PLAYED] games old already. Feel free to join us whenever the mood strikes.

2. Damon Jones and David Wesley played a nondescript [NOTE TO SELF: ENTER COMBINED MINUTES PLAYED] minutes between them. Their combined line: [PROVIDE STATISTICS, ALONG WITH WARNING THAT THE NUMBERS ARE NOT SUITABLE FOR CHILDREN]. It's still early, but here's hoping that Coach Brown will not be afraid to go to rookies Shannon Brown and Daniel Gibson if the veterans continue to struggle. (Note that Brown actually got into the game for four minutes tonight. It's a subtle move that probably means far less than we could make it out to be – kind of like the way the Western World used to dissect grainy videos from the Kremlin to determine who was really in charge – but it is a step in the right direction.)

3. The abandonment of the motion offense in the second half. Time and again, the Cavs hoisted long jumper after long jumper, rarely attempting to work the ball inside. When they weren't firing 20-plus footers, they stood around and watched LeBron go one-on-one. It didn't work last year, and it's not working this year.

4. Yet again, free throw shooting (or lack of it) killed the team. They shot 62% from the line (23 of 37), including a crucial miss by James with six seconds left that paved the way to Atlanta sending the game into overtime. Not that the game should have been that close at that point anyway; with even acceptable shooting from the stripe, the Cavs would have had the game in the bag.

5. Cleveland led by 10 points, 80-70, with eight minutes remaining in the game, in their own house, against a team that was one of the worst in the NBA last year. They just do not (yet?) have that killer instinct to step on the opponent's throat when the opportunity is there. Until they do, it will be a hurdle for LeBron in becoming an elite player and the Cavs in becoming one of the league's vanguard teams.

WHAT LIES AHEAD:

It's not getting any easier. After a day off, the Cavs play host to the new look Bulls this Thursday. Will they play up to the level of their competition, or will they lay another egg?