The only thing off was the timing. But even separated by about 45 minutes, the two events that defined Cleveland sports on Monday night were exquisite. The Cavs got an improbable and important last second victory in Philly. And shortly after, Joe Borowski blew yet another game and save for the Indians after surrendering a mammoth 9th inning home run to Manny Ramirez. In his latest, Gary Benz says the real difference between the Cavs and the Indians comes down to leadership.

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With just about one second left on the clock and his team down by one, Cleveland Cavaliers guard Devin Brown grabbed a rebound, tried the put back and was fouled in the process. As the ball was leaving his hand, the final horn sounded. But to those watching in real time, it looked as though the 76ers had escaped by the slimmest of fractions.

Philadelphia head coach Maurice Cheeks pulled a Brian Billick and hurried his team off the court even as the official reviewed the replay. It didn't work for Billick any better than it did for Cheeks. When the 76ers reluctantly trudged back out of the locker room, it was with just enough time to watch Brown nail two free throws that gave the Cavaliers the victory 91-90 and the home court advantage in their

upcoming playoff series against Washington.

The looks on the faces of the fans remaining in The Wachovia Center were not so much ones of disbelief as they were of resignation and inevitability. It was the same looks, frankly, that Indians fans were wearing about 45 minutes later. Once the replay confirmed that the foul call came with .2 left, 76ers fans just knew Brown would make the free throws and allow the Cavs to slip out of town with the improbable victory.

That same sense of dread permeated the sparse crowd at Progressive Field. When closer Joe Borowski entered the ninth inning with a one run lead, you'd have trouble finding anyone outside of manager Eric Wedge who thought Borowski would save that game. When Boston's Julio Lugo led off with a double, it's doubtful even Wedge had any faith in Borowski.

So when Manny Ramirez, of course, appeared in the batters box with David Ortiz, whose current weight far surpasses his batting average, standing on first, the only question was how deep in the count it would be before Ramirez sent a ball into the left field stands. Mercifully, Ramirez didn't wait long, sending Borowski's first pitch deep into the night to give the Red Sox the 6-4 lead and, ultimately, the win.

Borowski's pitch to Ramirez was so slow and so fat, Katie Couric could have sent it to the warning track. Rachel Ray would have probably hit it out. And, just like the 76ers fans lamenting their team's loss, Indians fans were hardly surprised by the Indians' result. Borowski coming through would have been a far bigger surprise.

Of the two games, the Cavs victory was probably more important than the Indians' loss, though it is few days too soon to tell. In the case of the Cavs, it wasn't

exactly a must win situation, but it was close. The victory gave this team that has struggled so mightily on the road this season a much needed home-court advantage against the Wizards. The way it ended may just turn out to be the event that helps this team gel in time for the playoffs.

Going into the 76ers game, it was Cavs fans that actually were feeling the sense of inevitability. To be charitable, the Cavs have struggled on the road. To be perfectly blunt, it would be a toss up whether the odds favored a Borowski save or a Cavs road victory. Throw in the fact that the Cavs were playing on the road the night following a tougher than it had to be home victory against the Miami Heat and the odds actually tip in Borowski's favor.

But that's really the point, isn't it? Nothing has to be inevitable. The Cavs didn't have to accept the fate their season-long trends dictate. Only they controlled how hard they would play, how deep they would dig and whether or not gaining home court advantage was meaningful. The end result may have been laced with luck, but it was surely the by-product of a larger effort earlier in the evening.

In the case of the Indians, the outcome was as much dictated by what transpired over the previous eight innings as it was by Borowski's implosion, a fate they didn't have to accept. The Indians left nine runners on base, four of which were in scoring position. Boston starter Jon Lester was hardly overpowering and was there for the taking. But at this point, the only thing keeping the heat off the Indians woeful offense is the far worse failures of the Detroit Tigers. As just an example, the Indians scored two runs in the fifth inning and then loaded the bases with only one out, chasing Lester from the game. But Julian Taverez came in and struck out both Ryan Garko and David Dellucci. Particularly fitting was that Dellucci was batting for Jason Michaels.

In other words, the game didn't have to depend on Borowski, it just ended up working out that way. Which is why it ended up working out the way it did.

The real dilemma for the Indians now regarding Borowski is how to fix whatever it is that ails him. As expected, he's now taking refuge on the disabled list with some sort of undefined arm trouble. But if/when he returns, working him back in won't be easy. Though he saved 45 games last season, Borowski also proved that he basically can't pitch in non-save situations. The bulk of his hefty ERA last season came as the result of his getting pushed around pretty hard when the game wasn't on the line. But Wedge can ill afford to put Borowski back in to save a game, either. Look for Wedge and general manager to go into full stall mode by prescribing for Borowski lots of simulated games and lengthy rehab assignments. In the meantime, you'll also see lots of bullpen by committee decisions until someone, anyone, emerges that can actually close out a game.

Beyond the outcomes of Monday's games, the real difference between the Cavs and the Indians comes down to leadership. In LeBron James, the Cavs have one of the most definable leaders in the game. James' presence, complemented mightily by his play, is uplifting to his teammates and allows them to not always accept the fate they're handed.

The Indians simply lack that kind of leadership. C.C. Sabathia may be the closest thing to a unifying presence in the locker room as they'll get by virtue of his tenure, but even the players know he has one foot out the door already. Victor Martinez and Travis Hafner are possibilities, but neither comes across as either imposing or passionate. The rest of the team lacks the requisite resume to be taken too seriously.

That doesn't mean that the Cavs are headed to the championship this year and the Indians headed for an early fall. But as the results of each become more inevitable, it's not hard to see why.