The Washington Huskies had lost to Portland to open their season; Cleveland State had beaten Oakland, who then came out and won at Oregon. So if that stuff meant anything, this could have been a good spot for the Vikings. Exhibiting the same inability to shoot from the perimeter that reared its head against Oakland, and being dominated on the boards by Washington's big strong front line, CSU was overmatched this night. Jay Pearlman recaps the Vikings loss to the Huskies.

The Washington Huskies had lost to Portland to open their season; Cleveland State had beaten Oakland, who then came out and won at Oregon.

So if that stuff meant anything, this could have been a good spot for the Vikings.

But you all know that the transitive property that works in math class doesn't work in basketball.

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CSU opened the game shooting 2-18 (1-6 from three), had to make their last shot to shoot 24% for the half, and were outrebounded in the first half 36-16.

Washington methodically extended its lead to 24, and it took a Norris Cole breakaway at the buzzer-CSU's first transition basket of the game-to cut the lead to 22 at the intermission, 48-26.

To CSU's credit, they came out angry after halftime, changed the game into the kind played in the schoolyard, and over the first nine minutes of the second half outscored Washington 27 to 8, cutting the lead to just 3. But just as Bill Russell said countless times all those years ago on television, when a team gets way down and then roars back, invariably its players expend so much energy climbing most or all the way back that they have nothing left when they get there;

in the last 11 minutes Washington outscored the Vikes 22-10, restoring the margin to a comfortable 15, winning 78-63.

For the full game CSU was outshot 44% to 31%, and outrebounded 60-34 (I can't remember a game in which one team grabbed 60). Led by the nation's third leading rebounder last year Jon Brockman (23 points, 10-17, and 13 boards), the five forwards who played for the Huskies dominated the game, scoring 58 points and grabbing 45 boards; the six forwards who saw action for CSU (including their best player J'Nathan Bullock) contributed 22 points and 9 boards (starting center Chris Moore missed all four of his shots, scored no points, and pulled down just 3 rebounds).

Even more telling, CSU's stars Bullock and Cedric Jackson combined to shoot 8-31, including 1-5 in threes, with 7 rebounds and 4 assists.

In the end, it wasn't as close as the score indicated.

In a column like this, it is the writer's job to separate for the readers the "real" from the imaginary, what is transferable to future outings from what isn't (if you don't think I do that, undoubtedly you've stopped reading long before now). That said, what was "real" in this game-and in the preceding game-is what happened in the first half: that unless they can get out in transition, this team is going to have a devil of a time scoring in the half-court; that teams are going to pack in man-to-man and zone defenses in the half-court against CSU, making the Vikings score from the perimeter to beat them;

and that unless CSU can hold its own on the boards-at least on its defensive board-its opportunities to score in transition will be severely limited.

That's a recipe for losses against major conference teams that rebound, control pace, and sluff or zone, and one for closely contested games against conference

opponents.

Two players took positive steps forward in the Washington loss, sophomore guards Norris Cole and D'Aundray Brown. Cole was able to get and hit his shot on offense, scoring 20 on 8-19 shooting, 1-3 from deep.

He also showed the ability to handle well, tallying two assists without a turnover.

And he led the team in rebounds from the second guard spot grabbing 9, 6 at the offensive end.

Often forced to guard bigger players, Brown was strong defensively (also when called upon to trap), showed the ability to penetrate under control and draw fouls, scored 8 on 2-4 shooting and 4-7 from the line, and grabbed 7 rebounds.

After shooting well from the floor against Oakland Saturday night and showing more confidence in his mid-range shot in practice on Monday, it's time for D'Aundray to bring this developing aspect of his game out onto the floor with him, to look more for his own shot, to take it and to make it.

And of course, to take 500 shots a day before or after practice.

CSU news and notes:

- The Vikings are getting used to Continental hub Houston International Airport, having changed planes there both on the way to Seattle and on the way home. Houston also appears a reasonable place to finalize TheClevelandFan articles.
- No time to cry over a tough Pac Ten loss on the road, as after the final leg home on Wednesday morning and an afternoon focused on classes and school work, it's right back at it on Thursday, practicing and preparing for Kansas State's visit in the McLendon game on Saturday night. The 1-1 Vikings will need to shoot better at home, and also defend their defensive board, if they hope to come out with a win against another major conference opponent.