

Sporting View

Cavs look to make NBA playoff action

by John Musser
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The 89-90 NBA season has been a long and arduous one for the Cleveland Cavaliers, but they just might make it.

After a 50-plus win season last year, the Cavs dropped back into the mediocre status that they had worked so hard to get rid of. Injuries to key players disrupted the chemistry of the team, and Coach Lenny Wilkens was often forced to use inexperienced people in important roles. Suddenly, the team that many thought had a chance to be a force in the 90's took a nose dive and had to land for repairs. Make that a crash landing.

Brad Daugherty, Mark Price, Larry Nance, and Tree Rollins

most frustrating. Now, with the regular season coming to a close and playoff time nearing, the play of the Cavs is starting to remind observers of last year's team. Wilkens now must get his charges back on track to becoming the dominant team that everyone predicated they could become. It will not be easy.

The Cavs hosted the Detroit Pistons on Sunday and came away with a 100-97 victory for their eleventh win in 16 games. This put Cleveland in the eighth and final Eastern Conference playoff spot, one game ahead of the Atlanta Hawks. Detroit was a tired team, playing on the road without one of their best players, guard Joe Dumars, who is out with a broken hand. The hosts did not have the services

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have all missed or played with injuries at some point during the season. In some cases, most of the season. The first three were named to last year's all-star team, and the last was their top defensive reserve.

Then General Manager Wayne Embry traded shooting guard Ron Harper to the L.A. Clippers. Imagine the magic tricks Big Len has had to cast just to put a competitive group of five out on the floor. As Cleveland's record shows (36-39 as of Monday morning), Wilkens is not David Copperfield. Heck, he isn't even K-Mar, the discount magician.

But Wilkens is a good coach, a damn good one. Little by little, he got his team back together. Price came back and opened up the court for the offense. The Cavs' other outside threat, Craig Ehlo, no longer had to carry the three-point load alone anymore. The inside game was still hurting though. John "Hot Rod" Williams, the Cavs' sixth man, and Winston Bennett, solid players both, couldn't make up for the loss of their two big men.

And when Daugherty and Nance did come back, they both had to shake off the rust and get back into shape. Then there was the problem of regaining that team chemistry that they built last year. The Cleveland organization has been through more trying times, but these times have certainly been the

of power forward Nance, who is still nagged by injuries (sprained ankle). The Cavs frontline, sans Larry, was still quite impressive.

Williams was hot, leading all scorers and picking bushels of rebounds. Price was his old self, nailing outside jumpers and making pinpoint passes on the break for easy buckets. Daugherty was a force down on the blocks, at times unstoppable. And Wilkens kept his team focused, and his careful planning in the final minutes of the game lead them to the triumph.

Unfortunately, Detroit, who might be Cleveland's opponent in the playoffs, won't always be tired. And Dumars will be back. But if the Pistons should finish behind the Chicago Bulls, the Cavs will have to play Jordan and company instead, a rematch of last years first round series. The Bulls upset the favored Cavs in five games, and eventually lost to Detroit in the Eastern semi-finals. Would the boys from Cleveland like revenge? I can answer that in one word: Youbetcha.

But first, they've got to make the playoffs if they wish to exact revenge, and they will have to keep improving to do it. If the last two weeks are any indication, they just might make it.



photo by Rick Brooks

Throw to third: Third baseman Joe Mason of the Lions reaches for a wild throw while an RIT runner slides in for the steal. RIT swept the Lions in Monday's twinbill. See story on page 15

Thursday	Monday
<u>Softball</u>	<u>Baseball</u>
Geneva 3 pm H	Edinboro 1 pm H
<u>Tennis</u>	Tuesday
IUP 3 pm H	<u>Baseball</u>
Saturday	Westminster 1 pm A
<u>Tennis</u>	<u>Softball</u>
Allegheny 10 am A	Allegheny 3 pm A

Baseball team struggles

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two, scoring a run and picking up a run batted in. Wotus was walked twice in the game reaching base three out of four times to the plate.

Catcher Paul Benim hit two of three and batted two runs in for the Lions. Benim picked up the only extra base hit of the game for Behrend with a double.

Chris Myers and Percy Gum had the other two hits for the Lions.

Behrend won the second game, 3-2, scoring in the eighth inning on a wild pitch when Myers crossed the home plate.

Scott Fleshman pitched the complete game allowing only three hits. Fleshman had seven strikeouts and four base on balls.

Terrill batted two of four, collecting a double and driving in a run.

Myers also hit two for four and scored the winning run.

Cerqua hit a double and also scored a run for the winning Lions.

Sophomore Kirk McKinney had the other hit for Behrend in the closer getting a double and picking up a RBI. McKinney drove in Goard who was walked to reach first base.

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