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Celtics at Atlanta Hawks Game 1: Hawks 83, Celtics 74

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- The Hawks were brilliant early, shaky in the middle and bad down the stretch. That also kind of describes the **Jason Collins** Game Flow after Larry Drew decided to start Collins and then play him 32 minutes in the playoff opener after not playing him more than 25 minutes all season.
- It all worked out in the end for the Hawks. Or at least it did after **Rajon Rondo** decided it was a good idea to get two technical fouls and then bump official **Marc Davis** with his team down four points and 41 seconds to go.
- It's an automatic one-game suspension if league officials determine that Rondo intentionally bumped Davis. They can also add games to the penalty.
- "I was upset about the call, and I said something to [Davis]," Rondo said. "As I was walking I thought he stopped and my momentum carried me into him. I even think I tripped on his foot. I didn't intentionally chest-bump him."
- The sequence led to three Hawks free throws and killed Boston's momentum. The Celtics are in trouble if Rondo sits because he was the only thing they had going for long stretches tonight. It's hard to understate the stupidity of his actions.
- "[Doc Rivers] just told me to keep my composure, which I know," Rondo said. "I was just out there competing. I wanted to win."
- Rondo was arguing the call even though it was clear **Brandon Bass** harangued **Josh Smith**. "It was definitely a foul, so that was the right call," Josh said.
- **Joe Johnson** had another poor performance in the playoffs. It's not as if he doesn't know he's going to get pressured. He handled it pretty well early (it helped that the Hawks played faster) but then Joe came out after halftime and seemed to want to go one-on-one.
- "I missed a lot of wide open shots I normally make. I'm sure Game 2 will be a lot different," Joe said. "I'm just glad guys like Jeff [Teague] and Josh was able to pretty much carry us down the stretch."
- You can't fault Joe for missing open shots. Well, I guess you can, but that happens. More problematic were all the possessions that came to a halt because Joe was dribbling aimlessly (or, worse, getting stripped by **Paul Pierce**) while his teammates stood and watched.
- "I look at the stat sheet and he didn't have a typical Joe Johnson game shooting-wise," Drew said. "Yet we still won the game. With this team, I always try to focus on the positive with things like that. He'll watch the tape and, like everyone else, he will make adjustments. We will continue to run plays through him, put the ball in his hands and put him in position to score the ball."
- Iso-Joe was a big reason the Celtics got back in the game early in the third quarter. Joe not touching the ball much was a big reason why the offense got going again soon after that stretch.
- If Joe is going to have an off night offensively he has to play better than one quarter of solid defense against Pierce. Pierce is always moving and looking to attack and then moves the ball when he can't find an opening.
- Teague was Atlanta's best offensive player tonight. He had two key baskets in the clutch to atone for that memorable airball in the loss here to the Celtics.
- The first was a 3-pointer on a drive-and-kick from Josh. "I knew they were going to stunt off of me, because Kirk [Hinrich] had been making shots from the corner. So I knew **[Mickael] Pietrus** was probably going to stunt off of me. So I just tried to set my feet and knock it down."
- Soon after that big shot, Teague slithered to the basket to make a floater. It was a gutsy play both because of the circumstances and because he hadn't been finishing very well. "I just tried to make plays when the opportunity presented itself," he said. "I think the guys believe in me, and I believe in the guys. I just try to go out there and play my game. Playing with Josh and Joe and those guys makes my job a lot easier."
- Teague generally forced Rondo to take jumpers. He made them at a pretty good clip but better than than Rondo operating around the basket area.
- Let's start with the good for Collins: He made **Kevin Garnett** pay for his insistence taking him to the post, got five rebounds in spite of a marked disadvantage in athleticism against Boston's frontline and scored six points on five shots. Collins even showed some nice feet when KG finally decided to try to go past him.

- But Drew pushed his luck with Collins and the Celtics started getting him in pick-and-roll actions with Pierce and KG in the final period. That didn't work out so well, especially with Joe constantly trailing the ball-handler.
- Josh was making enough jumpers that KG eventually had to come out and challenge. But after a stretch where he took advantage by driving to the basket, Josh launched three jumpers over the final eight minutes and missed two.
- Still, Josh beasted for 18 rebounds, often fighting through traffic to snag them, and played solid straight-up D against KG. Garnett was right to try to post Josh but struggled to get clean looks on his turnaround Js.
- **Kirk Hinrich** had his best games in months. The good ball movement often ended with Hinrich open in the corner and he made the Celtics pay by making 4 of 6 3-point attempts. Maybe Kirk has been sandbagging, or perhaps he punished me for giving **Avery Bradley** the edge in my matchup box.
- **Ivan Johnson** showed no fear in his first playoff game while collecting five rebounds and two steals with no turnovers in 15 minutes. It's hard to argue with the outcome of Drew's Collins fixation tonight but Ivan should get more than 15 minutes in a series where the opposition doesn't have much size.
- There was a stretch when Pierce and Garnett took turns going at **Marvin Williams**, who didn't handle it well. Marvin played 14 low-impact minutes. I guess it's a good sign that the Hawks had a 50-41 rebounding edge with Marvin getting just one.
- My **Tracy McGrady** prediction already looks shaky. The best I can offer in my defense are the five rebounds, including two offensive, in 14 minutes. He's got to stop looking for calls on those drives.
- In 10 minutes **Jannero Pargo** scored five points on six shots, had no bad entry passes for turnovers and recorded an assist. That was good enough and he was solid defensively.
- **Willie Green** managed to post a team-worst -15 in just 10 minutes. Defense was the issue, as it sometimes can be.
- When Drew let his bench guys run over the final two weeks of the season, I thought it was because he was trying to get his starters some rest. Now I'm not so sure after he opened the fourth quarter with that Pargo-Green-McGrady-Marvin-Ivan alignment—and then subbed Ivan for Collins when it became clear that wasn't a good look. That's just one example of some odd sub patterns tonight.

Michael Cunningham, Hawks beat

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