

## Wizards Flub Final Home Game of the Season; Fall to Toronto 97-96

Contributed by LeslieAnn Souders  
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WASHINGTON, D.C. — With a 19-62 record on the season, one of the worst in franchise history, the Washington Wizards managed to blow a 11 point fourth quarter lead and merely handed the visiting Toronto Raptors the 97-96 victory Monday night at the Verizon Center.

With the 93-82 lead, the Wizards broke down and allowed the Raptors to go on a 17-3 scoring run that ended when Shawn Marion, who finished the night with 25 points, put in a layup with 21 seconds left, that would bring them to within two of the Wizards, 96-94.

On the inbounds play, Wizards interim Head Coach Ed Tapscott had wanted his team to call a timeout. Brendan Haywood had heard the command and was looking to the ref to call the timeout, just as Juan Dixon was throwing the ball to him. With the miscommunication, the ball flew out of bounds passed Haywood and gave the Raptors 15 seconds left for another play.

“We had said if they score, timeout, automatically, timeout,” said Tapscott. “You get the ball at half court and we still would have been up by two at that point and you get the ball inbound. For some inexplicable reason we didn’t call the timeout as I’m yelling ‘timeout!’.”

But Toronto ended up calling a 20 second timeout and in the huddle, Tapscott told his Wizards players to not allow any open three’s. As soon as they went back on the court, it was as if Tapscott’s words were totally forgotten as the ball was thrown inbounds to the hands of Raptors’ center Chris Bosh. Bosh, who has only made 10 3-pointers all season, was completely wide open and calmly stood behind the 3-point arc and nailed the 3-pointer to give his team the lead 97-96 with only 9 seconds remaining.

Bosh finished the night with a double-double — his 42nd of the season -- with 25 points and 15 rebounds.

With the chance of one more play, Caron Butler who was heavily double-teamed down low, was able to get the layup off but to no avail as the Wizards would fall yet again in front of their hometown crowd for the last time during this challenging and downer of a season.

“Dain Bramage, that’s the best I can say, we call it brainlock. Just brainlock,” said Tapscott. “We made just about every error you could make at the end. We lost Antawn Jamison at the start of the fourth quarter, that’s a major part of what we do. The entire burden fell on Caron Butler and we were not able to get any scoring out of anyone else. We needed somebody else to step up and make a shot and it just didn’t happen.”

Jamison, one of the Wizards leading scorers, finished the night with 23 points and left early in the last quarter with a right foot ankle injury.

Along with Jamison’s 23, Butler topped all Wizards scorers with 28 points and nine rebounds. Rookie reserve, JaVale McGee, contributed 10 points.

“I thought we fought pretty hard all the way down to the end,” Tapscott added. “We fought tonight, we didn’t think tonight but we fought tonight and we fought the other night and we’re gonna fight Wednesday night. We’re going to try to finish the season as strongly as possible.”

The “other” night Tapscott is speaking of, was Friday night when the Wizards toppled the Raptors in Toronto 100-98 when Butler sank the game winning shot at the buzzer, so Monday night’s loss could be seen as a “payback” from Toronto.

And the Wednesday night mention is in reference to the Wizards last battle of the entire 2008-2009 season as they will take to the road to face the defending Champions, the Boston Celtics at 8:00 PM.

This season may have been tough and sometimes unbearable to endure for Tapscott and his Wizards but in the post game press conference Monday night, he had some time to ponder on what this season has done to his team.

“It’s always better to reflect back after you have had some time, but speaking now, there have been lots of positives and negatives to what we have done. We have taken a lot of steps forward and a lot of steps back. I will say that some of the young guys got some experience and made some strides and we were able to identify the core player in some of the guys,” Tapscott said.

**GAME NOTES:** Washington’s Gilbert Arenas is questionable to play Wednesday due to soreness in his knee. He

has played in just two games since his return Saturday, April 4.

Andray Blatche dressed for the Wizards but did not play as result of a sore left knee.

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