



Chris Grant made his first big trade of the season on Tuesday with the Memphis Grizzlies. The Cavs are set to send out Jon Leuer for Marresse Speights, Wayne Ellington, Josh Selby and a top 5 protected first round pick in 2015. Needless to say, this is quite the haul for a guy that the Cavs picked up off of waivers in July.

When the Cavs got Leuer, I wrote the [following](#) :

*"When Chris Grant claimed Leuer off of waivers in July, it was an understated personnel move that could potentially be beneficial for the Cavs. □ Leuer can also amount to a player who isn't very good. □ Acquiring Jon Leuer is a prudent transaction because it is the sort of low risk and possible high reward decision that rebuilding teams should make."*

Little did I know that Leuer would become a valuable piece for the Cavs not for his reported ability to stretch the floor, but because John Hollinger and the Memphis Grizzlies faced an important decision: Break up the core or give up bench pieces for nothing to avoid the luxury tax. By shedding this salary to below the luxury tax threshold, the Grizzlies will save a lot of

money. They not only owe a luxury tax, but they become a team that is going to receive money from tax paying teams. With the Grizzlies reportedly signing Bill Walker and Delonte West, they managed to potentially improve their team and save money. From Cleveland's perspective, they bolster the bench and get a first round draft pick in 2015

Marresse Speights is a fifth year 6'10" big man out of Florida. The obvious conclusion is that Speights was brought in as a stop-gap to help the Cavs front court in wake of the news that Anderson Varejao will miss the season with a blood clot in his lung. He averaged 6.5 points and 4.7 rebounds for Memphis in 14 minutes of playing time. Speights' best season was when he averaged 8.8 points and 6.2 rebounds with the Grizzlies in 2011-2012. An intriguing aspect of the trade is that Speights is better at stretching the floor than any current Cavalier big man. He is shooting 46% from 16-23 feet and has never shot worse than 40% from that area. The obvious conclusion to draw is that he may fit quite well with Tristan Thompson, who gets the vast majority of his points in the paint.

Regardless of how Marresse Speights fits with the team in the short or long term, the real prize of this trade was the first round pick. The protection is quite liberal. According to reports, it is protected 1-5 and 15-30 in 2015 and 2016, 1-5 protected in 2017 and 2018 and unprotected in 2019. Odds are that the Cavs will get the pick in 2017, but crazier things have [happened](#)

In addition, Rudy Gay and Zach Randolph have the option of opting out of their contracts prior to that year. Considering their age, it is unlikely that they will. But they may decide that it is prudent to opt out and sign a long term deal at the expense of losing money in the final year of their contract. Even if they do not opt out, a first round pick is always a good asset to have. Considering that the only thing the Cavs had to give up was Jon Leuer, this is a savvy trade that may have a big payoff in the near future.

The other pieces of the trade are Josh Selby and Wayne Ellington. Selby is probably going to be the more valuable piece. He is better at creating offense than Ellington (who is more of a spot-up shooter). In addition, Selby is a decent rebounder for his size and position.

This trade puts the Cavs roster at 16, which means that the NBA is either going to allow the team to sign an extra player due to injuries or that somebody is going to be cut. At this point, it appears as if that player is going to be Jeremy Pargo.

This is a great traded considering that the Cavs went from a general manager like Jim Paxson

who had a habit of trading away first round picks to Chris Grant who hoards them. In addition, this almost guarantees that Luke Walton's playing time at power forward is soon to be a thing of the past. We will not know how good of a trade this is until at least 2015, but it is looking to be quite the haul for a player who only logged 91 minutes on the season.

The trade is smart because it brings in assets for the long-term, doesn't hurt the chances of getting another top pick this season and will preserve cap space in 2014. It is difficult to argue that Chris Grant didn't make a smart trade today.