



The NBA Draft Lottery will be announced on Tuesday, May 21st. Normally I would wait until after this epic event to take a comprehensive look at the Cavs draft. But thanks to Byron Scott (i.e. the human tanking device), we know the Cavs are assured a top six pick in this draft. So I've decided to jump the gun and prepare for the worst by exploring all of this team's realistic lottery options. The following is what I believe the Cavs draft board looks like today. But since I'm not here to start a draft turf war, this is really more or less just a guide to help familiarize you with the draft and how it conforms to the Cavs.

1. Nerlens Noel, C, Kentucky, age 19

It wouldn't be the worst year to end up with first overall pick. Especially if you're the Cavs. Noel is widely considered the top prospect in this year's class. At this stage of his career he's offensively amiss, though not nearly to the degree Tristan Thompson was. Despite his lack of offensive dexterity, he's someone who could really flourish with Waiters and Irving in the pick-and-roll game. Unlike Thompson, that's an area he thrives. But Noel's basketball prospectus begins and ends with what he brings defensively. He tore his ACL in February, at which point Kentucky's season proceeded to crash and burn. But this shouldn't, and won't, deter the Cavs from taking him should they land the top pick. (I mean, can you name me the last person who didn't make a full recovery after coming off a torn ACL?) He is a game changer, someone who can affect the game with just his presence on the floor. If you insert him onto this Cavs roster, the team would suddenly have a luxurious jumble of front-court options to

play with, and a fully armed interior defense that could prove to be devastating (for other teams) for years and years to come. In his lone season at Kentucky, Noel averaged a stunning [4.4 blocks per game](#), which is flat out eye popping -- and a feat that would have been a bigger deal had he not been following in the direct footsteps of "The Brow" (4.7 BPG). Or had he, you know ... not torn his ACL.



I've always liked Noel as an option for the Cavs, but it wasn't until a couple weeks ago that I REALLY started to develop a crush on his game. This happened as a direct result of the Mike Brown hiring, and with Brown now in the picture, it has to change the way you view things. Unlike Scott, Brown knows how to adequately defend the pick-and-roll and have his guys in the right position to provide help-defense. But as far as "the Mike Brown years" are concerned, what goes largely unnoticed is that the Cavs defense really didn't become the truly elite unit we remember them being until midway through the 2008 season, when they traded for Delonte West, Wally Szczerbiak, and [an aging, flagrantly overpaid, thought-to-be-washed-up Ben Wallace](#).

West and Szczerbiak immediately upgraded the Cavs perimeter-d, which went a long way. But it was the addition of Wallace that proved to be the real game changer.

His impact on the defensive end was rarely accounted for on the stat sheet -- he wasn't blocking 3.5 shots per game like he had in Detroit -- but make no mistake about it, he was a terrific help-side defender who had a game altering presence on the defensive end. Really, he was

one of the most underrated players to ever dawn a Cleveland uniform. For God's sake, that crappy 2008 Cavs team nearly toppled the eventual World Champion Celtics. And that team in 2009 that Wallace started 53 games for alongside 7'2 Zydrunas Ilgauskas? They won 66 games!! They also sported the leagues top ranked defense despite the offseason addition of Mo Williams, who by all accounts was the worst defender in team history. Of course, we didn't know this about Mo until the 2010 playoffs, when Derrick Rose and Rajon Rondo exposed him to tragic degrees; or rather, when Rose and Rondo exposed the Cavs atrocious help defense, which consisted of Antawn Jamison and a portly Shaq.

My apologies for going off on that tangent. I think the point I was trying to make, though, was that 1) the addition of an athletic, shot altering big could really help accelerate the Cavs growth on the defensive end. 2) It could also really help take the heat off of Kyrie Irving's harrowing defense, and perhaps even transform him into a sufficient defender. And 3) the Ben Wallace for Shaq trade ultimately cost the Cavs in the 2010 playoffs.

Thank you, my work here is done. Let's move on ...

2. Alex Len, C, Maryland, age 19

Full disclosure: I didn't watch a single minute of Len at Maryland. But every single mock draft I've looked at has him going in the top ten, and scouts rave and rave and rave; hell, some say he is the closest thing we have to a third Gasol brother. I'm in a position where I have to take them at their word and assume that Len (7'1) is indeed an exceptional player. The real issue surrounding him though, is that he's going to be out 5-6 months after having surgery for a stress fracture in his ankle. In other words, if the Cavs were to take Len with a top three pick on draft

night, go ahead and grab your pitchforks and torches, boys -- the forecast calls for ruckus.

So yea, it wouldn't be a popular pick. Even I'll admit that Len's injury scares me -- seven footers and bad ankles/feet don't mesh well together. But I sense the Cavs really value an interior big, and while there are a gazillion other seven footers in this draft, none are nearly as skilled as Len. I also sense that Chris Grant wants to complete the trifecta of "What the fuck did the Cavs just do!!!" draft moments. The guy enjoys walking on a tight, tight rope.

But before you start shaking your head in disgust at the thought of the Cavs actually taking this Russian fella, just know that he was a former gymnast prior to his basketball playing days. Intriguing, right? I'm sold!!



3. Ben McLemore, G, Kansas, age 20

McLemore is considered the best overall 'basketball' talent in this draft and he will likely be the no. 1 or 2 overall pick depending on which team lands the top selection. For the sake of making in-house comparisons, he's everything Dion Waiters isn't in terms of his ability to shoot the ball. This year he shot .420 from beyond the arc compared to Waiters .372 clip. He's not high on my own personal board because of the position he plays and the built in bias I have against his game. But whatever. I have McLemore this high for one reason and one reason only: he has the best potential of any to be an all star. Other than that, he doesn't make a whole lot of sense for the Cavs at this stage of the ballgame.

But for the Cavs fans who dream of seeing Dion Waiters come off the bench in a sixth man role, McLemore is your guy.

And for the Cavs fans who would love to see this team acquire Kevin Love in a trade ... McLemore is definitely your guy.

Could the Timberwolves really say no to a Ben McLemore-Tristan Thompson package?

4. Victor Oladipo, SG, Indiana, age 21

Depending on how the lottery shakes out, Oladipo could very easily become the fans front running choice. He's basically this years version of Michael Kidd-Gilchrist; meaning, he has all of the immeasurable attributes that we so often fall in love with when it comes to the draft. Things like toughness, energy, and "a high motor." His best attribute, though, is that he's an excellent defender, the best at his position in the draft. When you factor in how terrible the Cavs have been on the defensive end, it's easy to gravitate towards a guy like Oladipo. He'll be able to guard three positions in the NBA, and at 6'5 he has the ability to play both the 2 and the 3.

Having stayed in college for three years, you kind of know what you are going to get from him. This is both a bad thing and a good thing depending on who you ask. Oladipo has a well rounded offensive game -- loves to get out in transition, can attack the basket, is a very effective shooter who knows his own limitations and doesn't force shots (especially three's), has an extremely quick catch and release -- and would be a massive upgrade over Alonzo Gee.

Yes, he's small for an NBA small forward. And no, he's not that great of a shooter despite what his 3-pt FG% says -- he averaged 0.8 made three's per game this year on 44% shooting. So this really begs the question, why in God's name would the Cavs have him ahead of Porter?

5. Otto Porter Jr, SF, Georgetown, age 19

In Cleveland, Porter is running away with the popularity vote. This is partly because we love his size and overall game as a small forward, but it's mostly because we're sick of seeing Alonzo Gee, the biggest and blackest of black holes, log 30-plus minutes per game in a starters role he isn't equipped to handle. I haven't seen a single mock draft that doesn't have Porter going to the Cavs at no. 3, and this fact alone gives me reason for much pause. This year I refuse to let Chris Grant smash my precious eggs, so I'm saying hell with the mocks.

For what it is worth (and it's not worth much), here was Mary Schmitt Boyer's response to a fan in a recent column who floated around the genius idea of signing Andrea Iguadola and having him "groom" Otto Porter: *"I'm not the slightest bit convinced the Cavs will draft Otto Porter, even though that seems to be the popular pick among mock drafts."*

Care to elaborate on that, Mary? (She doesn't)



6. Anthony Bennett, SF, UNLV, age 20

I really don't have the slightest idea how the Cavs view Bennett, nor any other team for that matter. He's basically the opposite of Porter. Super mobile, terrific athlete, devastating ability to finish at the rim and throw (the hammer) down. But not a great outside shooter by any means. Really, he's like Derrick Williams, no one knows what the hell he is, a four or a three. Like Noel and Len, Bennett also underwent (shoulder) surgery that will keep him out of all draft workouts. But this hasn't wavered the opinion of scouts. They don't see it affecting his draft position. In fact, they believe Bennett will ultimately be a top three pick. Stay tuned.

7. C.J. McCollum, PG, Lehigh, age 21

Ok, for good measure I added a seventh. McCollum is said to be the Damian Lillard of this draft class -- a four year player who played for a small school in a inferior conference and didn't receive a lot of attention. You might remember him in the 2012 Tournament, when 15 seed Lehigh upset Duke in the first round of the NCAA tournament. That's when his stock started picking up steam. He's a point guard with pure scoring ability. And score, he will. He led the nation in 3-point FG% and his 22.9 points per game was second best in the country; however, he only played 10 games this season (broken leg).

It wouldn't make sense for the Cavs to take a point guard. However, let's say all hell breaks loose on the night of the lottery and the Cavs actually end up with the 6th pick (highly unlikely, by the way). At that point they'd be right in McCollum's range, and he's a player who could storm out of the gate early (like Lillard) and become very attractive to another team in a trade down the line. Or ... the Cavs might just draft him because, you know ... they decide that they really like him, and think that he would make for a nice scoring sixth off the bench, and know that he would have no problem taking over the role of starting point guard for the 20 games that Kyrie Irving will miss due to injury ... I kid, I kid. But McCollum is the real deal.

Good day and God Bless