



There seems to be some excitement over the Cleveland Cavaliers for the first time in four years. Nobody expects the Cavs to get out of the first round, let alone win the go on a deep playoff run. But just about everybody nationally and locally expects the team to make the postseason for the first time in years. The Cavs have reloaded their roster by signing Jarrett Jack, Andrew Bynum and Earl Clark. They drafted Anthony Bennett first overall and were fortunate enough to have Sergey Karasev fall to them at 19. Karasev is a work in progress, but many people expected the Cavs to have to move up in the draft to pick him. Last but not least, they drafted Carrick Felix to hopefully be a 3 and D guy off the bench. It is unlikely that all three of these players will work out for the Wine and Gold, but they should at least be able to get some rotation players out of the draft that was held in June.

Luckily for Cleveland, they will not solely rely on the draft and free agency to make a playoff run this year. There should be enough internal growth for them to be a borderline playoff team. Combine that with the improvement that Kyrie Irving, Tristan Thompson, Dion Waiters and Tyler Zeller should show and you have a playoff team.

Some of the young players on the roster were more NBA-ready than others. While some of them need a lot of work and improvement, every player on the team has certain areas that they can improve in. I will outline what some of the players need to focus on this off season in the next few paragraphs.

Dion Waiters: One of the reasons that the Cavaliers drafted Dion Waiters was his ability to split double teams. The thought process was that having two players who can handle the ball at a high level in the back court will give defenses fits. It's hard to argue with that reasoning after we saw the Cavs go from a 45 win team to one that won 66 games within a span of a year by replacing Delonte West and Sasha Pavlovic with Mo Williams and Delonte West in the back

court. The team was much more dynamic on the offensive end of the court by having three players who can handle the ball as opposed to one. It didn't take long for Cavaliers fans to see how effective Waiters is at splitting double teams. The problem was what he did after doing that. Dion Waiters shot a sub-par 57.9% at the rim. In fact, the only areas on the court where Waiters could be classified as a good shooter are on the left side inside the three point arc and right side center. Of all of the shooting guards who play 25 minutes a night, Waiters is only more efficient than Joe Johnson, Marco Belinelli, Eric Gordon and Kirk Hinrich from that part of the court. Waiters scored on only 31.4% of his shots that came from 3-9 feet. This places him dangerously close to Tony Allen territory. In addition, Waiters took 20% of his shots from beyond the three point line. This is concerning considering that he is only a 31% shooter from beyond the arc. In order for Waiters to live up to his potential, which there is plenty of, he needs to take better shots and be more efficient in doing so.

Tristan Thompson: It is hard to be disappointed with Thompson after the sophomore season that he had. In it, we saw him almost average a double-double. Thompson was a bit of an ironman and he played in 82 games. He took his FG% from 43.9% in his rookie year to a Cavaliers-best 48.8%. Thompson had 31 double-doubles, which makes him the 6th most frequent power forward to notch at least 10 points and 10 rebounds. Having said that, he still had his shot blocked at too high of a rate. An alarming 13.6% of Thompson's shots were blocked by defenders. This puts him as the third highest rate of getting his shot blocked for players of every position who averaged 25 minutes a game. Thompson developed a nice push shot which seemed to open up the floor for him. In order to be as good as he can be, Thompson needs to figure out a way to have his shot sent back less often. I am worried about this aspect of his game considering the reports that he is going to switch his shooting hand from left to right.

Tyler Zeller: It is hard to be too critical of Tyler Zeller after his rookie year. What was supposed to be a first season in which he was not expected to do much resulted in one where he started 55 games. The lineup of Kyrie Irving, Dion Waiters, Alonzo Gee, Tristan Thompson and Anderson Varejao only played 189 minutes. During that time, they were +53. Replace Anderson Varejao with Tyler Zeller and the roster was -62 in 421 minutes. In other words, things just didn't seem to work out for the Cavs when Zeller was on the floor. Zeller has strengths such as running the floor and drawing charges. Besides that, his game needs to be almost completely overhauled. Zeller was supposed to be a player who could hit mid-range jumpshots, but he only converted on 41.8% of his shots from 10-15 feet. Besides being disappointing offensively, Zeller was frequently bullied by stronger players in the paint. Tyler Zeller needs to improve in most aspects. Most importantly, he needs the team to ask him to do less. Working on his skills with the Canton Charge this season may be the best thing for him. That should hopefully be possible with the additions of Andrew Bynum, Anthony Bennett and the return of Anderson Varejao. The fact that Tristan Thompson can also play center should also help in that department.

Kyrie Irving: The Cavs will pretty much go as far as Kyrie Irving takes them. There are other important players on the squad, but he is the head of the snake. One of the more exciting things to happen in the NBA world this week was the fact that 82games.com was updated to reflect the 2012-2013 season. They are best known for using advanced metrics to determine which players are most clutch. Irving rightfully so has earned himself the nickname "Mr. 4th Quarter." He has had plenty of clutch heroics in his two year career. He is one of the most feared players when he has the ball in his hands in a close game. According to 82games.com, Irving scores 53.6 points per 48 minutes of clutch time. This puts him as the most clutch player in the NBA. Irving scores more points in the clutch than players like Kobe Bryant, Chris Paul, Kevin Durant, James Harden and LeBron James. However, all of the news regarding Irving in the clutch is not good. Irving averages 10 turnovers per 48 minutes of clutch time. This makes him the most turnover prone clutch player in the NBA. In order for the Cavs to live up to expectations, they will probably need to win more close games than they lose. In order to do that, Irving will need to continue to be effective scoring the ball in the clutch and become less turnover prone when the game is on the line.