



I love watching the NBA, but early season basketball can be pretty brutal. Despite an overly long preseason, players need time to get acclimated to their new teammates, and it often shows up in the quality of play early on. What we're seeing right now is drastically different from what we'll see in April and May.

That's why I'm not ready to draw any conclusions about the Cavaliers' season after a 2-3 start. This team still has a huge range of possible outcomes for the season. I can still see them going over .500 and I can still see the bottom falling out. It's all still in play.

That being said...(C'mon, you knew that was coming)

That being said, I'm just not seeing it with this group. There are major issues on offense. Right now they're running what Bill Simmons would affectionately (disaffectionately?) call the "Dueling Banjos" offense where Kyrie Irving, Dion Waiters, and occasionally Jarrett Jack all take turns trying to beat their man off the dribble or create off a pick-and-roll at the top of the key. It's a very stagnant way to play basketball, and with Mike Brown at the helm, I wouldn't expect it to get much better any time soon.

As bad as Mike Brown teams traditionally are on offense, they always bring it defensively. But ask yourself this question: How often are the Cavaliers the best team on the floor on a given night? My gut tells me that most nights the Cavaliers will be facing an uphill battle talent-wise, and as much as we want to believe that heart and grit and determination all influence the outcome, most games come down to which team is more talented.

Now, the Eastern Conference is still pretty bad, and teams that play good defense always have

a chance. If they stay relatively healthy, this Cavaliers team can probably push close to 38 wins, which was good for the eighth seed last season. But I'm still keeping my expectations in check. I'd much rather have low expectations and be pleasantly surprised if the team is playing important games into March than the other way around.

### Keeping Anderson Varejao

Every offseason since LeBron skipped town has brought endless waves of Anderson Varejao trade rumors. I was firmly in the camp of fans that wanted the team to deal the big man for future assets. I felt this way because the team likely wasn't going to be very good for a while, and Varejao is a constant injury risk whose game is predicated on defense and hustle plays, making him more valuable to a contender rather than a rebuilding team.

However, now that the team has held on to him for all this time, the thing that really jumps out at me is Anderson Varejao is really freaking good.

Don't get me wrong, Varejao has always been a good player, but he's taken it to another level these past couple seasons. He's mainly done this by developing a semblance of an offensive game. He will never be mistaken for Tim Duncan, but Varejao's development of a 15-foot jumper/set shot as well as a post move or two makes him a much more palatable pick-and-roll partner than he had been in the past. Defensively, whatever quickness Varejao may have lost with age he's more than made up for with his intelligence and anticipation. To put it another way, is he that much different a player than Joakim Noah, a guy [Simmons ranked seventeenth in his trade value column](#) ?

Noah is a little over two years younger, but on any given night, I would say those two guys are more equal than one might think.

The other part of the equation is where the Cavaliers sit on the win curve, and despite all the negative things I said above, this team might kinda sorta actually be good! And if they're not good now, they certainly can be good next season.

In sports, there's always the allure of the future, the next draft pick, the next trade, etc. But there's something to be said for holding on to a player that you know is already really good, and the Cavaliers deserve some credit for sticking with Anderson Varejao.

## Dion Waiters Off The Dribble



Dion Waiters was one of the few bright spots in the loss at Milwaukee on Wednesday, scoring 21 points on 7-13 shooting (although just 6-11 from the line. Make your free throws Dion!). What stood out was he was constantly attacking his defender off the dribble, which is clearly his best skill.

There was a lot of talk on whether the Cavaliers reached in selecting him fourth overall in 2012. But a player who can consistently beat defenders off the dribble is always a valuable commodity in the NBA, and Waiters is already pretty good at it. Considering that he's still just 21 years old, he can probably get even better as he gets stronger and learns what does and doesn't work at the NBA level.

Waiters may never be a traditional starting two-guard, but I think his most logical comparison is Jamal Crawford. Crawford has never been a traditional starting guard, but his ability to score has made him a hugely valuable piece on a lot of teams.

Now, Waiters and Crawford get their points in different ways; Crawford is more of a quick outside shooter while Waiters is more physical. But there's no reason to think Waiters can't have a career similar to that of Crawford. Is that worth the fourth overall pick? In a weak draft, I think it is.

## One Last Note

I don't want to make any statements on Dan Gilbert and whether or not what he's done in the city of Cleveland has been good or bad. But I will say that if Dan Gilbert is going to join the broadcast and make fun of Austin Carr for a whole quarter, I will always watch. Always.

*Jeremy Klein is an unabashed Cleveland Sports fan who really wished there was a YouTube clip of Dan Gilbert making fun of Austin Carr. You can follow him on Twitter @PapaBearJere .*

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