



Speak to anybody who follows the NBA about Cavaliers general manager Chris Grant and odds are that they will mention his poor track record drafting. While I do not agree that Tristan Thompson and Dion Waiters add to his history of poor draft choices, the clock is ticking on Anthony Bennett to prove that he belongs in the NBA. He does not have to justify his top overall selection at this point. He simply must demonstrate that he deserves one out of 450 roster spots available in the league. You'd be hard-pressed to find one person that approves of Bennett's rookie season thus far. Having said that, most draft experts and armchair GMs had the Cavs selecting either Otto Porter, Ben McLemore or Alex Len with the top pick. Of those three, the only player who is clearly performing better than Bennett is McLemore who is averaging a pedestrian 8 PPG on 36% shooting. Porter has notched 2.1 PPG on 33.3% and Len has 1.8 PPG on 40%.

The only player who was in the discussion with the top selection who is proving to be a significantly better player than Bennett is Victor Oladipo. The ironic thing about that is that Oladipo is widely considered much better than any young player on the Cavs roster by many people. If you listen to scribes like Bill Simmons talk about Oladipo, you would think that the Cavs passed up Tony Allen with a handle and a jump shot. A better comparison for Oladipo is actually Cleveland's Dion Waiters. Nobody likes to talk about that, though because it is easier to push a lazy narrative than to actually spend 2 minutes hopping onto [www.basketballreference.com](http://www.basketballreference.com) and doing the most simple of [research](#) .

If there is one area where people actually like to give props to Chris Grant, it is his ability to make a trade. Below is a list of the 4 best trades he has made and some background information pertaining to them:

### **Mo Williams and Jamarion Moon for Baron Davis and an unprotected 1st round draft pick:**

This was an unpopular trade when it happened. As early as 2010-2011, the upcoming draft was considered to be one of the worst of all time. That has proven to be false because of players like Kyrie Irving, Tristan Thompson, Jonas Valanciunas, Klay Thompson, Kawhi Leonard, Nikola Vucevic and Kenneth Faried. A lot of national writers were disappointed that the Cavs took on the inflated salary a temperamental player like Baron Davis to likely have an extra bad lottery pick in a historically bad draft. Hindsight has shown us that the draft wasn't actually that bad and this trade netted the team Kyrie Irving. To make things even better, the Cavs were able to use the amnesty provision on Baron Davis which gave them about \$14 million of more cap space. The trade needed a lot of luck for it to work out as well as it did, but the bottom line is that the Cavs needed to do something creative. They severely lacked talent and the trade would have still been a good one if it landed them Klay Thompson instead of Irving.

### **Traded Jon Leuer to the Memphis Grizzlies for Wayne Ellington, Josh Selby, Marreese Speights and a protected 1st round pick:**

This trade came out of left field. None of the players that were acquired still play for the team, but Ellington and Speights were huge upgrades for the Cavs as bench players. Jon Leuer averaged 2.4 PPG in 9 appearances for the Cavs. He was waived by the Houston Rockets on July 18th, 2012 and picked up by Cleveland on July 20th. He did not do too much on the court for the team despite his unique skillset. He has proven to be a legitimate NBA player this year for the Grizzlies. However, the Cavs were able to get a draft pick that will most likely become a lottery pick for a player that they picked up off of the waiver wire. The pick is protected 1-5 and 15-30 in 2015 and 2016 and 1-5 in 2017 and 2018. In other words, this pick is likely going to be in the lottery. With the Grizzlies having an aging roster and being in the west, it is not unreasonable to expect a lottery pick from Memphis in 2015 or 2016. That could be a huge positive for the Cavs for only giving up Jon Leuer.

**Traded J.J. Hickson to the Sacramento Kings for Omri Casspi and a 1st round pick:** It is difficult to be excited about this trade. There is a good chance that both teams were unhappy with it. Hickson, who averaged 19.5 PPG and 12.3 RPG in 8 games in April of 2012 proceeded to notch 4.7 PPG and 5.1 RPG on very poor efficiency for the Kings. In addition to his horrible play on the court, he was rumored to be causing problems in the locker room for the volatile Kings team. On the Cavs side of things, Omri Casspi was not much better. He averaged 5.9 PPG on 40% shooting. The draft pick obtained from the Kings had incredibly restrictive protections on it. It was lottery protected in 2012, top 13 protected in 2013, top 12 protected in 2014, top 10 protected from 2015-2017 and then it becomes a 56-60 protected 2nd round pick. For a team that has not made the playoffs since 2006 who is routinely in the lottery, the odds of actually ever seeing that pick were slim-to-none.

**Traded Andrew Bynum and picks to the Chicago Bulls for Luol Deng:** The Cavs signed Andrew Bynum in July. It was considered a high risk/high reward move at the time. To

circumvent some of the risk, Grant made half of Bynum's \$12 million salary unguaranteed. If he was on the team past 5:00 PM on January 7th, his contract became guaranteed. That wasn't going to happen after he was indefinitely suspended from the team. This meant that the Cavs had a \$12 million contract that they could trade to a team looking to save at least \$6 million from their salary. With Derrick Rose being injured for the year and Luol Deng's impending free agency, the Cavs were able to capitalize on that situation and save the Bulls a lot of money and get them below the dreaded luxury tax. Part of the trade was the Kings 1st round pick (which will likely become a 2nd rounder by the time it is all said and done), two Portland second round picks and a lottery-protected right to swap 1st round picks with the Cavs in 2015. It was quite the coup for a two-way player coming off two straight all star appearances who is having a career year and who fills a huge position of need. The key is to re-sign Deng. If the Cavs do that, it will be a fantastic trade. If he walks, then they simply traded some draft picks of questionable value for a rental of Deng. This is not like the Bucks trading a legitimate prospect like Tobias Harris for a rental of J.J. Redick. Last but not least, the great thing about this trade is that the Cavs made their own market for Bynum by making the contract become guaranteed on January 7th. Doing so put the team in a unique position where they were the only team being active sellers at a trade deadline.

It seems obvious that Chris Grant is better at making trades than he is at drafting. He has made some fantastic trades which have for the most part worked out very well. Sometimes the best trades are the ones that are never made at all. We learned this the hard way when Danny Ferry acquired Antawn Jamison in 2010. Grant dodged a bullet when the Lakers were demanding Dion Waiters for Pau Gasol. He held his ground and walked away with a better, younger player who actually fills a position of need for the team.