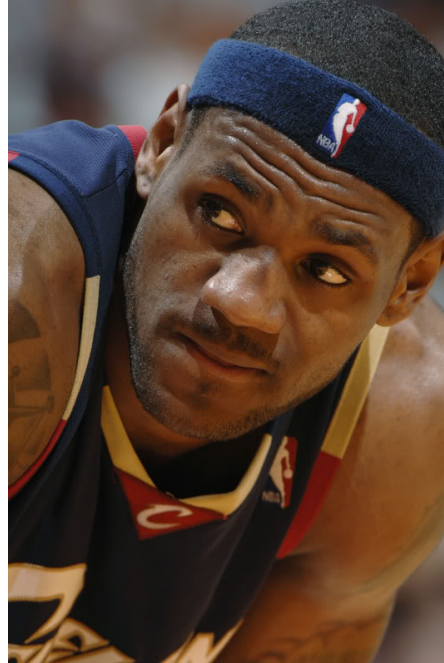


There is a line out there somewhere for the Cavaliers. And Papa Cass doesn't know how close they are to it. It's the line where a streak becomes a trend, where you stop wondering when they are going to pull out of their funk and start worrying that this is the real-deal team. The Cavs are 27-21 and still very much in the hunt for the best record in the dry-twig-brittle Eastern Conference. But you'd never know it to look at them. In his latest, Cassano proposed five bold changes that could help spark this Cavalier team.



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Exasperation, even desperation, appears to be setting in for this team. Mike Brown, usually a man in control of his emotions, is starting to point his finger at the refs on a regular basis, blaming them for their perceived role in the team's recent swoon. LeBron James, meanwhile, is about ready to smack his very valuable head against a wall when it comes to this team's inexplicably bad offense.

"I'm at a loss of words right now offensively, I don't know," LeBron said in the Akron Beacon Journal Monday. "We score 100 points one night and the next we score 70."

The Cavs, a team that has number of offensive weapons, have deteriorated into a mess at that end of the floor. Exhibit A is the contrast between the first and second halves of Sunday's loss to the Pistons. In the first half when the game was close, the Cavs played reasonably well at the offensive end, moving the ball, working it into the post, trying to make the pass that sets up the open shot. Basketball 101, in other words.

Then the Pistons went on a small run to go up 62-55 at the half, and the Cavs completely lost

their cool. Disciplined offense was eschewed in favor of kamikaze drives to the basket and horrid hair-trigger jump shooting. No one made any effort to rein in the erratic play, or so it seemed.

That's how a team puts up 78 points two days after reaching the century mark.

So this is where the Cavs are: 27-21 but playing with the confidence and cohesion of a team that is 17-31. Brown's offense is a joke, LeBron is dog tired and Larry Hughes has abandoned his slasher game for jump shots, with painful results.

There are two avenues the Cavs can take to better themselves: Have Danny Ferry make a major deadline trade to bring in some new blood, or make it work with what they have.

Ferry might be able to swing a deal before this month's deadline, but the odds of it being a landscape-changer are slim. That leaves picking up the hood on this buggy and figuring out how to tune up the engine that's already there. It's going to take a bit more creativity than benching Eric Snow and starting Dan Gibson.

Here are five possible solutions that could help the Cavs if Brown and Ferry are willing to think outside the box a little:

1. Hire an offensive assistant now.

Normally shaking up a coaching staff at this time of the year is virtual suicide, and this certainly wouldn't be the best option in February. But maybe it isn't Brown's offensive game plan that is the problem. Maybe it's just the way he's conveying it.

The Cavs have shown in bits and pieces that they can be an effective offensive club. Maybe hiring an assistant coach to come in, re-arrange the pieces a bit and explain it in a new way is the answer.

If they don't do it now, they'd better do it this summer.

2. Make LeBron a post player for now.

LeBron's hops are suffering due to his tired legs, as I have mentioned before. If sitting him isn't a realistic option, maybe Brown and Ferry should look at possibly re-defining LeBron's role for the rest of the season.

LeBron is built like an NFL tight end. He could back down guys like Rasheed Wallace in the post better than anybody else on the Cavs' roster. Turning LeBron into a power forward would take the emphasis off his tired legs and put it on his very large and very capable upper body.

This season, LeBron might be missing the quicks to blow past every wing defender in the league not named Ron Artest. But I bet he still has the quicks to cross up and muscle past the vast majority of big men.

LeBron probably wouldn't like the idea, but someone needs to remind His Kingness that Magic Johnson once won a championship playing center.

3. Turn Larry Hughes into a point guard.

I tend to [agree with Brian Windhorst](#) that Dan Gibson is not a long-term solution at point guard. The only thing he does better than Eric Snow is shoot. His passing is even worse than Snow's, and defensively, he was soundly abused by Chauncey Billups on Sunday.

Meanwhile, Hughes is underperforming as a shooting guard. So why not move Hughes to the role of offense-facilitator? It would force him to create the offense instead of constantly looking for his own shot and it would play to his strengths, driving and passing, instead of his well-documented shooting weakness.

Hughes would be far from an ideal point guard, but he has the skills and size to play the position on the NBA level. And does anyone think a backcourt of Hughes and Sasha Pavlovic would be worse than a backcourt of Hughes and Gibson/Snow?

4. Less Marshall, more Pollard.

Everything the Cavs need Donyell Marshall to do, he's not doing, at least consistently. He's not crashing the boards, he's seldom putting the ball on the floor, he's not using the rest of his game to get his three-point shot into a flow. He is just a three-point brickster in desperate need of a diminished role on this team.

So let's see more Scot Pollard. I know his Mohawk makes him a crowd favorite, but he can do far more than just sport crazy hairdos. He'll crash the boards and he'll play tough on defense. And I bet his free-throw line jumper would be far more consistent than Marshall's three-point bombs.

5. Burn a DVD of Sunday's game. Take it with you wherever you go and watch it frequently.

There is no shame in sitting at the feet of the Pistons and learning from them. Just because you almost eliminated them last spring doesn't mean you are yet on equal footing with them. You still have much to learn, young wine and gold grasshoppers.

Watch how smoothly and consistently the Pistons handled themselves at both ends of the floor. If the Cavs made a run, they didn't panic. They stuck to their guns, moved the ball around and patiently waited for the seam or pass that would lead to the open shot.

Defensively, they maintained their spacing and made sure every shot was contested.

Don't get frustrated. Don't be in awe. Just watch and watch, and take notes. That includes you, Mike Brown.