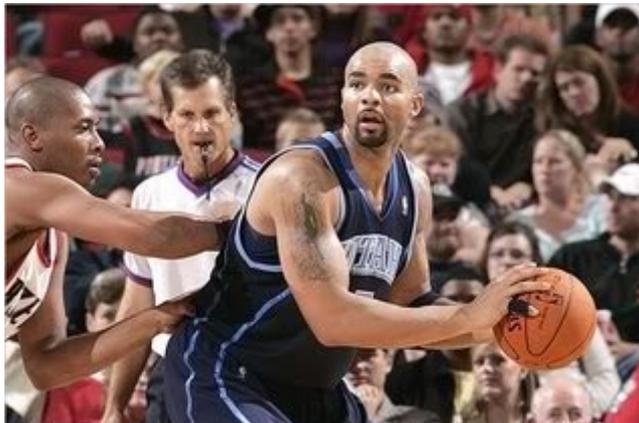


He said he would stay. He lured us into trusting him. He gave the Cavaliers organization a false sense of security to the extent that they felt comfortable letting him out of his contract. Turncoat. Benedict Arnold. Scalawag. Backstabber. It's Carlos Boozer. In his latest, Cassano asks Cleveland fans: isn't it time to let it go?



How long can you keep it up?

How long can you keep the hatred burning in your belly?

I know Cleveland fans pride themselves on being the elephants of pro sports. They never forget. Once a bitter enemy, always a bitter enemy. And no one deserves to be reviled in Cleveland more than Carlos Boozer.

He said he would stay. He lured us into trusting him. He gave the Cavaliers organization a false sense of security to the extent that they felt comfortable letting him out of his contract. That in of itself was a pretty big mistake, but not even the judgmentally-challenged tandem of Jim Paxson and Gordon Gund would have gambled with a key cog in their team without some kind of reassurance that releasing him from his option year was a safe move.

Turncoat. Benedict Arnold. Scalawag. Backstabber. All of it applies to Boozer, who merrily and unrepentantly cashes his checks in Utah.

And you know what? All the Cleveland rage in the world isn't going to change that. Just like all the rage in the world won't ever make Art Modell sorry he moved the Browns.

So how long are you going to keep your teeth clenched and your fists pumping? How long can you keep your anger at Boozer bottled up, waiting for that one day when you can go to The Q and let that sniveling son-of-a-drip have it?

Because it appears Boozer is willing to play the waiting game, too.

Boozer has played the Cavs a grand total of one time since bolting for Utah, and that likely won't change this year. A broken leg sidelined him for last weeks matchup in Utah and almost certainly will for next month's rematch in Cleveland. If predictions are accurate, Boozer will be 0-for-3 in giving Cleveland fans their shot at revenge.

You keep vowing to give him the most inhospitable welcome any fan base has ever given,

bigger than the chorus off boo-birds and projectiles that greeted Albert Belle upon his return to Jacobs Field as a member of the White Sox.

Boozer keeps dodging, always coming up with conveniently-timed rehab appointments that cause him to not be able to travel with the team.

It's no secret that Boozer is trying to let time dull the feelings of betrayal. He saw the Malice at the Palace. he knows what can happen when inebriated, enraged fans meet a vilified player. He doesn't want a beer cup to the noggin, or worse.

So he waits. Eventually, he'll have to suit up and play at The Q. Maybe he really was going to do it this year until his injury. But now he gets to buy some more time before he faces Cleveland's Army of the Incredulous.

This might be a waiting game Boozer can win. Boozer can keep rehabbing and cashing checks, but it's going to be significantly harder for Cleveland fans to maintain their level of rage at him.

So maybe it's time to take the high road and treat Boozer like any other Andrei Kirilenko who comes through The Q. Maybe indifference is the best medicine, like moving on with your life after being dumped.

It's been three years. Boozer is getting his just desserts with a maddening string of injuries that has both hampered his career and caused Jazz management to lose their patience with him. He's also playing for Western Conference team that is thoroughly cemented behind Dallas, Phoenix and San Antonio, reducing by miles the chance that we will have to endure another Cleveland backstabber hoisting a championship trophy any time soon.

Meanwhile, the Cavs are in the hunt for the best record in the (albeit far weaker) Eastern Conference.

Let it go. Boozer is a schmuck who just isn't worth the cost of the blood pressure medication it will take to stay mad at him until he finally re-appears for his Cleveland punishment.

The punishment he gets is the constant reminder that he is not, nor will he ever be, the next Karl Malone.