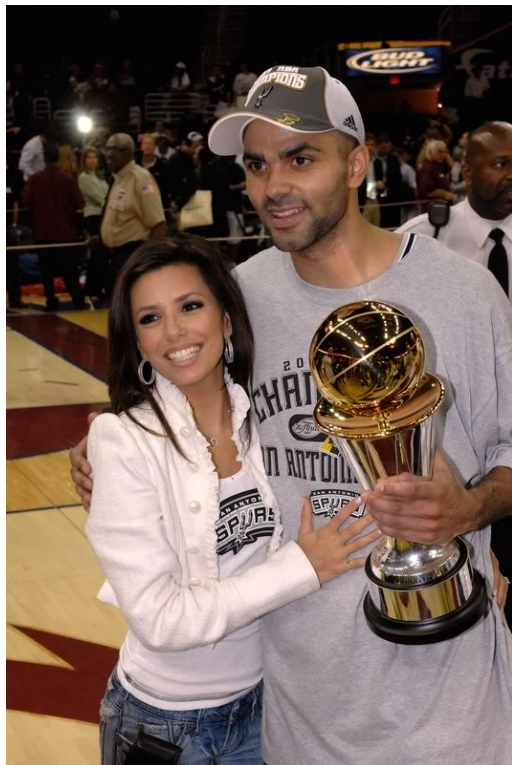


The Fumble. The Drive. The Shot. And now ... The Sweep. Add it to the laundry list of lexicons used to describe memorable failures in Cleveland sports history. In his latest column, Hiko looks back at the Spurs series, the season as a whole, and also looks ahead to an off-season where the Cavs will look to address some of the needs exposed by the Spurs.



Before I pontificate on what a great season the Cavaliers had, and what an exciting playoff run they put together (excepting the last week, of course), I'd first like to apologize on behalf of Cleveland to all the basketball fans who had to watch this pitiful series.

(Except Spurs fans. I'd like to extend you a hearty F*** You.)

These games were almost unwatchable, and I had a vested interest. The Cavs are a BAD offensive team. They have been all season. National pundits were lauding the San Antonio defense, and certainly it is formidable, but the Cavs had their share of open shots all series, and they – every last one of them – could not find their shot.

It's not just the San Antonio Spurs that caused the Cavs to shoot this way. They've played this bad offensively against MANY teams. Even against teams that had lots of ping pong balls in the lottery, the Cavaliers could often look like *The Worst Offensive Team In NBA History*

™.

This is not to say that the Cavs are without offensive talent. Oh no, that would be naïve. It's just that – for whatever reason, be it game play, execution, coaching, or what you will – more often than not, they don't get it done on the offensive end.

That's something that needs to be remedied.

Now, I will take two seconds to wax poetic about the Cavs season, since two seconds is all I really feel like dedicating now at this frustrating hour after yet another bitter Cleveland sports lexicon – *The Sweep*.

They probably went a little further this season than anyone expected. And there was certainly nobody in the East markedly better than they were, so any other Eastern Conference team would probably have been just as much a lamb to the slaughter as our poor national punchlines.

Last year, on the brink of going much further than anyone expected of them, they choked away two games in a row to lose to the Pistons in 7. They learned from their experience, and came back this year and really put a beatdown on a team that was widely expected to emerge from the East.

Can they learn from this experience as well?

Now, no one can any longer say that the only Cavs member with Finals experience is Eric Snow. Now, there's a whole gaggle of them.

Certainly, it is obvious that they need something extra, and it could be in one of many areas. A true point guard. A great outside shooter. A tremendous low-post presence.

But where are they gonna get this miracle maker? A trade? Free agency? Really, the Cavs' options are not huge, and there's not a helluva lot of players on the Cavs team that I'm willing to part with right this second. Larry Hughes, sure, but no one is going to take his huge contract and mediocre contribution. Z is too old to get much for. Drew is too inconsistent. Varejao is too one-dimensional, and, really, I'd hate to lose his energy. Sasha is too raw. Gibson is too unknown.

I guess there's always Free Agency, but the Cavs aren't going to have the passel of cash that they've had in the past, and they have a few Free Agents of their own that I'm sure they'd like to retain.

So just saying *Hey we need so and so* doesn't mean it can or will happen. Throwing out bizarre-ass trade options doesn't mean that it's even mildly feasible.

Realistically, the Cavs options will surround role players. And role players can

certainly help, but right now we must look at the core group that currently exists, and ask ourselves how this team can actually *win* a Finals game with today's roster.

How? Experience. LeBron did not have the best Finals. That will be beaten into the ground over the next year, so get used to hearing it. Gibson struggled. Sasha and Drew had their moments, but they were subject to the dreaded Lid as much as anyone. Can experience alone move these players up a notch? Can experience alone give them the opportunity to make better plays, to make better choices?

I don't know.

Good thing that's not my job. Danny Ferry's level of pressure just went up. You have a team that went to the Finals and lost. The next logical step is to go back and win.

Easier said than done. That's probably why his hourly rate is slightly higher than mine.

The closer you get to the sun, the more likely it is that you get burned.

I'm burned right now. I'm sure we all are.

But, with all of 20 minutes retrospect, I already look forward to next year. I expect – I demand – that the Cavs make that next step, that they prove they weren't a one hit wonder, that they make the necessary improvements, both internally and roster-wise, to make THIS team the San Antonio Spurs of 2007.

We've all gone way too freakin' long without a championship. WAY. TOO. FREAKIN'. LONG. I want one. We all want one so so bad.

For the love of Whoever, I implore you, get it done.