

Great column from Erik Cassano this morning. In it, he takes a comprehensive look at who Danny Ferry and the Cavaliers may look to add in an off-season that will require creativity. Cassano provides a list of potential players the Cavs could target in trades and free agency, and through the draft should they acquire a pick. Some are realistic, some are less-realistic, but right now, it's all about brainstorming.



If there is one good thing about losing the NBA Finals, it's that the NBA calendar doesn't give you a lot of time to stew over what might have been.

The Cavaliers have to dive headfirst into the offseason with the NBA Draft set for June 28 in New York and free agency to begin shortly thereafter.

The Cavs have no picks in this year's draft – shall I invoke the name of Jiri Welsch one more time? -- and are pretty much flush against the salary cap, so adding the pieces that could help make a second trip to the Finals have a much happier ending will be difficult for GM Danny Ferry.

But that's why Ferry makes the big bucks. He's going to have to get creative. Right now, with the Pistons declining, it appears the Cavs aren't very far away from being the class of the Eastern Conference and the favorite to make the Finals every year for the next several years.

Of course, that could all change if there were a major coup in the Central Division, say ... I don't know ... [the Bulls trading for Kobe Bryant](#).

But that's neither here nor there right now. At this point, all the Cavs have to worry about is keeping their options open to add the couple of pieces that could really

solidify the team's near future.

Below is a list of potential players the Cavs could target in trades and free agency, and through the draft should they acquire a pick. Some are realistic, some are less-realistic, but right now, it's all about brainstorming.

### **The draft**

#### **Mike Conley, PG, Ohio State**

Mock drafts have him going as high as the top three or as low as 11. Obviously, the odds of the Cavs being able to trade into the lottery picks are really not good. Having said that, man would Conley look good in a Cavs uniform.

Conley is not-so-arguably the best point guard in the draft. The job he did in leading a marginally-deep Ohio State team all the way to the NCAA title game was nothing short of masterful. He is a lightning-quick lefty who can turn a defense askew with his weak-side drives, and has a developing outside shot to boot. Even with just one year of college experience, he'll be able to step into the NBA and make a difference as a rookie. But Ferry would have to wave once heck of a magic wand to position the Cavs to draft him.

#### **Acie Law III, PG, Texas A&M**

Not a top-notch NBA athlete, and more of a gunslinger than a traditional point guard, but Law definitely has the pedigree to be a difference-maker in the NBA. Given his history of clutch shooting, he doesn't back away from pressure, and would be a great fit for a contending team looking for guys who can bury fourth-quarter shots from the perimeter – if you remember, that was kind of a problem for the Cavs in the Finals.

Law realistically projects as going somewhere between 10 and 20. Not quite as elusive as Conley, but it would still take some work by Ferry to get a pick that high.

#### **Josh McRoberts, PF, Duke**

Just because one or two experiments with Duke power forwards blew up in the Cavs' faces doesn't mean they should never look to Durham, NC for help again.

McRoberts brings a low-post offensive game that would rival anything the Cavs franchise has seen since Brad Daugherty was running the pick-and-roll with Mark Price.

McRoberts could be the double-team-demanding low-post threat that forces defenses into a pick-your-poison decision over whether to double him or LeBron.

Like Law, draft prognosticators project McRoberts as going somewhere in the teens or early 20s. Another difficult grab for Ferry, but a possible one.

### **Daequan Cook, SG, Ohio State**

Cook is the forgotten third wheel in the freshman machine that propelled Ohio State to this year's title game, but he might be the best all-around athlete.

As far as the Cavs are concerned, he'd likely be an upgrade over Sasha Pavlovic, though right now he has that same problem of not being able to finish plays with authority.

Cook is an explosive athlete who is going to be able to get to the basket. His mid-range jumper is there, and his long-range jumper is developing. If the Cavs are looking for a perimeter scorer to compliment LeBron, Cook might be it.

Cook seems to be destined to go somewhere around 20. If Ferry can acquire Charlotte's second first-rounder at 22 or Philadelphia's second first-rounder at 21, there is a chance Cook would be there.

### **Kyle Visser, C, Wake Forest**

If Ferry can't nab a first-round pick, Visser might be a good compromise in the early-to-mid second round. For a team that needs skill in the low post, as well as an eventual heir-apparent to Zydrunas Ilgauskas, Visser could fit the bill.

Visser isn't an exceptional athlete, but like Wake Forest predecessor Tim Duncan, he has a great handle on basketball fundamentals that was hammered into him by legendary coach Skip Prosser. Visser has good footwork, good rebounding skills, and scouting reports say his back-to-the-basket game is well-polished for a college senior.

## Trades

### Mike Bibby, Kings

When Ferry failed to acquire Bibby at the trade deadline in February, it was looked upon by some as a step backward. The Cavs' stagnant offense needed a floor general, and Bibby could have answered the bell.

Looking back, it was a wise no-trade. Drew Gooden, who likely would have been dispatched to Sacramento in a Bibby trade, was a key in the Cavs' late-season run and factored heavily in playoff series wins over Washington and New Jersey.

But that doesn't mean the need has gone away, and the Cavs, with three guaranteed seasons of LeBron remaining, really need a veteran to step in and assume the starting point guard's role.

Bibby is 29, entering that dangerous time in a basketball player's life when athleticism can suddenly start to wane, but playing in the slow-down Eastern Conference, that wouldn't be nearly the problem it is in the hyper-fast West. In the East, Bibby would be valued more for his passing and playmaking abilities than for his ability to blow past Steve Nash off the dribble.

He's also slated to make about \$13 million next year should he decided not to opt out of his contract –which appears to be a near-certainty. That means if the Cavs want to keep Gooden and still trade for Bibby, they'd better A) be willing to part with Anderson Varejao in a sign-and-trade or B) find a taker for Larry Hughes and his upcoming \$13 million-plus, which would probably require a third team to get involved.

### Kevin Garnett, Timberwolves

Yeah, this is complete fantasy-league stuff. KG and LBJ in the same frontcourt. Better than being in a forest. With Heather Locklear. And you're warm ... very warm.

But there are conditions that would make a KG-to-the-Cavs deal seem like something at least slightly more substantial than total fantasy.

Garnett is 31. He's entering the final years of his prime. His biological clock is

ticking, the Wolves are faltering, and unless he wants to end up like a 40-year-old Karl Malone, latching on to the Shaq-Kobe machine for one last title run, he knows he need to find a title contender. But not just any title contender.

Sure, he could demand a trade to the Heat and share frontcourt time with Shaq, or to the Bulls where Ben Wallace plays defense like few others can. But in Miami, he'd have to fight for touches with Shaq and D-Wade, and in Chicago, he'd likely be a one-man offensive show again as in Minnesota.

But then there's Cleveland. Teaming up with LeBron, a like-minded superstar who values team basketball, a superstar who wants and needs a low-post threat to open up the floor. To have KG and LBJ together on the floor ... no defense could stop both at the same time.

Not only that, Garnett knows that if LeBron is covered, he wouldn't hesitate to pass the ball. Think Kobe Bryant would do that without pausing? How about Allen Iverson?

Playing alongside LeBron could be the ideal situation for KG and his title chances. But to make that happen, and to absorb his \$21 million salary, would require the Cavs to part with Hughes and Gooden, for starters.

### **Jason Kidd, Nets**

It's hard to see the Nets helping out a team that just beat them in the playoffs, but there is no doubt that the Nets are a decaying veteran team in need of youth. And youth is something Kidd, 34, does not have anymore.

Again, the math makes a Kidd deal a difficult proposition. Making more than \$18 million a year, the Cavs would need to find a taker for Hughes, and still need to lop more than \$5 million more to balance the salaries.

But Kidd, despite slowing a step, is still one of the premier point guards in the game, with Finals experience under his belt. The championship-hunger factor is there with Kidd as much as it is with Garnett.

If the price is right, he'd be one heck of a pickup.

### **Elton Brand, Clippers**

Brand is one of the few players who makes the Clippers watchable, so it might be hard to convince the Clippers to trade him. But as a fundamentally-sound power forward who is averaging 20 points and 10 rebounds per game for his career, he is a poor man's Tim Duncan. Or maybe a peer of Duncan who has never had the fortune of playing for a consistent winner.

He made just more than \$14 million this year, which means some combination of Gooden, Hughes or Varejao would have to go the other way.

### **Andre Miller, Sixers**

A step beneath Bibby and Kidd as a point guard, but you also get what you pay for. Miller's approximately \$9 million-per-year salary buys you about 14 points and 7.5 assists per game.

If the Sixers want to take Larry Hughes and give the Cavs Miller and Kyle Korver, I'd have no problem with that ... provided attempts to land Bibby and Kidd fell through already.

### **Free agents**

*Note: This section is written with the Cavs' midlevel salary cap exemption in mind, so you can rule out Vince Carter and Chauncey Billups right now.*

### **Earl Boykins, Bucks**

He'd be a nice acquisition as a bench player, but at 5'-5", there is no way on Earth I want him as a starter.

Of course, if you're already developing an undersized scoring guard in Daniel Gibson, why would you need more of the same for a lot more money in Boykins? I know he's a hometown guy, but signing him doesn't seem all that pragmatic at this point.

### **Matt Carroll, Bobcats**

Fellow [TCF](#) writer Joel Hammond calls Carroll a less-stylish version of Damon Jones. I prefer to think of Carroll as everything Trajan Langdon was supposed to be.

During a breakout 2006-07 season, Carroll shot more than 40 percent from beyond the arc while shooting more than 90 percent from the free-throw line.

Carroll at the free-throw stripe in a Cavs uniform could cause even the most even-tempered Cavs fan to break down and cry. Swish, swish. Swish, swish.

Needless to say, I think signing Carroll would be great use of the midlevel exemption.

### **Grant Hill, Magic**

Hill worked Brian Sipe into one of his pregame commentaries during the Finals. Granted, it was to illustrate that the Cavs didn't even have a Sipe-caliber player to help LeBron, but how can you not like that reference as a Cleveland fan? How many professional basketball players even know who Brian Sipe is, let alone that he played for the Browns?

Only someone who spent a sizeable chunk of his childhood in Cleveland.

The son of former Brown Calvin Hill is in the Garnett boat of looking for title before it's too late. For Hill, the need might be even more dire. He'll turn 35 in October and can no longer play big minutes on an ankle that has been damaged by repeated surgeries.

But providing some scoring punch off the bench behind LeBron for 10 or 12 minutes a night? He can probably do that. Maybe it's time for Hill to bring his family's relationship with Cleveland full circle.

### **Jason Kapon, Heat**

At the time the Cavs left Kapon unprotected in the 2004 expansion draft, it looked like they were casting adrift another Danny Ferry – a big, tall guy who couldn't do much besides shoot.

But after arriving in Miami, Kapon became one of the better bench scorers in the league and a key piece of the Heat's 2006 title run. Now, the Cavs might want him back. Certainly, his outside shot would look really nice coming off the Cavs bench.

### **Andres Nocioni, Bulls**

He's a Mike Brown kind of guy. A piss-you-off defender who takes contact as well as he dishes it. His offensive game is lacking, but he's started for a playoff team in Chicago for three years.

Nocioni is a restricted free agent, and it's believed the Bulls will fight to keep him. There is no reason at this point to believe the Cavs would make a hard run at Nocioni, but he's a Mike Brown kind of guy. That's all I'm saying.