

Cavs Showcasing Damon Jones?

Written by {ga=samamico}

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It's been hard to with the Indians playoff run and strong starts to the Browns and Buckeyes seasons, but if you've been paying attention to the Cavs preseason games ... you'd see that Damon Jones has been logging big minutes, and started yesterday's game in China at the point for the Cavs. Sam Amico thinks the Cavs may be shopping the self proclaimed world's most handsome man. And reports on it, as well as the Cavs trip to China in his latest.



You may have noticed that Cavaliers guard Damon Jones has logged quite a few minutes this preseason, and you're probably wondering what gives.

Then again, maybe you haven't been paying attention to the Cavs or preseason basketball at all. Either way, just know that Jones has been part of Coach Mike Brown's regular rotation - and has almost been as featured in the new offense as You Know Who.

So why has it been all Jones, almost all the time? Or to be more precise, why did Jones start and play 26 minutes in the Cavs' 90-86 loss to Orlando on Wednesday in Shanghai, China?

These questions aren't out of line when you consider how Jones barely played at the end of last season, falling out of favor after then-rookie Daniel Gibson got hot. Then Jones spent the summer saying he wanted to be traded, having backed off those comments only a little recently.

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With that in mind, there are two schools of thought when it comes to Jones' sudden emergence:

First, the Cavs are missing last year's starting shooting guard, Sasha Pavlovic, who is holding out as he awaits a new contract. It doesn't appear one is coming, but that's a story for another day. But Pavlovic's absence opened up some extra minutes in the backcourt.

Also, second-year guard Shannon Brown is still pretty raw, and free-agent signee Devin Brown is still getting acclimated to his new surroundings. On top of all that, Gibson sat out Wednesday's game with a strained hamstring (it's not expected to be anything serious).

On the other hand, Jones is a 10-year (and 10-team) veteran who knows what Mike Brown expects. He is likely to be more reliable at executing the new offense than a younger player.

n OK, now for the second school of thought - the one that says the Cavs may be showcasing Jones for a potential trade.

Far-fetched? Not really. Not when you consider Cavs general manager Danny Ferry already thought he had a deal in place this summer that would have sent Jones to San Antonio. That was part of a three-way trade that also involved Cavs forward Drew Gooden, Sacramento guard Mike Bibby and a few others. It never materialized, but word is Jones wasn't too happy about the rumors.

Of course, pleasing a guy such as Jones probably isn't real high on the Cavs' priority list. Not that he's a bad guy - just the opposite. He's not exactly a prince in the locker room when he's not playing, but who is? Generally, Jones is well-liked by his teammates and understands how to play the media, always offering his time, a friendly smile, and a quick one-liner.

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The problem the Cavs have with Jones is his game. He's pretty much a standstill 3-point shooter, and little else. He's not much of a defender or ballhandler, and is fairly useless when trying to drive to the basket. He may penetrate, but he never creates.

Basically, there's a reason the Cavs are the first team with which Jones has ever spent more than one consecutive season. And based on what some insiders are saying, it's a streak that may well end soon.

CAVS IN CHINA

Don't feel bad if you missed the Cavs-Magic game Wednesday. After all, it was broadcast live at 8:30 a.m. on ESPN2.

Such is preseason life in China, where the Cavs and Magic meet again Friday. This time, the game will be televised live at 11:30 p.m. (also on ESPN2). You can also listen to the radio broadcast, with Fred McLeod providing the play-by-play. McLeod is the TV voice of the Cavs who is filling in for Cleveland legend Joe Tait, out with a bum foot.

The Cavs took a party of about 100 on the trip, an 18-hour flight one way.

As for the actual game, the Cavs looked better than they have all preseason, with their starters outplaying the Magic's for the majority of the game. That's especially true of LeBron James, who scored 17 points and thrilled the Chinese crowd with a massive breakaway dunk and dipsy-do layup in traffic that made all the highlights.

But then the Cavs cleared the bench, and the Magic pulled away by keeping their starters in for the entire fourth quarter.

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As Mike Brown said afterward, "(The game) showed their first five is better than our second five."

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