

## Battered & Bruised

Written by {ga=samamico}

Wednesday, November 14 2007 7:00 PM -

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Eric Snow out with a knee injury. Donyell Marshall's injured wrist. Damon Jones with a strained back, Sasha Pavlovic with back spasms. Larry Hughes missing games early on with the sniffles and again recently with a shaving cut. This Cavs team has been battered and bruised early on in the season, and is still missing Andy Varejao. In Sam's latest, he quickly brings us up to date on the Cavs MASH unit, and talks about the potentially uncertain future of some of these players with the team.



Despite appearing in the Finals last season, the Cavaliers weren't known as a particularly deep team. That is why any injury, no matter how minor, can really throw their rotation for a loop.

But bumps, bruises and bad backs are pretty much the story of the Cavs' early season. Granted, nothing major has happened to LeBron James -- and Cleveland fans everywhere are lighting holy candles and praying for it to stay that way.

Others who played a supporting role in team's ascent to Eastern Conference supremacy last season have not been as fortunate. Throw in the late arrival by Sasha Pavlovic and continued holdout of Anderson Varejao, and it's safe to say the Cavs' bench is a little on the thin side. And that's being generous.

Here is closer look at the what Cavs have had to deal with in the season's first two

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weeks:

\* Eric Snow's knee. Snow is the team's best defender and the first guy off coach Mike Brown's bench. He has yet to play after injuring his knee on the first day of training camp. Surgery soon followed. Snow was seen hobbling around in his uniform prior to the Cavs' home loss to Orlando the other night, which can only be a good sign. But he is at least a month away from returning to action.

\* Donyell Marshall's wrist. Marshall isn't close to the rebounder or shooter he was when signing with the Cavs three years ago. There have even been reports that the Cavs would love to buy out his contract and hope for a quick development from younger players like Dwayne Jones and Cedric Simmons. But Marshall is veteran, and until Varejao returns (make that IF he returns), Marshall will be a needed body in the frontcourt. Right now, the Cavs seem to be keeping his status a secret, saying only that the wrist is being evaluated and re-evaluated, ad nauseam.

\* Larry Hughes' knee. No Cavaliers injury report would be complete without Hughes, unquestionably one of the NBA's most fragile players. This year he's already missed three games with a bruised knee, an injury that was aggravated in the Orlando game. Throw in the fact he played just four minutes before getting ejected in Denver, and is averaging just 6.8 points on a miserable 29 percent shooting from the field ... well, you can really make a case for the Cavs not getting their money's worth (\$12 million this season, \$12.8 million next, and \$13.6 million the year after that).

\* Damon Jones' back. Jones has been a regular part of the rotation, just as he was at the beginning of last season, before finding himself buried on the bench at the end. He strained his back against Orlando and is also day-to-day.

\* Pavlovic's back. After missing the first games, last season's starting shooting guard had to work himself into game shape -- then suffered a setback when he

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suffered back spasms. Like most back problems, this could linger for a while, and even get worse before it gets better.

Obviously, the Cavs aren't the only team that's been bothered by injuries, and to their credit, they've made no excuses. But it undoubtedly has forced Brown to do a lot more lineup juggling than even he could have imagined. The result is end-of-the-bench guys like Ira Newble and Shannon Brown being counted on regularly, and the Cavs struggling to get into any type of real rhythm.

Mostly, it's just been one big pain in the neck. Not to mention the knee, wrist and back.