

Danny Ferry finally heard the cries (and yelling and swearing) of his people. After two frustrating years as one of the NBA's most inert GMs, Ferry broke through in a big way at Thursday's NBA trading deadline. And the Cavaliers have four new players. In this excellent piece, Erik Cassano take a closer look at the four new Cavs, telling us what to expect, the roles they will fill, and the impact they will have here in CTown.



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For anyone who has ever said "Man, would Ben Wallace look good in a Cavs uniform" or "It would sure be nice to bring Wally Szczerbiak back to the state where he played his college ball," dream no longer. Starting with Friday's game against the Wizards, Wallace and Szczerbiak will be LeBron's wingmen thanks to a massive 11-player trade with the Bulls and Sonics reported by multiple media outlets shortly after the deadline passed Thursday afternoon.

Joining Wallace and Szczerbiak in the new-look Cavaliers lineup is aging power forward Joe Smith and combo guard Delonte West. The trade, as reported by the Akron Beacon Journal's Brian Windhorst, sends Larry Hughes, Drew Gooden, Shannon Brown, and Cedric Simmons to Chicago, Donyell Marshall and Ira Newble to the Sonics, and Adrian Griffin to the Sonics from the Bulls.

At first blush, this trade gives the Cavs two things they very much needed -- an upgraded backcourt, and toughness, depth and rebounding down low. But as with all trades, there is a give-and-take of positives and negatives. Here is a breakdown for each player the Cavs received:

## Ben Wallace

**Age: 33; 2007-08 stats: 5.1 PPG, 8.8 RPG, 1.6 BPG**

When the Bulls signed Wallace to a four-year, \$60 million contract in the summer of 2006, it was hailed as the move that would crown the Bulls as the class of the Eastern Conference once again. Unfortunately for Chicagoans, things didn't really work out that way.

Wallace never appeared comfortable with his centerpiece role in Chicago. He quarreled with since-fired coach Scott Skiles over issues as trivial as headbands. His stats declined, prompting people to proclaim the four-time NBA Defensive Player of the Year washed up.

There is no question that Wallace is exiting his prime years. He's 33, he has become more susceptible to injury, his stats are falling, he is no longer the best defensive player in the league and his lead weight of a contract is paying him \$15.5 million this year, with the next two seasons offering no relief. But there is reason for Cavs fans to hope for a Big Ben revival in Cleveland.

With the Cavs, Wallace will have a chance to slide back into the enforcer role which he filled so masterfully in Detroit. In the end, that's what Wallace is -- a role player. A very expensive role player, but a role player nonetheless. There is nothing about his game that says "go-to guy" or "centerpiece." Fortunately, the Cavs already have that covered.

With LeBron handling the spotlight and shouldering the burden of winning games, Wallace can focus on doing what he does best: rebound, block shots and making fast squirts like Raymond Felton and Rajon Rondo think twice about speeding into the lane for layups. If you've watched the likes of Felton and Rondo confound the Cavs in recent years, Wallace's ability to knock them on their rears might make him worth the \$15 million a year.

**The bottom line:** If Wallace's drop in production is due primarily to the fact that he was unhappy in Chicago, and not due to the fact that he is Trot-Nixon-at-33 old, look out. A re-energized Wallace is the kind of pickup that can make the Cavs, at long last, a legitimate title contender.

## Wally Szczerbiak

**Age: 30; 2007-08 stats: 13.1 PPG, 2.7 RPG, 1.4 APG**

Good thing I arrived in Bowling Green the year after Wally Szczerbiak left Miami Ohio for the NBA, otherwise I might not like this pickup.

In the late '90s, Szczerbiak was the prince of Mid-American Conference basketball, leading the RedHawks to the NCAA's Sweet 16 in 1999. In the 2000 NBA draft, he was nabbed two picks ahead of the Cavs' slot, taken sixth overall by the Timberwolves.

For six years, he was the closest thing Kevin Garnett had to a sidekick in Minnesota. He hasn't been an all-around force in the NBA, but he has carved a niche as a capable outside shooter who can put the ball on the floor and create off the dribble.

As with Wallace, Szczerbiak's acquisition brings with it age concerns. As guards hit their 30s, usually a rapid decline in athleticism follows. Szczerbiak has never relied much on speed or hops to make his game go, so that is likely less of a concern. If Wally World can spot up beyond the arc and knock down threes off LeBron's kickouts, he'll fit in just fine.

To that end, Szczerbiak is motoring along this year, shooting more than 42 percent from beyond the arc, above his career average of 40 percent.

On the financial end of things, Szczerbiak will give the Cavs another potential expiring deal to trade this summer. He is making just over \$12 million this year, and will enter the final year of his contract at season's end.

**The bottom line:** Szczerbiak has started only one of 50 games this year for Seattle. He is averaging a mere 23.6 minutes per game, so there is a question of what type of impact starter's minutes would have on him. Mike Brown will likely have to start Szczerbiak until Sasha Pavlovic returns, but he'd be wise to manage Szczerbiak's minutes closely. By season's end, this could be a shooting-guard-by-committee situation.

**Joe Smith**

**Age: 32; 2007-08 stats: 11.2 PPG, 5.3 RPG, 0.6 BPG**

It is entirely possible that Smith, not Wallace, will fill the starting power forward's role. It might be a better decision than you'd think. Smith has started 35 of 50 games for the Bulls so far this year, so he's likely used to the starter's job. But at 22.9 minutes per game, he's also not going to need starter's minutes to be effective. And, hey, when you have Wallace and Anderson Varejao on the bench, there's no need to stick with Smith if he's not producing.

At this stage of his career, Smith is a downgrade over a motivated Drew Gooden talentwise. He can barely score like Gooden, he can't rebound like Gooden, and he certainly doesn't bring the athleticism of Gooden. But Smith should bring the one thing that was Gooden's Achilles' heel: consistency.

Smith seldom has been following 17-point, nine-rebound games -- such as he had Wednesday against Minnesota -- with six-point, two rebound games. That means he'll likely be a legitimate late-game option for Brown, which Gooden wasn't much of the time. If Gooden didn't have his A-game, you might as well bench him for the night. That shouldn't be the case with a veteran like Smith.

**The bottom line:** Smith is averaging 11 points in 22 minutes per night. Even if he's not Mr. Endurance, he should at least be efficient with the minutes he plays.

### **Delonte West**

**Age: 24; 2007-08 stats: 6.8 PPG. 3.2 APG**

At 24, he's the baby of the bunch, but his role with the Cavs might become extremely important before the end of the season.

At 6'-4", West is listed as a shooting guard. But he'll likely be a point guard for the Cavs' purposes. When you get right down to it, with Hughes gone to Chicago, and Daniel Gibson and Eric Snow already registered flops as the starting point guard, West might be Mike Brown's best option to start at the point.

West's stats look extremely pedestrian, but he's putting those numbers up in a little over 20 minutes per game. If he can produce at that level over the span of 35 to 40 minutes per game, we're talking about a guy who is averaging 11 points and six assists per night -- still not great, but an upgrade considering that's essentially what the Cavs were getting out of Hughes, who was really their starting shooting guard playing out of position.

West can be a free agent at season's end, but if he shows any promise, Ferry would probably want to bring him back for the price of his \$2.7 million qualifying offer.

**The bottom line:** Yes, he's far from Jason Kidd or Mike Bibby. But with West manning the point, the Cavs might actually receive some semblance of athleticism and playmaking ability from the position. In any amount, that's an upgrade over what they had.