

Tomorrow night ... the 2008 NBA Draft. The Cavs pick #19, and conventional wisdom is that the team will select a big man. Andy Varejao becomes unrestricted next season, and Zydrunas, Big Ben, and Joe Smith all are well into the back nines of their respective playing careers. But who will it be? Robin Lopez from Stanford? Roy Hibbert from Georgetown? Darrell Arthur from Kansas? JaVale McGee from Nevada? I think the pick will be Marreese Speights from Florida, and lay out the reasons why in my mock draft.



1. Chicago - PG Derrick Rose, Memphis

This kid is going to be a superstar, and it's too bad it has to be with the Bulls. Once Rose improves his outside shot a little bit, he's going to be unstoppable, and as is ... he will be an impact player from the very first day he steps on the court. He's strong, athletic, has great vision, and will be mentioned amongst the NBA's elite point guards within a couple of seasons.

2. Miami - PF Michael Beasley, Kansas State

There's a lot of talk about Miami dealing out of this spot. Don't believe it. Beasley is too good to pass on. Beasley is a complete offensive player, a ferocious rebounder, and can score and create from anywhere on the floor. If Dwayne Wade can come back and stay healthy, the Heat should make a quick return to the upper tier of the Eastern Conference.

3. Minnesota - SG O.J. Mayo, USC

In my mind, Mayo to Minnesota was set in stone when he was measured at over

6'4 at the Orlando pre-draft camp with a 6'6 wingspan. Mayo has incredible range on his jumper, can get to the hole, and has the ball handling skills to step over and play the point in spots. He exudes confidence on the floor, and should join Rose and Beasley in developing into a future NBA All-Star.

4. Seattle - C Brook Lopez, Stanford

Brook is the better of the two Stanford Lopez brothers, and appears to be a prototypical NBA center. And those aren't easy to find. Brook is big, strong, and athletic and has soft hands and good touch out to about 15 feet. The Sonics continue to add core pieces, and Lopez should be another one for them in the middle for many years.

5. Memphis - PF Kevin Love, UCLA

The Grizzlies are loaded with point guards (Conley Jr., Lowry, Crittendon) and wing players (Miller, Gay, Warrick) and are completely devoid of talented big men in the wake of the Pau Gasol trade. If they deal Mike Miller for a big man, Eric Gordon could be the guy here. If not? Most likely the versatile Bruin power forward.

6. New York - PG Jerryd Bayless, Arizona

One would have to think that the Knicks brass will be pulling hard for the Sonics to pass on Bayless at #4, because he appears to be the perfect pick for New York here. The comp? Another former Arizona Wildcat, Gilbert Arenas. The Knicks need a PG badly, and Bayless appears perfect to come in and run Mike D'Antoni's new wide open offense.

7. LA Clippers - SG Eric Gordon, Indiana

Gordon is a thick, strong, explosive two that can fill it up from outside and is relentless taking the ball to the hole. He's also a very strong defender. Gordon lacks point guard skills, but appears set to have a very nice career as a NBA shooting guard.

8. Milwaukee - SF Joe Alexander, West Virginia

Alexander was completely off the radar before a breakout year for the

Mountaineers last season, and has continued to ascend draft boards after strong workouts and teams falling in love with his character and work ethic. The Bucks need a small forward and they need toughness. Alexander will provide both.

9. Charlotte - PF/C Kosta Koufos, Ohio State

With Ray Felton, Jason Richardson, and Gerald Wallace set in stone at the 1, 2, and 3 ... I'd be surprised if the Bobcats don't go with a big man here. Their only big man worth anything is Emeka Okafor, and he struggles to score. Koufos is a risk. He's soft, skinny, and has just OK feet ... and drove Buckeye fans batty at times last season. This said, he is a very skilled seven footer, and has considerable upside if he is committed to getting stronger.

10. New Jersey - PG Russell Westbrook, UCLA

Jason Kidd is in Dallas, and Vince Carter isn't getting any younger. Devin Harris is a nice young player, but Marcus Williams has failed to live up to the Nets expectations for him. Westbrook makes a lot of sense here for Jersey. He's as good a perimeter defender as there is in this draft, and can play both guard spots.

11. Indiana - PF Anthony Randolph, LSU

Jermaine O'Neal can no longer stay healthy and is being shopped. And all three of the Pacers centers (Murphy, Foster, Harrison) are stiff. Indiana desperately needs a talented big man and the only way they're going to do that at #11 is by rolling the dice on the lanky 6'10 freshman from LSU. Whether Randolph ends up as a three or a four is still in question, but this is a Pacer team that can no longer afford safe boring picks.

12. Sacramento - PG D.J. Augustin, Texas

I think this pick is a no brainer if Augustin is still on the board. Sacramento doesn't even have a point guard on their roster after dealing Bibby to Atlanta. Augustin is undersized, but is a true point guard with incredible ball handling skills and also has a scorer's mentality.

13. Portland - SF Brandon Rush, Kansas

With core players at the two (Roy), the four (Aldridge), and the five (Oden) ... I

look for the Blazers to either take Augustin or Rush off the board here at #13. Rush is as NBA ready as anyone in this draft, plays great perimeter defense, and should score enough to become a long term starter at a wing for whoever he is chosen by.

14. Golden State - C DeAndre Jordan, Texas A&M

Jordan is another one of those raw big men who left school after just one year, and is clearly a high risk, high reward type pick. He runs the floor well, which will play well with the Warriors, and also has a huge wingspan and is a quality shot blocker, which will help Golden State's porous interior defense.

15. Phoenix - SF Danilo Gallinari, Italy

Grant Hill is nearing the end of the road, and the Suns will likely jump all over this talented paizan if he's still here at #15. Gallinari was one of the top players in one of the top European leagues last season at the ripe young age of 19, and scores in a variety of ways.

16. Philadelphia - PF Darrell Arthur, Kansas

The Sixers have done a great job rebuilding their team in the wake of the Iverson deal, and will get a chance to add another nice piece here at #16. Looking at their roster, there is a gaping hole at the four, and Arthur is a skilled power forward with good size and athleticism.

17. Toronto - C Roy Hibbert, Georgetown

Hibbert doesn't seem like the Raptors kind of player, but I've got a feeling he may be the guy they take off the board here at #17. While he lacks upside, Hibbert is big, safe, and will give the Raptors a true center for the first time, well, maybe ever ... taking some pressure off Chris Bosh and Andrea Bargnani in the paint on both ends of the floor.

18. Washington - PG Mario Chalmers, Kansas

The hero of the NCAA title game, Chalmers appears to be a perfect fit for D.C. Gilbert Arenas has struggled to stay on the court, and when healthy, is no longer the point guard he entered the league as, now preferring to play off the ball.

Chalmers will give Arenas a legitimate running mate, and also help improve the weak Wizard defense.

19. CLEVELAND - PF Marreese Speights, Florida

With Darren Collison and Ty Lawson pulling out of this draft, and the Cavs essentially agreeing to bring back both Boobie and Delonte, I would be shocked if the Cavs do anything other than select the best available big man here. Under this scenario, the decision would come down to Robin Lopez, Marreese Speights, and JaVale McGee.

Robin Lopez ... he's Andy Varejao. We have one of those. McGee? Too lanky, too raw. He'll likely contribute nothing these next two seasons, which are so crucial for the Cavaliers.

I think Speights is going to be the guy. He's a big strong four that emerged for the Gators this season after Horford and Noah left. He's got good hands, a long wingspan, and can block shots and help out defensively ... which Ferry and Roker will like. And he can score. Around the bucket, and also shooting 15 foot jumpers. The knock on Speights is his conditioning, discipline, and his basketball IQ, which will no doubt invoke Drew Gooden nightmares from Cavs fans.

But listen, you're going to get some warts on whoever you pick at #19. Historically, the success level of players selected around this spot is very limited. If the Cavs can get this kid's head right and his waistline in check, this is a player that can conceivably help us pretty quickly. He's a very skilled and strong big man.

20. Denver - C Robin Lopez, Stanford

Nene is a bust. Kenyon Martin is shot. The Nuggets desperately need a big man that can help Marcus Camby out down low on both ends. Robin is nowhere near as strong or polished offensively as his brother, but he's more athletic and is a great shot blocker.

21. New Jersey - C JaVale McGee, Nevada

Like Randolph from LSU and Jordan from A&M, McGee is another one of those young, raw, string bean seven footers that has considerable upside if he can add

some strength and develop post moves. Jersey is rebuilding, and with two first rounder's, can afford to roll the dice on McGee.

22. Orlando - SF Chris Douglas-Roberts, Memphis

The Magic could really use some backcourt help for Jameer Nelson, but the guards available at this spot are pretty weak. CDR would be a good option for them at the two, giving them an interesting platoon at the position with J.J. Redick.

23. Utah - PF Alexis Ajinca, France

Your typical light in the pants Euro-big man, Ajinca has some scoring, passing, and shot blocking skills and seems to fit nicely into Utah's scheme.

24. Seattle - SG Nicolas Batum, France

With Brook Lopez already in tow at #4, the Sonics will likely look to their backcourt here at #24. With no quality point guards available, Batum is a long two guard that can help provide some scoring for Seattle.

25. Houston - C Joey Dorsey, Memphis

Outside of garbage buckets around the hoop, Dorsey is very limited offensively. Defensively however, he's ready to help someone in this league right now, and would provide a nice change of pace off the pine for Yao Ming.

26. San Antonio - SF Donte Greene, Syracuse

This talented frosh surprised some by leaving the 'Cuse after just one season, but this kid can straight out fill it up from the outside. With Bruce Bowen and Michael Finley getting up there in age, the Spurs would be elated if Greene fell into their laps here at #26.

27. New Orleans - SG Courtney Lee, Western Kentucky

Just in ... Portland has dealt this pick to New Orleans for cash considerations. The Hornets missing piece is a legitimate two guard to run with Chris Paul. Lee is a prolific scorer with great shooting range, and I would not be surprised if this is the guy they targeted in dealing for this pick.

28. Memphis - PF Serge Ibaka, Congo

The Grizz once again address the interior, and can afford a high risk, high reward selection with Kevin Love already on board at #5. Ibaka has freakish physical skills, but I see him slipping based on how badly other recent players from Africa have busted.

29. Detroit - SF Bill Walker, Kansas State

Michael Beasley's talented fellow freshman running mate at K State, Walker has great athleticism and a very high upside at the next level. I don't see him slipping out of the first round.

30. Boston - SG Kyle Weaver, Washington State

One thing the playoffs did expose about the Celtics is that Ray Allen is clearly on the back nine of his career. Weaver is a four year starter at Wazzou, and like many of the other young players Ainge has drafted, is ready to help in a supporting role right away.