

Dazed & Confused

Written by {ga=samamico}

Tuesday, January 06 2009 7:00 PM -

Since Christmas, our beloved Cavaliers have looked dazed and confused. At least, they have in the first half of road games (i.e., at Miami and Washington). What makes it so painful is they couldn't be contained earlier in the season. In Sam's latest, he goes inside the numbers to decipher what has caused the Cavs funk ... and what they need to do to get out of it.



Since Christmas, our beloved Cavaliers have looked dazed and confused. At least, they have in the first half of road games (i.e., at Miami and Washington).

What makes it so painful is they couldn't be contained earlier in the season. They passed, they cut, they hit the open man and averaged something like 222 points a game. Not really, but it sure seemed like it.

That's when everyone seemed to understand his role, every shot seemed to ring true, every rebound seemed to lead to another fast-break monster dunk by You Know Who.

Now?

Dazed & Confused

Written by {ga=samamico}

Tuesday, January 06 2009 7:00 PM -

Well, the Cavs can't even get a rebound against the lowly Wizards (they were out-boarded by a 52-35 count in their unsightly 80-77 loss). Remember, these are the Wizards we're talking about -- a team with little inside game to speak of even when it was competitive.

And it's gonna take a lot more than Mike Brown getting thrown out of games to fix what currently ails the Cavs. Instead, this is a team that could use at least a tweak on offense. As crazy as it sounds, they need less of LeBron James and more of the other guys. It's what worked at first.

Mostly, they need to get the ball out of LeBron's hands early in the shot clock -- and it's up to Brown to make sure it happens. It's no secret that when LeBron stands at the top of the key and dribbles and dribble and dribbles, the Cavs are at their worst. If that's the offense, the Cavs have absolutely NO CHANCE at winning a championship. Hopefully, James and the gang can grasp that.

And if that's gonna be the strategy, then trading for Mo Williams was a colossal waste of time. Someone just needs to have the guts to tell LeBron that the ball belongs in Mo's hands at the beginning of each possession. Truth is, Williams is a better creator than even the King himself.

At the very least, Brown and "offensive coordinator" John Kuester must convince James to get on the low block with his back to the basket once in a while -- especially now that the Cavs' low-post game has become non-existent in Zydrunas Ilgauskas' absence.

I asked LeBron if he would play power forward on occasion now that Z is out, and he said that there was "no doubt about it." I then asked Brown, and he said "that even in games where Z is available," James usually plays power forward "at the end of the first quarter."

Dazed & Confused

Written by {ga=samamico}

Tuesday, January 06 2009 7:00 PM -

Apparently, I know nothing about basketball, because I always thought the power forward went inside, played with his back to the basket, and battled for rebounds once in a while. I have yet to see James do that during the past two weeks or so.

Nor has he exactly been Magic Johnson when it comes to handling the ball. As Brian Windhorst reported in Tuesday's Plain Dealer, James is averaging 4.7 turnovers over the past eight games. That's not to say the ball shouldn't be in James' hands a lot, it's just that he may be trying to do too much as a guard.

None of this is meant to indict James. He's the greatest thing to ever happen to Cleveland basketball and is one of the two or three guys who have saved the NBA since Michael Jordan's retirement. He is a team player who really wants to win a title. For that, Cavs fans should forever be thankful.

But unless the Cavs figure out how to get the maximum performance out of the game's greatest player, they'll have little to show for this season at the end. Unless finishing with one of the top two or three records in the league is all you're hoping for from this team.

Sam Amico is the editor of Pro Basketball News and a frequent contributor to SportsTime Ohio and The Cleveland Fan. He can be reached at amico@probasketballnews.com.