

## Preview: Cavs at Magic

Written by {ga=samamico}

Tuesday, November 10 2009 7:00 PM -

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If you're a Cavaliers fan, this is one of the games you've been waiting for. You've been waiting for another shot at the team that wiped away your season, the team for which everyone said the Cavs had no answer. And are the Cavs more equipped to face the Orlando Magic this year? Sam Amico gives us his thoughts in his preview of Wednesday night's big game between the Cleveland Cavaliers and the Orlando Magic.



INDEPENDENCE - If you're a Cavaliers fan, this is one of the games you've been waiting for. You've been waiting for another shot at the team that wiped away your season, the team for which everyone said the Cavs had no answer.

And are the Cavs more equipped to face the Orlando Magic this year?

You would sure think so. They have a massive body in Shaquille O'Neal to put on Dwight Howard, the Magic's muscular man in the middle. They have more athletes at the wing positions in Anthony Parker and Jamario Moon to put on all those tall Magic shooters.

Most importantly, they still have LeBron James.

Granted, that didn't do a whole lot for the Cavs in the Eastern Conference finals last season -- but as James proved in Game 5 (the Cavs' final victory of last season), if he has to do it alone, he will.

Like the Cavs, the Magic have a different look, allowing Hedo Turkoglu to bolt to Toronto and landing Vince Carter in a deal with New Jersey that involved two

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starters from last year's Finals team (Courtney Lee and Rafer Alston).

Throw in the fact forward Rashard Lewis is still serving a 10-game suspension for steroids, and Howard is the only starter who remains from the team that finished last season.

I asked James what he made of all of the Magic's changes, and he immediately mentioned Turkoglu, suggesting the 6-foot-10 point forward will in fact be missed. But LeBron also complimented the newcomers, saying Carter, Ryan Anderson (also from New Jersey) and Brandon Bass (from Dallas) are good fits in Coach Stan Van Gundy's system.

In other words, there may be some new faces, but the philosophy is the same. The key to stopping the Magic is trying to contain Howard while staying put on all those perimeter marksman. That's no secret and the Cavs feel they're well-prepared (or at least, more prepared) to deal with it.

What we're all more concerned with is how the Cavs have looked through the first seven games. It hasn't been bad -- it just hasn't been nearly as earth-shattering as we may have expected.

O'Neal and the team have been slow to adjust to one another, particularly on offense. Shaq was even ripped on an ESPN talk show on Tuesday morning, with analysts suggesting he's past his prime and that his acquisition was a mistake by GM Danny Ferry.

It seems awful early to make those assumptions, particularly a mere seven games into the season. Especially when you consider Orlando opened last season 0-2, having lost at home to Atlanta and then dropping a road game in Memphis. And just look at where the Magic ended up.

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Anyway, back to the Cavs.

While Shaq has indeed missed some bunnies near the basket, the bigger concerns have been point guard Mo Williams and just overall team chemistry.

The addition of O'Neal, for whatever reason, seems to have effected Williams the most, with Williams clearly struggling to get into any type of rhythm. In all honesty, he hasn't been himself -- or more accurately, what the Cavs hoped he would be -- since the regular season last year.

Williams hears what people have been saying about his early-season issues, and the normally talkative, jovial guy was rather firm with the media at Tuesday's practice. He wasn't rude, he just wasn't his usual light-hearted and fun-to-be-around self.

That could change tonight, he suggested, by beating the team that has suddenly become the Cavs' No. 1 nemesis.

Last year, this team was built to beat Boston. This year, it's been built with the idea that it can beat anyone.

So far that hasn't been the case, but a win over Orlando sure would do a lot to change people's perceptions. That includes the Cavs themselves.

## HICKSON TO START

Cavs forward J.J. Hickson will start his second game the season tonight, Coach

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Mike Brown said. Hickson started Friday in New York in place of Anderson Varejao.

Following Tuesday's practice at Cleveland Clinic Courts, Hickson played a game of one-on-one against assistant coach Melvin Hunt on a side basket while Brown spoke to reporters. Brown laughed and suggested that if Hickson lost, Hunt would start in his place.

&quot;Mel's been bugging me about his minutes,&quot; Brown said with a smile.

Hickson finished 3-for-4 shooting for six points in 13 minutes against the Knicks. On the negative side, he also committed two turnovers and failed to grab a rebound.

*Sam Amico cover the Cavaliers and NBA for NBA.com, and is a regular contributor to SportsTime Ohio and The Cleveland Fan.*