



Over the course of the last month, Cavaliers power forward Drew Gooden's name has been the subject of a host of different trade rumors. This shouldn't be surprising to anyone that follows the team closely. The NBA trade deadline is approaching, and Gooden becomes a free agent at the end of the season.

The Cavs also have three pretty prolific offensive players (LeBron James, Larry Hughes, Zydrunas Ilgauskas) firmly fixated in their long term plans, as well as the offensive-minded Damon Jones and Donyell Marshall as the first two guys off the bench. Ideally, general manager Danny Ferry would like to replace Gooden with a defensive minded power forward that would give the team toughness and defensive presence down low, a mandatory asset if the Cavs want to advance to the Eastern Conference finals.

There is a market for Gooden due to the fact he is still young, very talented, and becomes a restricted free agent at season's end. Any team dealing for him would be able to offer him more money, and also eventually match any offers made to him in free agency. On the flip side, Gooden has been all around the league, playing for three teams in three and a half seasons, and is once again on the block. This has many GM's apprehensive about acquiring him, despite the aforementioned attributes he possesses.

The knock on Gooden, and it's justified, is that he has a poor "basketball IQ". A "good player on a bad team" kind of guy. At times, Gooden looks like a guy that

could average 20 and 10 a night if featured in an offense. He shows similarly impressive defensive skills in spots, but has not been able to play at a high level for extended stretches thus far in his career. He seems to lose focus on the floor at times, and frequently botches defensive assignments down low. However, he has played much better overall as of late.

Ferry's dilemma is that he wants to improve the team for this year, as well as for the future. None of the Gooden rumors to date have resulted in the Cavaliers receiving equal talent in return. Additionally, even if Ferry doesn't want to resign Drew, he could easily sign and trade him in the off-season, and may be able to get a king's ransom if Drew continues to play well on the back nine holes of this season.

The most recent rumor, which seems to make the most sense of any of them, has Drew going to Chicago in exchange for point guard Chris Duhon. Again though, this deal does not figure to help the Cavs this season, and leaves a gaping hole in the frontcourt if coach Mike Brown is forced to move emerging Anderson Varejao into Gooden's spot in the starting lineup. Adding Mike Sweetney and Luke Jackson into the deal still works under the salary cap and NBA collective bargaining agreement, and may tempt Ferry to pull the trigger. Duhon and Sweetney are both under contract for two more seasons following this one, and Bulls GM Jim Paxson is said to be interested in signing Gooden to a long term deal this off-season.