

Pole Position

Written by {ga=samamico}

Sunday, February 14 2010 12:00 AM - Last Updated Wednesday, February 17 2010 9:12 PM



Thirteen straight wins.

The best record in the league.

Two wins in two tries against the Orlando Magic. Two wins in two tries against the defending champion Los Angeles Lakers.

LeBron James grabbing one-handed rebounds in traffic, using his other hand to slap the backboard for effect. Of all the great LeBron moments in Thursday's 115-96 thriller of a victory over the Magic, that one may have meant the most.

It seemed to be LeBron's way of saying this one was over. It was as if he was waving goodbye to the Magic, thanking for them for playing and wishing them a safe trip home.

Ah, yes. What a great time to be a Cavaliers fan.

Remember the beginning of the season? Remember how the Cavs lost the first game to Boston? Remember how they followed it a night later with a loss in Toronto?

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And remember how the Chicago Bulls came to Quicken Loans Arena and made the Cavs look dazed, confused and like a team that was quite deserving of its 3-3 start?

But that was so five minutes ago. Actually, those days seem like another year in another galaxy far, far away.

Seriously, folks. Whoever imagined the Cavs would be 43-11 and tie a franchise-best winning streak with Daniel Gibson and J.J. Hickson as their starting point guard and power forward, respectively?

That's not a knock on either of those quickly improving young players -- but rather to show that this year's Cavs are deeper, more cohesive, and yes, more talented than the team that finished with the NBA's best record last year.

It's true that the Cavs finished with the best record last season and it amounted to nothing. But this year just feels different.

It's easy to forget that starting point guard Mo Williams has missed 11 games with a shoulder injury, or that Delonte West missed nine in a row with a broken finger before Thursday night. And anyone who's foolish enough to think the Cavs need to make a trade before next week's deadline has obviously forgotten about injured forward Leon Powe. He's the talented off-season acquisition who has yet to play a game for the Cavs, but could be activated as soon as the first game after the All-Star break.

You want the Cavs to make a trade? Well, here's a little advice: Forget about it. They don't need anybody else. This year ain't last year.

This year the Cavs are beating the other teams considered to be among the league's elite. This year they are taking down the Magic and the Lakers, and you can be darn sure they can't wait for another shot at the Celtics.

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This year they can go tall, they can go small, they can slow it down and they can speed it up. You name the style, and these Cavs can play it.

They can match up with Orlando's perimeter shooters, and thanks to Shaquille O'Neal, they don't need to worry nearly as much about double-teaming Magic center Dwight Howard.

Heck, it's probably time for Orlando to start worrying about the Cavs from the perimeter -- as the Cavs hit 45 percent of their 3-pointers Thursday, compared to just 38 percent for the Magic. It's probably time for the Magic to start worrying about matching up with the Cavs, and not vice-versa.

Obviously, it's too early to be anything more than cautiously excited. No one wins a championship in February. Or March or April or May, for that matter.

And as no less than Shaq has indicated, not much that happens before the All-Star break really matters. At least, not compared to what happens after the break.

But take this break and enjoy it. Reflect on what the Cavs have done, what it really, really, really seems like they might be able to do.

Go ahead and dare to dream. This time, it very well could be worth it. This time, the Cavs have the look of champions. And this time, it's not just because they're winning a lot -- it's because they have been a team of substance. They are beating other winners. They are winning on the road. They are more than just All LeBron, All The Time.

Then again, it never hurts to have LeBron. This is a man who knows how to wave goodbye when the Cavs leave the competition in the dust.

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And right now, they really need that.

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