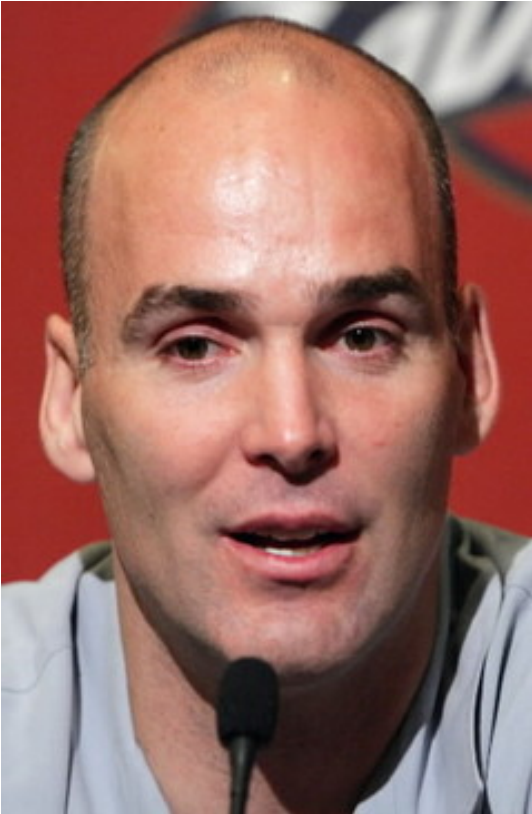


It's Official: LeBron James Has His Sidekick . . . and It Isn't Antawn Jamison

Written by {ga=jdclevelandfan}
Thursday, February 18 2010 10:19 PM -



No matter how expected or unexpected it may have been, it still felt a little shocking:

Yesterday, the Cleveland Cavaliers finally found LeBron's sidekick. His #2. His Pippen. His Robin. His Doctor Watson. His Ed McMahon. His Boo Boo. His Michael Wilbon. His Austin Carr. His Anti-Hughes.

At around 6:30 P.M. Eastern, the *"Washington Post"* reported that the Cavs had traded for Washington Wizards star forward Antawn Jamison. It was a three-team deal; the L.A. Clippers were also involved.

From there, a cavalcade of Twittered reports burst through Cleveland's fervent, but divided and vacillating fan base. It was a great relief; things were finally coming to a conclusion.

When it was all said and done, the Cavs landed Jamison for Zydrunas Ilgauskas, a first round draft pick, and the rights to Emir Preldzic, who the Cavs drafted late in the second round of last year's draft.

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[Somewhat ironically, the Cavs purchased that pick from the Phoenix Suns. Preldzic was born in Slovenia, is currently playing in Turkey, and is now a part of the Wizards' rebuilding project.]

No J.J. Hickson, no Jamario Moon, no strings.

In an odd twist, the Cavs also landed 24-year-old disappointment Sebastian Telfair. Technically, he's a point guard, but he'll be taking over Coby Karl's end-of-the-bench spot on the roster. The Cavaliers didn't want him, of course, they had to take him for the Clippers to participate. [Telfair is out for the next three weeks with a groin injury.]

During that time, he can also field offers from other teams, some of which may be able to offer him more money than the Cavs. Cleveland is over the cap, and their only liquid funds are the \$1.9 million Bi-Annual Exception (BAE). That should do the trick, though. No frustration over being traded could be bigger than the reception Z is going to get at The Q when he walks back out onto the court.

But more on later, back to LeBron James' new sidekick.

Antawn Jamison is an excellent player . . . and I absolutely can't wait to see him in a wine and gold uniform, but he's not the sidekick I'm referring to. And neither is Sebastian Telfair, as shocking as that may be. [Actually, he, like LeBron, was a super-hyped high school star before he was drafted in 2004, and back then, he may have been considered to be a dream sidekick for LeBron.]

And no, we didn't also trade for Amar'e Stoudemire in some overshadowed move.

The sidekick is: Cavs GM Danny Ferry.

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It's not a joke. Think about it.

Ferry just brought in Jamison for Z, a first round pick, and some dude playing in Turkey that you probably didn't even know existed until this trade. If Z is able to come back, Jamison cost the Cavs just a late, *very late* first round pick, which is projected to be the last or second to last pick in the first round.

It's grand larceny, and that's the *fourth straight heist* that Ferry has made.

Let's rewind the tape.

It started off a little rough. When Ferry was hired in the summer of 2005, the Cavs had no draft picks or trade assets, but he did have \$28 million in cap space. So, naturally, he was stuck overspending in free agency.

He was rejected by Michael Redd (who has to regret that decision now, right?) . . . and decided not to lock up his money while waiting to see if the Phoenix Suns would match a max offer for restricted free agent Joe Johnson (somewhat surprisingly, when Atlanta made a bid, the Suns let him walk).

So he threw \$70 million at the then-best player available: Larry Hughes.

He spent the rest of his purse on unfriendly contracts for role players Damon Jones and Donyell Marshall. And the whole thing turned out to be such a colossal disaster that no one could have seen it coming. All three of their careers basically ended in Cleveland, and they didn't really do much while they were here.

Then Ferry went to work.

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He warmed up his red right hand by stealing Flip Murray from the Seattle SuperSonics for freakin' Mike Wilks in a 2006 trade deadline deal. I couldn't understand the Sonics motivation for that trade at the time . . . especially as Flip was having a stellar second half for us . . . but that was petty theft compared to where Ferry is at now.

In a 2008 deadline deal, Ferry executed his first big score. He orchestrated an 11-player, three-team deal that not only rid us of Larry Hughes and his pet albatross . . . but he got talent back. Real, *helpful* talent. The deal was done with the "help" of the Chicago Bulls and the Seattle SuperSonics.

Ferry shipped out Hughes, Drew Gooden, Ira Newble, Shannon Brown, Donyell Marshall and Cedric Simmons . . . in exchange for Delonte West, Ben Wallace, Wally Szczerbiak and Joe Smith. (In case you're thinking about bringing it up, Shannon Brown's current success in L.A. doesn't make this any less of a steal.)

That summer, Ferry staked out, and broke into the Milwaukee Bucks organization and ran out with a future All-Star point guard named Mo Williams. In that deal, the Cavs gave up Damon Jones and Joe Smith. Once again, he employed an accomplice. This time it was the Oklahoma City Thunder.

At the trading deadline last year, Ferry was spotted in Phoenix by his buddy GM Steve Kerr. Stevie K suspected, correctly, that Ferry was there to *rob him blind* . . . and immediately sounded the alarms. Ferry escaped, but never quite got over that thwarting, and after the Cavs lost to the Orlando Magic in the Eastern Conference Finals, he vowed vengeance.

Less than a month later, Ferry went back down to Phoenix to finish what he started. This time, Kerr never saw him coming. Ferry was halfway out the door with Shaquille O'Neal before Kerr had the eerie feeling that he was now in possession of Ben Wallace and career under-achiever Sasha Pavlovic.

This was Ferry's first big solo job . . . and his first five-finger pickup without the involvement of the Seattle / Oklahoma City franchise.

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[Kerr ended up buying both of them out, meaning that he gave up Shaq for cap space . . . and whoever they select with the Cavs' second round pick in this year's draft.]

Then later that summer, he didn't have any cap room to sign any free agents . . . but he did re-sign Anderson Varejao, and turned a \$6 million cap exception into Anthony Parker, Jamario Moon and Leon Powe. Now that's how you work the free agent market.

Then, just yesterday . . . in his boldest, most insane move yet . . . Ferry broke into the bank, in broad daylight, wearing a burglar mask and flashing Christmas lights, and stole Antawn Jamison out from right under everyone's noses.

And instead of running out to the soundtrack of police sirens . . . Ferry sashayed out the front door, with his arm around Jamison (and Telfair riding piggyback), while everyone in the bank applauded and cheered.

Seriously, everyone in the media has been talking about how Ferry was on the prowl for over a month now. Everyone knows his track record. Everyone was thinking . . . 'OK, we need some cap relief, but we can't deal with Cleveland unless we can get Ferry to give us something, *anything*

We don't want to end up being featured in one of the eventual bio specials on the LeBron Era in Cleveland. Hmm... this J.J. Hickson guy looks good..."

And then, out of the blue, Ferry struck . . . like lightning . . . and that was that.

Everyone saw it coming, and he still got what he wanted, on his terms. Unbelievable.

To those of you who wanted Amar'e, I understand. I really do. (I'd started coming around on him too, and was definitely intrigued about the possibility of watching him play alongside LeBron.) But there's no need to rehash the Amar'e situation here.

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There was no deal to be made.

The latest talk out of Phoenix is that Ferry pulled J.J. off the table there once the framework for the J.J.-less Washington / L.A. Clippers deal was in place . . . and *that's* when Phoenix said 'no.' We'll never know what actually happened. It's in both sides best interest to blame the no-trade on the other side.

And frankly, it doesn't matter. The Suns could've pulled the trigger at any point up until yesterday morning. It sounds like the offer was on the table for a week.

Ferry was left empty-handed when Kerr walked away from the Shaq talks at the last minute last February . . . but this year, Ferry had business to do. And if you're a good GM, regardless of what potential trades were still available, you *don't* pass or stall on a deal like the Washington one.

You're aggressive, and you make things happen. With everything that Ferry has been able to deliver for the Cavaliers, it's pretty obvious that if he shifted away from Amar'e, there wasn't ever going to be a deal there. And if there wasn't going to be a deal there, you move on. It's how things get done.

Low-risk, virtually no-cost is good by me. This team is damn good.

The *only* downside is that the Cavs didn't get the opportunity to pair LeBron up with a superstar sidekick.

Amar'e, who's only 27, could have been LeBron's Wilbon . . . *if* Phoenix would've traded him to us, and if he would've been willing to defer his 'star' status, and if he would've re-signed with us, and if he would've become a *tea*
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member, and if he wouldn't have suffered any further injuries.

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But that's OK, because we have Danny Ferry, a creative thinker and a ruthless negotiator.

The player-sidekick notion is difficult. How many young superstars today have sidekicks more significant than LeBron/Mo or LeBron/Shaq, or LeBron/Jamison, or . . . seriously . . . LeBron and Anderson Varejao? Is it Kobe Bryant/Pau Gasol? (Not impressed.)

[I'd take LeBron/Andy vs. Kobe/Pau in a two-on-two any day. And can we bet on it?]

With a resourceful (if not genius) GM in Ferry (and, by extension, a Cleveland-savior of an owner (that "gets it" and actually *wants it* in Dan Gilbert) the Cavaliers have someone willing to go to exhaustive efforts to get the job done. This doesn't sound like a front office that a star disconnects from.

[You know how the Clippers cleared all that space? Well, I'd take out front office vs. theirs any day. Hell, I'll take the Cavs' front office easily over: New York's, New Jersey's, Miami's, and Chicago's, too.]

The roster that Ferry has built over the past three years has been overflowing ever since June. It's a team built to win now, and in the future. It may not be a dynasty yet, but Ferry (our newly certified #2) is working on that. And he's not going to stop ripping off the league to improve this team anytime soon.

It isn't easy, look at the three-team deals . . . Washington clearly wasn't going to let Jamison go without getting Hickson, so Ferry brought in another team that could send the Wizards some talent, and took on a salary from the Clips in exchange.

There is one bit of business that needs to be done, to keep this core together, that Ferry *can't* handle. And that's his own deal.

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Last month, Brian Windhorst reported that Danny Ferry's five-year contract . . . which was reportedly worth \$2 million a season . . . is up this summer. At this point, it seems like a no-brainer to extend Ferry, and there's no indication that Gilbert is thinking otherwise.

But if he is, you can guarantee that Ferry's taking some office supplies on the way out.

One last note on Z:

If you've been a fan of the Cavaliers for the past 15 years, it can't *not* be difficult to see Z go. This is a man who has given everything he has to Cleveland . . . both in good times and in bad times. 15 years!

If Z does get bought out by the Wizards, and assuming he does return to the Cavs, that first day back on the floor at The Q needs to be *his* night. Every single person in the arena . . . and every fan watching at home . . . needs to think over Z's career in that game.

All the struggles with injuries early, all the perseverance, all the effort he put in over the course of his career . . . especially as the team was working to build a team around LeBron. And all the sacrifices he's made over the last couple years for the sake of the team.

He's a commendable, legitimate Cleveland *star*.

In celebration, here's a fantastic piece, called "*The Giving Z*", written by **John Krolik** of Cavs: The Blog. Enjoy it at this [link](#)