

Jiri Welsch: Making Anything Danny Ferry Does Look Awesome, Since 2005

Written by {ga=jdclevelandfan}

Tuesday, February 23 2010 5:41 PM - Last Updated Saturday, March 27 2010 1:32 PM



Today, February 24th, should be **Danny Ferry Appreciation Day** in Cleveland.

Why?

Because he's awesome. (As a GM.)

He just landed Antawn Jamison to cap-off an absolutely wicked two-year roster overhaul . . . beginning roughly six months *after* the Cavaliers made their first ever appearance in the NBA Finals in 2007.

Not including Zydrunas Ilgauskas, the only remaining Cavs players from that run are: LeBron James, Anderson Varejao and Daniel Gibson. In the two-and-a-half seasons since, Ferry has aggressively and completely transformed the Cavs roster into a *legitimate* title contender.

[I detailed Ferry's questionably legal, but unquestionably brilliant, moves [here](#) .]

But the Jamison pick-up happened almost a week ago. February 24th holds a special significance, though. It also involves a first round pick . . . which *may* end up being the sole cost of Jamison . . . and it also involves a trade deadline deal. A much, *much* worse trade deadline deal.

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Five years ago tomorrow . . . on February 24th, 2005 . . . then-GM Jim Paxson traded the Cavs' 2007 first round draft pick to the Boston Celtics for . . . super-flop Jiri Welsch.

I remember being extremely unimpressed at the time . . . as a lot of Cavs fans were, presumably. Yes, we'd brought in someone new to play with LeBron, but this kid was worse than Ira Newble (who we were starting at that point, as you may recall.)

Thanks to the Internet, Paxson's attempt to sell us all on the trade has been preserved. Granted this is in retrospect, but even then I think most of us felt he was laying it on pretty thick.

He [said](#) :

"We've been interested in Jiri for some time now and we felt it was the right time to get him here." *[That actually was good foresight; Jiri had limited time left in the NBA.]*

"He is an aggressive, complete player that can impact offense and defense, so we look forward to his involvement on both ends of the court. Jiri has the talent needed to make the difference for us this season and we look forward to seeing him excel as a Cavalier."

There's also this equally amusing ESPN [recap](#) of the trade, which reports that the Cavs were attracted to Jiri because of his scintillating 32% shooting from beyond the arc:

"Welsch, who started for Boston earlier this season, should help the Cavaliers improve their 3-point shooting. The club is 27th out of 30 teams in the NBA on 3-pointers. Welsch has made 32 of 99 3-point attempts this season.

"[He] started 32 of 55 games for the Celtics this season and averaged 7.5 points on 43 percent shooting. He lost his starting job to rookie guard Tony Allen last month and watched his minutes diminish.

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"Welsch will likely split time [with Newble] at the [shooting guard] position and gives the team a much-needed 3-point shooter. The Cavs had been relying on Lucious Harris to fill that role, but he has made just 28 percent of his 3-point attempts this season."

Jesus.

This might be a good time to ask if anyone thinks they may be taking the current Cavaliers team for granted. Anyone have any gripes about the talent level that the Cavs have since placed around LeBron?

O Jiri, where art thou?

Jiri ended up playing in just 16 games and 192 total minutes for the Cavaliers. If you had the chance to see him play in a Cavs uniform . . . either in person or on TV . . . you witnessed *history*.

Our so-called 3-point savior only shot 2-for-11 from beyond the arc in those games. That's 18%. But overall, he shot 23.5%, connecting on 12 of his 51 field goal attempts. If you had the chance to see Jiri make a basket as a Cavalier, you saw a small slice of history.

And if you remember seeing him hitting one of those two bombs, you have a story to tell your children . . . when you try to explain to them why LeBron couldn't win a championship in his early years in Cleveland.

Jiri did make 71%, or 20 of his 28 free throw attempts as a Cavalier, which is only *somewhat* below average. He averaged 2.9 points, 1.2 assists, 1.4 rebounds, 0.3 steals and 0.9 turnovers a game. All of those numbers aren't exactly what you're looking for when you trade a future first round pick.

The move didn't work out for the team either; they failed to make the playoffs.

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Since there are surely countless now-teenage Cleveland fans out there who remember anxiously watching Jiri, while wearing their "Welsch" jerseys, hoping that they may see Jiri make a shot (and thus, witnessing one of the rarest stats in Cavaliers history) . . . let's pay tribute by taking a look at Jiri's post-Cavs career.

After the 2005 season, new owner Dan Gilbert hired Ferry to be his GM. Ferry's first order of business was shipping Jiri out of town in exchange for, well, the going rate. The Cavs traded Jiri to Milwaukee for a *second* round draft pick in the 2005 draft . . . on the condition that the Cavs would pay his \$2.2 million salary.

The Cavs used that pick, the 47th, to draft Lithuanian center Martynas Andriuskevicius.

The following summer, Ferry traded Andriuskevicius to the Chicago Bulls for Delonte West's old high school buddy Eddie Basden. He never played for the Cavs. So, Jiri was traded for nothing . . . and that's fitting, because nothing ended up coming of Jiri. In the NBA at least.

The 2005-2006 season in Milwaukee was his last. He bumped his scoring average up to 4.3 points a game, and raised his 3-point shooting prowess to 28.6%. But that was it. He played four years in the NBA, and was traded *five* times: Philadelphia to Golden State to Dallas to Boston to Cleveland to Milwaukee.

[Interesting connection: On August 18, 2003, the Golden State Warriors traded Jiri to the Dallas Mavericks, along with Antawn Jamison, Chris Mills and Danny Fortson . . . for Nick Van Exel, Avery Johnson (as a player, of course), Popeye Jones, Evan Eschmeyer and Antoine Rigaudeau.]

No one courted him after that season, so he signed with the Spanish Euroleague team Unicaja Málaga . . . and he stuck. He's currently in his fourth season there.

Every team screws up every now and then . . . and on the surface, that seems like a harmless

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fiasco, considering that Ferry was able to at least white-out Paxson's mistake. But there's one other thing.

Remember that 2007 first round draft pick? Well, Boston ended up trading it to Phoenix for a first round pick in the 2006 draft. It was #21 . . . and they used it to select Rajon Rondo.

Phoenix then used the pick we gave Boston to draft Rudy Fernandez at #24 in 2007.

Fernandez had just come off a superstar year on the Spanish Euroleague team Joventut Badalona. That isn't the team Jiri was on; it's the team that currently features the Cavs' 2009 1st rounder, Christian Eyenga. Funny how connected everything is.

On that note, let's remember to celebrate **Danny Ferry Appreciation Day** tomorrow.

Because he's the architect of the current Cavaliers roster. And even though he may make bizarre draft selections that we only understand further down the road . . . or maybe not at all . . . when he trades his picks, he sure gets his money's worth. Amen.