

## Putting the Pieces Back Together

Written by {ga=jerryroche}

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The new Cavaliers coach -- whomever he may be -- will face a formidable task in determining how to fit the pieces and parts remaining from the disastrous playoffs into a synchronized, cohesive contender. Certainly, the Eastern Conference semi-final loss to Boston exposed at least some of the Cavs' most pressing problems.

None of the player-related questions can be answered until a certain "Chosen One" makes up his mind where he'll be plying his trade this coming season. So we'll table that problem for now and instead look at the players on the current roster whose fates will be decided by the new coach.

**Shaquille O'Neal:** According to most reports, he is as good as gone. Whether he stays or leaves, he and his fans must face the obvious reality that he is a mere shadow of his former All-NBA self. The 2009-2010 season proved that he can still be a dominant force in the middle, but only in certain situations and only for short spurts. The day is not far off when he will have more value to TNT in front of Camera Two than to any NBA team.

**Zydrunas Ilgauskas:** Ditto O'Neal, except that his status with the team is not such a foregone conclusion. As Cavalier fans, we love Big Z. We love his heart and soul, his love for the city, his love for us, and his 20-foot jump shot (when it's falling). Z's been around longer than many Cav fans, and his departure would leave not only a hole at the center position but a vast hole in our collective hearts. Unfortunately, a new head coach will not have the emotional ties to Z that we

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do.

**Mo Williams:** His future lies as a two-guard, not the PG that the Cavs force-fed him to play. What many critics have failed to realize is that he's been out of position since being traded from the Bucks. That can work, and work fine, during the regular season, but it handicaps both him and the team in the high-intensity playoffs. During this off-season, the Cavs absolutely must find an effective point guard, so Mo can move back to his natural position and not worry about guarding all those smaller, super-quick PGs like Rajon Rondo, Jameer Nelson and Chris Paul.

**Anderson Varejao:** Andy is a natural power forward, quite capable of giving the Cavs what he's given them the past two years -- which is to say hustle, rebounding and defense. Should Shaq and Z both leave, however, Andy is the team's only current option at center. Yes, he can play center, but asking him to do that for any length of time is like asking Mo to be a point guard.

**J.J. Hickson:** One of these years, J.J. is going to blossom into an all-star power forward. But is this the year? And -- should he be asked to spell "Wild Thing" at center -- will that retard his development? Big, big question marks. But J.J. is one of the few talented youngsters on this roster who holds some hope for the Cavaliers being a playoff contender three, four, five years down the road.

**Antawn Jamison:** Pity Antawn. Touted as the "missing link" to a championship, he came to the Cavaliers late in the regular season and never really had a chance to fit in with Shaq. He was misused on offense and misused on defense, especially during the playoffs. Given his age, he's got two, maybe three more years left. But because he can do wonderful things with a basketball, he could become the Cavaliers' leading scorer -- and, perhaps, rebounder -- this coming season. I still love the guy.

**Anthony Parker/Jamarion Moon:** I've lumped these two guys together because they came to the team during the same off-season and were basically asked to be the same player, though Parker was given the starting nod. Both are role players at best.

**Delonte West:** Redz gave us some wonderful moments. At times, he was amazing. At other times, he disappeared. Most of the time, though, his personal problems were a tremendous distraction. He's one of the current Cavs who probably should not be on the roster come

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November, for the sake of game-to-game consistency and the team's collective peace of mind.

**Daniel Gibson:** Poor Boobie is not a play-making point guard, nor is he quick enough to defend opposing PGs. He's a shooting guard in a point-guard's body. Sorry to say that -- unless he's spotting up for a three-pointer -- Boobie is of no value whatsoever.

**Sebastian Telfair:** Bet'cha didn't know that the L.A. Clippers import averaged 9.8 points and 3.0 assists in 19.3 minutes per game with the Cavs. Coming back from an injury, he only played four games with us -- but could this be the true point guard for whom we've been searching since, well, forever? Hey, let's give the guy a chance. What've we got to lose?

**Jawad Williams:** One of the surprises of 2009-2010, Jawad can play both the "two" and the "three" adequately. If the 2010-2011 roster needs a decent small forward, he can effectively come off the bench. He needs more seasoning, but he can be a valuable sub.

**Leon Powe:** Can Leon become the Leon he was with the Celtics? He gave flashes of brilliance (well not brilliance, more like competence) in limited duty. As the 2010-2011 season begins, he should be given the opportunity to compete with J.J. at power forward if Andy is otherwise occupied at center. Otherwise, he's just a third power forward on a team that needs expertise at other positions.

**Danny Green:** The North Carolina product is a classic 'tweener. At 6-6, 210 pounds, he's not really big enough to play small forward in the NBA, and the Cavs' roster is already crowded with two-guards. To his credit, in very limited duty last season, he didn't make the mistakes usually associated with rookies. Green will probably be a reserve for the rest of his tenure in the NBA, however long or short that is.

**Don't forget:** The Cavaliers retain the rights to 6-11 center Sasha Kaun and 6-5 shooting guard/small forward Christian Eyenga. According to the *Plain Dealer's* Terry Pluto, Kaun "played well for Moscow CSKA and is expected to be the starting center for the Russian national team." Eyenga, on the other hand, averaged just 3.8 points and 2.0 rebounds in a minor Spanish league (ACB) -- and his limited talent is not in an area of need.

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**OVERALL PROSPECTUS:** With or without You-Know-Who, the Cavaliers need a good starting center and a good point guard in order to remain championship contenders. They are fairly well set -- and very flexible -- at shooting guard and the two forwards. The bench may not be as strong as last season, but it should be adequate.