



Second Surgery to Sideline Larry for Rest of Regular Season, Maybe Playoffs

The Cavaliers learned yesterday that shooting guard Larry Hughes will be out another 8-10 weeks as he recovers from a second surgery performed on his right middle finger yesterday. This is the same finger Hughes had operated on six weeks ago. Hughes has three screws inserted into that finger in the first surgery, and one of those three screws became loose, necessitating the second surgery, which Danny Ferry defiantly defended yesterday. Ferry said that the first surgery was the right call, and that the second surgery was necessary now to avoid the awry screw causing further damage to a tendon in that finger.

The Cavs are 12-11 without Hughes, who signed a five-year, sixty-million dollar deal with the team in the off-season. The Cavs offense has regressed without him and his 16 points, 4 rebounds, and 4 assists a game. The team is scoring less four points per game, and shooting a lower percentage from the field. Hughes has been plagued by injuries his entire career, and has been out since December 31st with this latest ailment. Larry has now sustained injuries to five different parts of his body over his career, being sidelined in the past due to problems with his thumb, wrist, ankle, and shoulder.

This setback complicates matters even further for General Manager Danny Ferry. Had the team not been ravaged by injuries to Hughes, Luke Jackson, and Ira Newble ... Ferry would have likely looked to move Luke or Sasha Pavlovic for a veteran big man for the playoff push. Now, Pavlovic will likely continue to start at shooting guard, and demand for the injury-riddled Jackson is likely to be lukewarm at best.

Instead, Ferry will now likely look to add another guard to his depleted backcourt. In addition to forcing guys like Pavlovic and new addition Stephen Graham into key roles, Coach Mike Brown has been using LeBron James to play point guard. LeBron has also been playing too many minutes, which Brown readily admits.

Ferry's greatest dilemma is that his only real remaining trade-able commodity is forward Drew Gooden, and the Cavaliers cannot afford to give up Gooden without getting a near equal big man in return. The Cavaliers already lack interior toughness with Gooden, and moving Donyell Marshall into the starting lineup would leave untested Anderson Varejao as their only big off the bench. Additionally, the Cavs can wait until the off-season and likely get more back in return for Gooden in a sign-and-trade.

The trade deadline is February 23rd, so Ferry only has about a week to decide what to do. Latrell Sprewell is still a free agent, but is said to be seeking guaranteed money for this year as well as next. Would the opportunity to play 25-30 minutes a night with LeBron James on national television once a week change his mind? Another possibility is Jim Jackson, the former Ohio State star (and Cavalier) who is toiling on the bench in Phoenix. Jackson can still play and was a key contributor for the Suns down the stretch last season. Also, Denver has three

quality point guards and is looking to move one. Earl Boykins is a Cleveland native, fan favorite, and solid NBA point guard. Denver also has Earl Watson, who the Cavs almost signed in free agency this off-season before deciding on Damon Jones.

Swerb's Blurbs will be all over any and all developments with our Cavaliers as the trade deadline approaches.