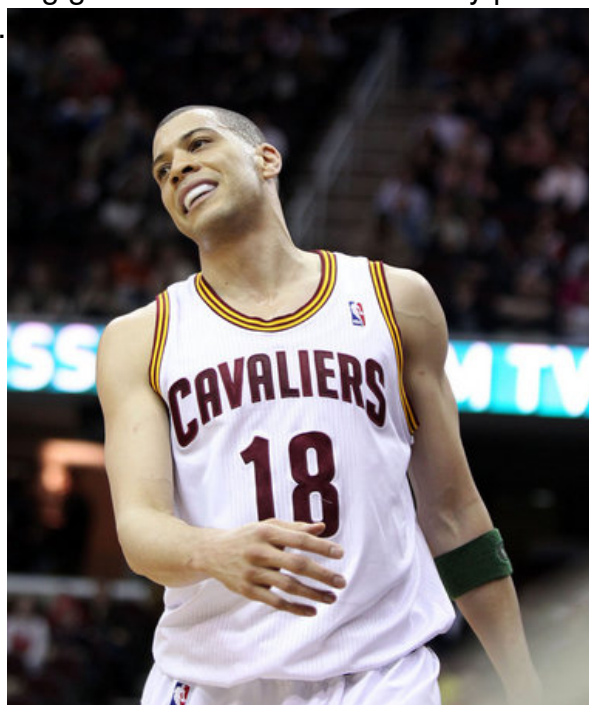


According to Cavaliers GM Chris Grant, the Cavaliers “absolutely want to have Anthony Parker back.” Parker’s veteran leadership and presence are two characteristics that the team highly values. With the Cavaliers being early in the process of rebuilding through the draft, the idea of having a stand-up person like Anthony Parker mentoring young guys like Kyrie Irving and Tristan Thompson makes sense.

On the surface, Parker is a cheap veteran who can fill a much needed hole at shooting guard. As Chris Grant mentioned in his press conference to the media on December 1st, the organization would love to have him back. I am not so certain that re-signing Parker is in the best interest of the team moving forward.

The biggest issue with this approach to free agency is his age. He had turned thirty-six years old in June, which puts him as the twelfth oldest player in the NBA. There are guys such as Steve Nash and Grant Hill who are older, but they are an anomaly. Anthony Parker’s game took a turn for the worse last season when he shot the second-worst percentage of his career. Parker’s worst shooting percentage came in his rookie year when he averaged .397% shooting in thirty-seven games. Last season he hit on 399% of his shots in seventy-two games. This is a drastic drop-off from his first season with the Raptors when he shot a respectable .476%. Thirty-six year old shooting guards who shoot below forty percent are not likely to improve in the twilight of their careers.



Anthony Parker has maybe one or two years left in his career. He has only been to the playoffs in only three seasons. His last season was spent in Cleveland where he was a part of a twenty-six game losing streak and saw his team win only nineteen games. Anthony Parker may be a bit long in the tooth to be a difference maker for a playoff contender, however it seems like his most prudent move would to sign as a free agent with a playoff team. If Parker finishes his career in Cleveland, he would essentially be closing the door on winning a championship.

This is not to say how valuable having a veteran presence is for a young team. In the NBA TV panel "Open Court," Charles Barkley mentioned how important it was to have Julius Irving's presence. The main example that he gave was regarding how he showed him how to behave like an adult because he "wasn't in college anymore." We have to remember that when we discuss Kyrie Irving, Tristan Thompson and the 2012 draft picks, we are talking about guys who are in their late-teens. Very few people that age are mature enough to not require some kind of leadership.

The Cavs have multiple veterans present on the roster. There is much chatter about Baron Davis and Antawn Jamison. Little is known about Davis' future with the Cavaliers due to his two years and 29 million dollars left on his contract. There are concerns about his attitude which has a history of changing without notice. Antawn Jamison has one year and 15 million dollars left on his contract and he is not expected to have a future with the team.

One veteran on the roster that is overlooked is Anderson Varejao. A veteran of seven years, it is time for him to accept a larger role in the locker room so the Cavs can stop worrying about re-signing Anthony Parker and allow Manny Harris and Christien Eyenga to develop.

Another source of leadership that the Cavs could look to to prevent re-signing Parker is the coaching staff. Byron Scott played fourteen years in the NBA and won three championships with the Lakers. Additionally, Scott won the Coach of the Year award in 2008. Byron Scott is a well-accomplished player and coach and should be able to handle the pressure of coaching a struggling team.

The idea of making re-signing a thirty-six year old shooting guard with diminishing skills a "priority" is baffling. This leads me to believe that the front office really values what Parker brings to the team off the court and that his presence really is as great as advertised. The question is do they value him enough to offer him a multi-year contract and does Parker value long-term security over making the playoffs. Only time will tell.