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Hang on Loosely, but Don't Let Go

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The game Friday night, as well the bounce-back win Saturday night at home against the Miami Heat did make a few things abundantly clear though.

First off, home court advantage and the #1 seed is critical for the both the Celtics and the Cavaliers. Neither Boston nor Cleveland has shown any ability whatsoever to beat the other away from the comfort and support of their home arena in over two years. Prior to Friday the teams had split their two games with, again, each team winning on their home court. Friday night was no different. The Celtics held serve on their floor.

Not only does the #1 seed guarantee you the home court advantage throughout the conference playoffs if you're the Cavaliers, but it also almost assures you of not having to face both Celtics and the talented and dangerous Orlando Magic in back to back to rounds. Orlando is an elite team themselves as indicated by their 46-16 record (including an 86-79 over the Celtics Sunday in Boston).

Secondly, the points in the paint that both the Celtics and the Heat rang up this weekend are an issue. The Cavs have been exposed by the Celtics and the Lakers in the front court with and without Ben Wallace. Joe Smith is a nice and needed pickup but Smith is not a bruiser that will bang with the bigger bodies Cleveland will likely see in the later rounds of the playoffs. Success and advancement in the post season is going to come down to the Cavaliers bigs showing a lot more ability to neutralize the big men they'll face at some point as well as perhaps some schematic changes from head coach Mike Brown. It's either that or hope for a myriad of upsets that will prevent a few of these bigger bodied teams from ever seeing those later rounds.

Lastly, despite the loss Friday night, the Cavs are two games up in the loss column and have played two fewer games than Boston has on the season. The Celtics gave back everything they gained by beating

Cleveland Friday night by virtue of the Cavs win Saturday night against Miami and their own loss to the Magic Sunday. The point being that every game counts. If the Cavs take care of business and continue to win 80% of their remaining games they are likely to take down that 1st seed and with it home court advantage.

As fans we have a tendency to be fatalistic and expend a great deal more energy on the losses than on the joy we feel after a win. But the line that separates the two teams, big man differences included, is very thin when you consider that inability of either team to beat the other on the road.

The Cavs are now forced to dance with who brought them in terms of personnel. There may be a bit of change that takes place in regard to the back end of the rotation (take heed Boobie) but there will be no additions to the Cavs roster made to address any front court deficiencies. Still, there's more than one way to skin a cat. Adjustments made in the backcourt and on double team rotations can help neutralize the disadvantages the Cavs big men face.

Make no mistake though. Gaining that #1 seed is an extremely valuable weapon in the arsenal. And despite being somewhat exposed over the weekend the Cavaliers are still on pace to take that down. For a couple years running that's been more critical than the disparities in front court talent.

Etcetera

- It looks like the roots on the Tribe Tree are healthier right now than they have been in years. We were fortunate enough to have Anthony Castrovince, the fine writer who covers the Indians at www.MLB.com on the radio show this past Wednesday. Castrovince was asked a question about which of the kids we might see in Cleveland during the 2009 season. He was unable to pick one not because none have been impressive but because so many have. Castrovince mentioned Matt LaPorta, Michael Brantley, Luis Valbuena and Carlos Santana as guys who are having impressive springs.

The guy most likely to lose his spot to one of the kids (and add Trevor Crowe to the list of guys lined to take his position) is David Dellucci. But Dellucci might just not be quite ready to go off into that good night. Dellucci made his first appearance of the spring on Friday after recovering from a lacerated thumb that required stitches and clubbed a monstrous home run. A healthy and productive Dellucci would be a welcome contributor on the field and in the clubhouse. I know Tribe fans are waiting (and hoping?) that he falls on his face and is released, but he had a track record when he was signed and I can't imagine any of us care too much what name is on the back of a jersey as long as the body filling the

jersey is producing.

- Ah, March in Browns Town. In like the Lions and out like the Rams pretty much sums it up.

Here is a hearty yawn to the acquisition of TE Robert Royal and DL C.J. Mosley and to the re-signing of DB Mike Adams. These depth signings and the departures of TE Kellen Winslow II, LB Andra Davis and S Sean Jones signify either the Browns are fortifying their roster for a playoff run or have entered the familiar territory of the dreaded rebuilding period. I know which my money is on.

I'm fine with letting go the guys who have been shown the door and I've long been of the opinion that this Browns team was more than just a couple players away. But it's damn depressing to look forward to September with no hope and no chance of competing for anything other than respectability and moral victories.

- In case you missed it, and judging by the ratings and attendance....., Cleveland State is back in the Horizon League championship game on Tuesday night against

the Butler Bulldogs. It'll be tough sledding again for the Vikes given the game is in Butler's Hinkle Field House, but head coach Gary Waters's squad has played Butler tough for a couple years now and a win puts them into the NCAA tourney that's fast approaching.

Waters and his kids deserve a little karma and good fortune as they head into Tuesday night's game. You can bet he'll have them ready to go defensively and they'll look for some easy transitional buckets to keep things close. If you haven't watched the Vikings get after this season do yourself a favor and tune in Tuesday night at 9pm (ESPN).

The Cleveland Experience

If you missed Wednesday's show you missed an entertaining interview with not only Anthony Castrovince but also with former Browns fullback Tim Manoa and www.draftcountdown.com NFL draft expert Scott Wright. Go to the front page and

download that show and be sure to check in with us this Wednesday at 930pm when either Mike Pagel or Kevin Mack will join us as we continue to bring you some Browns players from the mid-80's as well as whomever else we can drag into the fray. Maybe Mr. Waters will be so kind as to join us to review the Butler game and what's ahead for the CSU program?