

The Weekend Wrap

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Peeker's in Nashville for the Country Music Festival this weekend, so enter TCF jack of all trades/master wordsmith Jesse Lamovsky to fill in for Peeks with The Weekend Wrap. Jesse touches on Braylon Edwards injuring his ankle laying pickup basketball. He talks about the rumors that the Cavaliers front office was thinking of whacking Mike Brown in the wake of the Eastern Conference Finals loss to Orlando. And discusses the revitalized rumors that have Shaq heading to the north coast.



It's that time of year again, folks- summer time. Time for baseball, barbeques, and backyard swimming pools... and once again, time for me to wish to be cryogenically frozen, temporarily thawed for my birthday (July 15) and then re-frozen, not to be thawed permanently until the first week of September, when football season begins. For a guy who hates the heat and cares as much about baseball as about the exchange rate in Paraguay, spending the better part of the next three humid, sticky months looking like Han Solo on the wall of Jabba's palace would be an outright *mitzvah*.

I've been reduced to writing about soccer, for God's sake. Soccer! That should tell you something. I mean, I like the game, I really do, but it isn't exactly in my creative wheelhouse.

So please, let this summer be anything but endless. And to paraphrase Green Day, wake me up when September begins. On to the Wrap (for this week only, 80 percent less caustic.)

Courtesy of our friends at [Waiting For Next Year](#) : It seems that these days Braylon Edwards is having as hard a time catching a break as he does catching a football. The controversial receiver was rumored to be limping around in a walking boot this week due to an ankle injury incurred in a pickup basketball game, which explains his absence from the first day of mandatory mini-camp. I think "hapless" is the operative word here. When it comes to public relations, this man just can't stay out of his own way.

It's tempting to take a pot shot at Braylon for being irresponsible enough to play a pickup basketball game while he's supposed to be saving his body for the sport he's actually being paid to play. The truth is, a lot of these guys probably engage in pickup sports, especially basketball. They're great athletes with a predisposition toward physical activity, and it's better to be shooting hoops than to be smoking weed around the X-Box, hammering Tanqueray till the small hours or, well, shooting something else. Injuries happen. You can plan against them, take measures to prevent them, but sometimes it's just a matter of dumb luck. You can get hurt getting out of your car... or running barefoot through the grass, as the case might be.

Let's just hope Braylon's ankle is fully healed by the time the season starts- as well as his fortune and his hands. He'll need them all to be healthy for this team to have any chance at a decent season- and for him to have any chance of landing a major payday next spring.

From rumors that are probably factual to rumors that probably aren't: Last Wednesday, the New York Daily News's

[Knicks Knation blog](#)

, along with our own Sam Amico at Pro Basketball News, reported on infighting within the Cavaliers front office in the wake of the Eastern Conference Finals loss to Orlando that could cost reigning NBA Coach of the Year Mike Brown his job. Dan Gilbert, Danny Ferry, and the indefatigable Brian Windhorst were quick to scotch the rumors, and there's little doubt that Coach Brown is safe in his seat, at least for the time being.

Still, the flap raises some questions regarding Coach Brown's future and who, if anyone was to blame for the team's failure to win a title in a year in which they had the NBA's best record and home-court advantage throughout the Playoffs. I've made my opinion known on the latter: Orlando simply has a better team than Cleveland- taller, more athletic, and more versatile- and the Magic match up extraordinarily well with the Cavaliers in terms of what they do offensively. To be sure, Mike Brown didn't have his finest hour in the series- he failed to properly utilize LeBron's athletic gifts on defense, he didn't go deep enough into his bench to counter Orlando's advantages both inside and on the perimeter, and compared to the hyper-kinetic Stan Van Jeremy he looked clueless and ineffectual. But he just didn't have the resources to stamp out every brushfire that flared up in the series. It's tough to blame him for the loss.

It's also tough to blame Danny Ferry. Since coming on board as GM in 2005, Ferry has had limited means to build this team in terms of premium draft picks and young talent to parlay for existing stars. Danny Ainge had Al Jefferson and a top-five pick that he was able to flip for Kevin Garnett and Ray Allen. Ferry's assets have mainly consisted of low first-round picks and expiring contracts- thin gruel when it comes to building a championship-caliber team. A GM can only do so much with what he has, and Ferry hasn't had a whole heck of a lot. He deserves kudos for putting together an excellent team out of Paxson-era detritus and the remnants of his own ill-fated free-agent splurge of 2005. So far, it hasn't been enough.

Sometimes it isn't about blame as much as accepting the fact that you were beaten by a superior team. That's the case here. And it isn't as if the Cavaliers would have beaten the Lake Show in the Finals anyway.

As for Coach Brown's future on the bench, we all should know the score in that department. It isn't about what Danny Ferry thinks of him; it isn't even about what Dan Gilbert thinks of him. The first, last and final judge of the coach's fate is LeBron James. Mike Brown's job is safe as long as LeBron is satisfied with the job he's doing. Conversely, if LeBron ever decides he can't work with Mike Brown anymore, the coach will be cleaning out his office within five minutes. It's that simple.

More rumors regarding the Cavaliers: Word on the street is that Cleveland and Phoenix have revived trade talks centered on Shaquille O'Neal. [According to ESPN writer and former Akron Beacon-Journal staffer Chris Broussard](#), the Cavaliers and Suns have discussed a deal that would send the expiring contracts of Ben Wallace and Sasha Pavlovic to Arizona for the aging big man.

Now, *this* is one rumor I fervently hope is true. Yes, the Cavaliers need to get younger in the frontcourt. No, Shaq isn't capable of physically dominating the game like he used to. He's 37 years old, slow on defense and has never been the world's most conditioned athlete, even at the best of times. But the man can still play. Last year he averaged 17.8 points and 8.4 rebounds and shot nearly 61 percent- the kind of numbers the Cavaliers could certainly use up front. He's still *Shaquille O'Neal*

. He still commands the respect of opponents, more so than anyone on the current roster aside from LeBron himself. He isn't the same force of nature that terrorized the league in the '90s and early in this decade, but his mere presence counts for quite a bit.

There is risk involved in giving up the team's two biggest trading chips (Wallace's and Sasha's expiring deals) for a player who is nearing the end of his career. But really, there is no plausible trade that would deliver as much immediate impact as one for the Big Aristotle. What's more, Shaq's contract expires after the 2009-10 season- just in time for that summer's free-agent bonanza. The reward outweighs the risk. And it still leaves the Cavaliers with the mid-level exemption to use on their second-biggest need after a frontcourt scorer- a wing player with size.

And the Indians? They're still in last place in the worst division in baseball, and Eric Wedge is still gainfully employed. Next!