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Feeling It

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Wins at home over Toronto, the Lakers and Oklahoma City, all playoff-caliber teams with superstars of their own, qualifies as impressive. More so when you consider that the Cavs started three different point guards in those games and still had enough to notch victories.

And the three impressive wins bolstered my already soaring confidence in the Cavs to a point I'm almost uncomfortable with. The Cavaliers depth and ability to play multiple styles of basketball has me feeling nearly invincible in terms of their chances to end the decades old title drought in this city.

I believe in this team that much.

This scares me because, well, you know why.

But if you sit back and take a look at the composition of the Cavaliers I think you'd have to agree that this team is the most legitimate title contender that this city has seen in the last 45 years or so.

They have the biggest superstar in the game in LeBron James. Not only is he a strong 35, 10 and 10 guy every single night but he's capable of assuming nearly any role on the court when called upon to do so. Need a guy to handle the ball and distribute it to open mates, especially when you're down to your third string starting PG who isn't an assist machine? James is willing and able. Need a guy to check Kevin Durant for the ultimate possession in a close game? James is the man who forces Durant to his weak side and then gets his hand to the top of the square and blocks Durant' shot. Already the reigning MVP James has clearly elevated his game this season and taken it to levels heretofore unseen in this town and in the NBA.

For the first time in my lifetime (or at least since the days of Jim Chones and Jim Brewer) they also have a nastiness and physical presence to them. Shaquille O'Neal may be a shell of his former self but he is still the real deal in the post. When was the last time an opponent headed to the rim and was sent sideways and downward with regularity? When was the last time you recall an opponent getting up off the ground after being splattered on his drive to the hoop and getting into the chest of the Cavalier who sent him sprawling? O'Neal still has that bad-ass reputation that makes an opponent get off the floor, look back at who hit him, and march to the line with his head down and his mouth shut.

The Cavaliers have never had the combination of size, attitude and skill in the middle that they do now with O'Neal, regardless of the fact that his game overall is in decline. So he's not a guy you build around anymore and hasn't been in years. But he's a guy you can definitely win with today and who can still dominate offensively and defensively on occasion.

Probably the biggest reason for my optimism is the depth of talent on the Cavaliers roster.

Anthony Parker has been a disappointment but not a bust. The addition of Parker and Jamarion Moon, as well as the development and play of Jawad Williams, J.J. Hickson and Danny Green, when given opportunity, and the ability to mix and match personnel based on the tempo and flow of the game is enthralling. This isn't exclusively a slow-down, power basketball team nor is it a run-and-gun type of team. It's whatever it needs to be on a given night or, extrapolating that to the playoffs, a given playoff series. And it's dangerous offensively while built on a strong defensive foundation.

Mix in experienced veteran options like Zydrunas Ilgauskas, Mo Williams, Delonte West and Anderson Varejao and you're facing a very difficult team to beat on any given night or in any given series.

No question it would be tremendous to add a player like Antawn Jamison. But if it doesn't happen I'm still encouraged that the team as it is presently constructed is a strong title contender. The Cavaliers are not at the mercy of certain matchups any longer. They need to get healthy in spots and stay healthy in others. If that happens, well, look out.

Not Feeling It

The Indians are the anti-Cavaliers.

This is the time of the year when optimism should be running rampant but I can't find it within me to have it. I guess if you're looking for optimism you can write off the year as a season where some of the young position players are going to get a legitimate chance to show their wares and develop. Some will rise and some will fall but in the process we should have a clearer picture of who amongst the group of Michael Brantley, Matt LaPorta, Luis Valbuena and Carlos Santana are real building blocks for 2011.

Yes, that means that 2010, in my estimation, is another throw away summer on the north coast. I'm nowhere near as concerned with the offense and the position players as I am with the pitching staff, namely the starting rotation. I think guys like Grady Sizemore, Jhonny Peralta, Shin-Soo Choo and Asdrubal Cabrera have established themselves as professional hitters. I think Travis Hafner could give you 400 productive at bats if things go really well. A couple of the aforementioned young kids will develop this season to the point they contribute. It's not the

offense that concerns me.

What concerns me is the Indians are hoping and praying that a 32-year old career number three starter coming off elbow reconstruction will be healthy enough to hold down the first spot in the rotation. Or that a 26-year old riddle wrapped in an enigma named Fausto Carmona recaptures the form that made him the toast of the town and a viable Cy Young candidate in 2007. And after that it's all about throwing a bunch of arms at the wall and in the rotation and seeing if you find anything that sticks.

Can Aaron Laffey, David Huff and Carlos Carrasco take a step toward becoming middle or bottom of the rotation starters? Can Jeremy Sowers be counted on to avoid his typical inning of doom and establish himself as a major league starter? What about Jess Todd? How far away is Alex White from maybe helping out? Will it be in the rotation or as a reliever?

Speaking of relievers, which Raffy Perez do we see in 2010? Will it be the dominant pitcher we saw in 2007 or the complete mess we saw in 2009? Are Chris Perez and Justin Masterson anchors in the pen for years to come (or at least until they leave for more money) or are they anchors around the neck in the pen?

There are just too many questions for any optimism. That's not to say I won't be sitting there and watching night after night to see the answers to all the questions unfold. And it doesn't mean there won't be moments during such a season to celebrate and get excited about. But it means I've got low expectations in terms of the number of wins I expect to witness. With the way this team is constructed and with so many questions to be answered I'd be hard pressed to entertain predictions beyond 70-75 wins.

I hate entering a season hoping that it proceeds quickly and relatively painlessly so that we can get to one where the chances for success are better. But no matter the tint of the Tribe-colored glasses I put on, I always end up seeing the same thing for 2010. And it's not pretty.

Super Sunday Set - Colts vs. Saints

Pretty much the way many thought it would go down in the AFC and NFC Championship games is exactly how it did go down Sunday afternoon. The Colts had enough to get by a plucky Jets club and the Saints and Vikings played an overtime classic with the Saints winning on field goal.

It sets up what would seem to be the best game for fans with Drew Brees and Peyton Manning dueling in Miami for the big trophy.

Glad to see the Saints prevail. Drew Brees seems to be a better person than QB and he's a damn good QB. Initial thoughts on that game have to have you favoring Manning against a porous Saints defense. But with two weeks to prepare maybe New Orleans can put a game plan together to keep it tight.

But for tonight, and likely the next few days, it'd be best to keep the women and children away from New Orleans.