



Go Back to Get Ahead

Let me caution any and all ledgers out there that I'm not in the mood. If you want to whine, cry and complain about the Cavaliers three game losing streak (their first such streak in the last two seasons) take it Cleveland.com with the rest of the rubber room crowd.

If you truly believe this team, that was on a 13 game heater when they traded the corpse of Zydrunas Ilgauskas and a draft pick to the Washington Wizards for Antawn Jamison, is worse today than it was last Wednesday morning before this trade was made, well, your fan card needs to be pulled and destroyed. Then your empty head should be hollowed out and used as a dip bowl.

This team is much better equipped to go deep in the playoffs now than it was before the deal was made.

It's a much better basketball team, period.

But it forces the Cavs to somewhat start over from the day the deal was made. Jamison is going to play a ton of minutes for this team. He's going to get touches and he's going to be a vital part of what they do. But getting him comfortable, involved and acclimated is not going to happen overnight or in a week's time. And with the deal coming in the midst of a three games in four days stretch, what you saw Friday in Charlotte and Sunday in Orlando is the not unexpected result.

That's a disjointed Cavalier team out there right now. Rotations have been adjusted, minutes are being dispensed differently and the combinations of guys on the floor have all changed. You see some defensive assignments missed, offensive sets that result in some confusion and just a general lack of comfort when Jamison is on the floor with four other guys right now.

But it will work itself out.

Mike Brown could hasten the process by starting Jamison sooner rather than later. Get him as many minutes with the first team as quickly as possible. Let him get a couple chippies and open looks early on in games when LeBron and Shaq make such things possible so that his confidence is high and his anxiety is reduced. I think Brown is heading this way given his early call to Jamison Sunday afternoon. I'd be surprised if he wasn't starting by next week in Toronto or so.

The one thing (other than losing to Orlando in general) that annoyed me Sunday was seeing the return of the Vince Carter Bad-Ass face. I hate when things go well enough for a talented but gutless player like Carter to preen and pose on the floor. He hit some tough shots late in Sunday's game with Anthony Parker in his shirt and doing a really nice job on him defensively. He's capable of that kind of day.

In fact, that's the problem; he's capable ***of that type of effort and result every night*** he takes the court ***but he doesn't have the heart***, the drive, the cajones or whatever else you want to call it to actually produce those nights regularly.

In short, Vince Carter is just another in a long line of guys who have the talent to be way better

than their heart and heads allow them to be. The word 'punk' might sum it up best.

Getting So Good

Sunday didn't go the right way for the Cavaliers but damn if it's not fun watching these two teams go at each other now. More so than last year, right now this series seems like its dependent on home court advantage (and the horrid calls that seem to accompany home court advantage).

It doesn't get much better than Shaq and Dwight Howard fighting on the blocks. They don't like each other and you can see that venom starting to spread to other guys on the floor. I like that because I actually think the Cavs are the stronger team mentally. I think they're tougher physically as well and that once Jamison assimilates the Cavs have a healthy advantage.

Big Win for Buckeyes

Following up a disappointing loss to Purdue at home this past Wednesday the Buckeyes traveled to East Lansing on Sunday for a critical game not only in regard to the Big10 standings but also a potential NCAA Tournament seeding difference-maker.

The Buckeyes ran out to a big 13-point halftime lead but gave it all back and actually trailed by a point late. But a 7-0 run with a couple minutes left gave the Buckeyes another cushion that they kept in a 74-67 win.

The win put the Buckeyes back in the chase for the conference title and it also added another chip to their stack with another win over a ranked opponent on the road.

We're getting down to it. The conference tourneys start in about two weeks and the Big One in just about three weeks. Ohio State, despite having next to no depth (they played only six guys Sunday and one of them, Kyle Madsen, fouled out with more than 10 minutes of time remaining)

keeps moving up the national rankings ladder and into the tournament committee's sights for a potential two seed.

That 2nd seed may be a stretch, but OSU's a bad match up for a lot of squads. They have a National Player of the Year candidate in Evan Turner (who had about the quietest 20 and 10 you've ever seen Sunday), they have a lockdown defender in David Lighty and they have a couple guys in Jon Diebler and William Buford who can stretch defenses and open the paint for some easy buckets by Dallas Lauderdale.

Looking forward to some excitement come the middle of March if the six guys who actually play don't drop from exhaustion first.

Someone Get Me a Bucket...

Because I think I'm going to puke.

Honestly, after watching guys like CC Sabathia, Cliff Lee and Victor Martinez leave town over "a few million dollars" I'm extremely offended that the Indians have signed the poster boy for 'Perennial Mediocrity Interrupted only by Inactivity Due to Injury', Russell Branyan, to a deal for "a few million dollars".

What is the ever-loving point to this? Is Branyan the experienced, mentoring veteran presence this club is desperate for? I thought that was Mike Redmond, a much cheaper signing (and likely more productive one on the field). Is it because Bran

yan, unlike a guy like Jim Thome who signed for less with Minnesota, is more diverse in that he can poorly play more positions than Thome?

Yeah, I get that it's not terribly expensive. But just a couple weeks ago I was dead set against Jermaine Dye coming here on one of these deals. And Jermaine Dye looks like a combination

of Albert Pujols' offensive skills and Cal Ripken's durability next to Branyan (who reminds me more of baseball's version of Chuck Wepner more than anything else given his big swings, occasional contact and much time spent on the canvas or the couch).

This is just wasteful. It does nothing to make this team any better. Are you telling me that if Travis Hafner's career slide continues that at least we have Branyan to pick up the pieces and rely upon?

Honestly, if June and July roll around and we get to the point where draft choices need to be signed or otherwise they are lost to their college programs for another year, and I hear that the Indians and Draftee X are a couple hundred thousand bucks apart on a deal, I'm going to be bent as a mother when I see Russell Branyan's name in the lineup or, more likely, on the disabled list that same night.

I understand that certain allotments of revenues are made to each part of the budget and that major league salaries may not theoretically mix with monies set aside for the draft; that they're basically two different accounts.

Whatever.

With a team that's not a veteran or a piece away from a title and that cries "Middle Market!!!" there shouldn't be expenditures on guys like Russell Branyan. Put that \$3million toward the draft and go over slot once. Put that money into Asia or Latin America and make sure the system gives us what we need when the time comes we have to have it.

Russell Branyan? You have got to be freaking kidding me.