I'm glad LeBron James handled his *Decision* so poorly. It's become one of the more underrated "what if" scenarios to grace the Cleveland sports scene. Not a lot of fans are aware of this, and they're still bitter about the whole thing. But they shouldn't be. Here's what we know: Had LeBron notified the Cavs of his intentions ahead of time (say directly after the Boston series), Byron Scott doesn't come within a 1000 mile radius of Cleveland.

We've underrated the impact that Byron Scott has had on this franchise. He deserves a lot of credit. Because his agent lacked the necessary connections to sniff out the future intentions of LBJ's free agency quest, Scott came to the helm of a highly unattractive situation. And he brought an unfamiliar philosophy and an entirely new attitude to the table, both of which were completely contrary to that of Mike Brown .

Scott attempted to implement his princeton system, juggled the lineups with reckless abandon, and handled his team's personalities so poorly that eventually the team flat out quit on him. They lost an NBA record 26 consecutive games and left themselves with no other recourse but to tear things apart and engage in the profoundly popular tradition of tanking. They started this process by dealing an unmotivated and highly disgruntled Mo Williams , in exchange for what would eventually become Kyrie Irving.

You can argue that these events were inevitably bound to happen, regardless of Byron Scott or not. But admittedly, I've spent a fair share of time wondering how things would have unfolded had Mike Brown remained on the sideline; which likely would have happened if James handled

his free agency like a decent human being.

Is it crazy to think that instead of being god awful, the Cavs would have been somewhat respectable? To the point they might have been competitive enough to get caught up in the prospects of a highly vitriolic first-round matchup with the Miami Heat? To the extent that Kyrie Irving never would have wound up in a Cavs uniform?

Under Brown, the Cavs were major overachievers; with a historically atrocious supporting cast around LeBron James, they won 66 and 60 games. They

accomplished this with their defense. Is it impossible to fathom the thought of them continuing that trend in 2010-2011, with a core of Mo Williams, Antawn Jamison, Andy Varejao, and J.J. Hickson all playing in a system that they were familiar with and comfortable in? I really don't know. I'm just glad we didn't have the chance to see it play out. For all we know, we could be building around a core of J.J. Hickson and Bismack Biyombo right now.

Do you remember back in 2010, when Byron Scott came to the helm of the LeBron-less Cavs and we kept saying things like...

Damn, if LeBron had stayed, Scott would have done wonders with this team...

With Scott's offensive pedigree, he would have put them over the top. They would have

definitely won it; LeBron made a huge mistake.

*Scott is everything Brown wasn't. It would have been the perfect situation. **** you LeBron.*

This is funny to think about now only because the hypothetical question we should have been posing was...

"If LeBron stayed, how big of a step back would that Cavs have taken?"

"How much would they have underachieved?"

"Would they have even won 50 games?"

"Would they eventually have to trade a unhappy LeBron James?"

Personally, I think we've overrated Byron Scott as an NBA head coach.

Glance back to his days in New Jersey and New Orleans, his overall record, the two NBA Finals he reached, how he transformed Jason Kidd and Chris Paul into top five players, how he led the Hornets to within a game of the Western Conference Finals, and it becomes easy to justify his status as an above-average NBA coach. Look at his stern, hard-nose, old school mentality, his former professional playing days, his unwillingness to tolerate what fans and the media call "punk ass behavior," and the fact that he isn't afraid to step on anyone's toes and bench them if he doesn't like what he see's—and we're left to say, *What's not to love about this guy?*

In a vacuum, he's everything you want a coach to be, especially in the NBA. But Scott's approach isn't necessarily a full proof recipe to improvement and success.

First, his style has the tendency to rub players the wrong way; particularly veteran players, which is something the Cavs don't have at the moment, but eventually will. In New Jersey, he was canned just six months removed from his second consecutive Finals appearance; in New Orleans, he got the axe just nine games into the 2009-2010 season. In both instances he basically had lost the respect of his entire team.

Second, and more importantly, Scott's ignorance to the occurrence's on the defensive end of the floor make him easily expendable, and frankly, a downright terrible coach.

Go ahead and pick a loss, any loss...these are the words you are sure to hear from Byron Scott in the post-game presser:

"Our defense has to step up."
"We need to give a better effort on the defensive end of the floor."
"I was disappointed with our defense."
"Guys need to play better, and it starts at the defensive end of the floor."
"Plain and simple, our defense stunk."
"Anderson Varejao was fantastic. The rest of our team sucked"

It's no secret, the Cavs have major issue's on defense. And the blame doesn't fall on the player's perceived effort—or lack thereof. It falls squarely on Byron Scott. Defense comes down to philosophy and coaching, and Byron Scott has yet to grasp a legitimate defensive philosophy, and probably never will. That's why his pressers have become borderline comical as reporters frantically jot down his criticisms of his teams lack of effort on defense, taking them at face value.

The Cavs don't have to be this bad, and they shouldn't be this bad. For now, considering what they're trying to accomplish long term, we can live with the losing. I guess. But if this team played any type of formidable NBA defense, they could be close to a .500 team. I mean, for gosh sakes, they have Anderson Varejao, who by all accounts is half alien, half machine. And the Eastern Conference is insanely mediocre. The Cavs are actually ranked 18th in John Hollinger's mathematically computed power rankings , despite being 3-12, and I guess that's the consolation prize we're left with. Just think if they could clamp down on the defensive end in the fourth quarter and do what every other team has (basically) done to them... finish games. A sound defensive system makes that task monumentally easier.

Right now— even if you can't help staring at the sideline during the games just to remind yourself, "Oh yea, Kyrie Irving is sidelined for a month, we're screwed"—the Cavs have already established the type of team they are. They're a team that's going to compete their asses off every night for 48 minutes only to have the outcome come down to a weighted coin flip because they lack a sufficient defensive philosophy—a philosophy to properly defend the high screen without it requiring you to have to work twice as hard as the other team. And for this, I honestly feel bad for the team because they're destined to suffer down the stretch in the fourth quarter all season long. They really do have to work twice as hard as the other team. Under Scott, they always have; even with a healthy Kyrie Irving. Sure, with Kyrie you can give him the ball late in games and pray that he can will the team to victory with another Mr. Fourth Quarter showing. But their shoddy D-scheme is the reason they continually find themselves in that situation.

All of it is especially frustrating because they have Tristan Thompson, who should be among the league's top ten shot blockers and was drafted specifically for defense; Tyler Zeller, a seven footer; Anderson Varejao, whose individual defense (and hustle) is literally revered by every team in the league; Alonzo Gee,

[redacted]