As the Cleveland Cavaliers approach the All Star break, they are on pace to win 48 games, two less than last year. Presumably, if the chat boards and sports talk shows are any gauge, this would be a major disappointment. But the real question is whether this disappointment is based on unreasonable self-inflicted high expectations or if it objectively indicates a step back.

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The mission statement for this year's statement was essentially ripped from the George W. Bush playbook: Stay the Course. The thought process was that another year of seasoning, coupled with the additions of the two young draft choices, naturally would lead to an even better result this year, particularly if Larry Hughes remained healthy.

But this always seemed like a tenuous theory, the kind of luck and hope strategy usually reserved for our friends in Berea. Instead, given the lack of moves made by the Cavs in the offseason, the belief here was that whether or not the Cavs significantly improved on their 50-win season of a year ago highly depended on the schedule. Back before the first game of the season, the following was noted:

So if you insist on dissecting the Plain Dealer's NBA preview supplement in today's paper for insight into how the Cavs will finish, don't look to the idle words of the self-annoited experts. We suggest you look solely at the schedule. You know that the Cavs will play on the road 41 times. That means that, at best, that will account for 20 wins because if there is one thing that is more true in the NBA than in any other sport, it's that the home court advantage is more pronounced. Next, look at how many times the Cavs play back-to-back games, particularly when the second game is on the road and even more particularly when they are both on the road. If there is anything even more true about the NBA than home court advantage, is that back-to-back games are greeted with about as much enthusiasm as a Thanksgiving trip to the in-laws. That should account for another 10 losses right there. In short, if the Cavs are as good as advertised, they'll win around 50-52 games. If they fall short of expectations, meaning they lose more games at home than anticipated, then they'll be in the 46-48 win range. Again, though, this is mostly meaningless because they'll make the playoffs either way.

At the moment, this prediction is looking pretty solid. The Cavs right now are winning 74% of their home games, compared with 75% all of last year, essentially a wash. The slight difference right now is on the road. With Wednesday night's loss to Utah and Thursday's victory over the Lakers, Cleveland is winning 41% of its road games to this point and last year they won 46%. Thus, the Cavs need to go 8-7 on the road the rest of the season to equal last year's road win total and overall win percentage, assuming they continue to win at the same clip at home.

But in the grand scheme, the Cavs are likely to end this season in similar shape as last season and with a similar playoff seeding. The only real difference comes elsewhere in the conference. Toronto currently leads the Atlantic Division which was won last year by New Jersey. Similarly, Washington now leads the Southeast Division where last year they finished behind Miami. And Chicago currently has a better record than Miami, meaning Chicago would have the 5th seed and Cleveland would retain the 4th seed.

Given the make-up of the entire Eastern Conference, the real impediment at the moment to Cleveland making the NBA finals, even with its current line up, still remains Detroit. And that is the rub. When Danny Ferry chose to stay the course, he offered a strategy that failed to present any logical reason, beyond the power of hope, as to why that would be enough to overcome the Pistons. To this point in the season, the Cavs look no closer to solving the Pistons than they did last year. If anything, they seem to be further away.

It makes nice conversation on a snowy February day to further dissect what's supposedly wrong with the Cavaliers. But objectively, nothing so much is wrong as most fans simply drank the Kool-Aid once again, wanting to believe that things would automatically get better. But when one views the season in terms of what has actually been accomplished to this point in relation to last year, it's very clear that the only thing really wrong was another failed strategy by another Cleveland general manager.