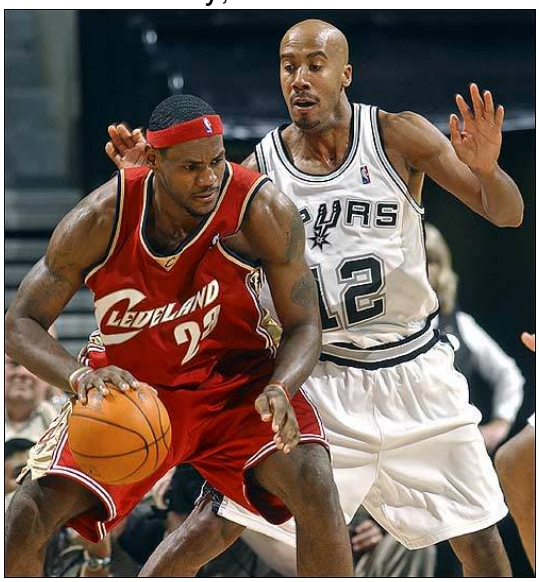
The NBA Finals begin tonight, and despite being sizable underdogs in Vegas ... most Clevelanders feel reasonably confident that the Cavaliers have a pretty good shot to bring the first professional sports championship back to Cleveland since 1964. We wanted to find out if our writers felt the same way, and asked them to make their NBA Finals predictions in our latest Roundtable.



"The Roundtable" is a regular weekly feature that will continue throughout the year covering hot topics surrounding the Browns, Buckeyes, Cavaliers, and Indians. One question. Several different answers from TheClevelandFan.com panel.

The NBA Finals are about to kick off with your Cleveland Cavaliers facing off with the vaunted San Antonio Spurs.

Over the course of the past few days since the Cavaliers wrapped up their first Eastern Conference Championship in franchise history, we have seen many articles and TV spots from local and national pundits explaining why the Cavaliers will win this series, or why they will not.

Locally, you would be hard pressed to find a Cavalier fan who does not think the Cavaliers have a legitimate shot at winning this series, and their first NBA Championship. That's how much of a high this championship starved town is on right now. The fans believe the Cavaliers can beat the Spurs, and with good reason. Can the Cleveland sports championship drought of 43 years FINALLY come to an end in the coming days? We'll see.

In any case, all the talk and predictions end once the series gets started Thursday night in San Anonio. Here is a final rundown from several of TheClevelandFan.com writers with their thoughts and predictions as the Cavaliers embark on their first ever Finals appearance, and bringing home Cleveland's first

major sports championship in four decades:

Rich Swerbinsky: The Cleveland Cavaliers are going to win the NBA Championship. There, I said it.

Predicting this seemed unthinkable to me a month ago. Shoot, two weeks ago I predicted that the Cavs would fall in six games to the Detroit Pistons.

Maybe this is just Lucy holding the football out for Charlie Brown again, but I can't help thinking that this year's Cavaliers team is one of destiny, and that there is simply no stopping LeBron James at this point. Things have really broken their way so far, and I see it continuing. They secured the #2 seed and favorable draw in dramatic fashion. They came back and smacked the Pistons four straight after two tough losses in Motown. And now, they avoid the two Western Conference teams that would have presented them matchup nightmares: Dallas and Phoenix.

The Cavs are on a roll, are very confident, and match up very well against this Spurs team ... which had it's berth in the Finals giftwrapped due to the Warriors upset of the Mavericks, and the Suns losing two of their best players for game five in the second round.

I've got the Cavs winning tonight. Winning two of three at home. And then stunning the Spurs at home in game six behind another magical effort from LeBron James to win the NBA Championship.

John Hnat: I am not making any predictions for this series.

When you make a prediction, then you have created a level of expectations in your mind for the outcome, and those expectations can then become a source of disappointment if the outcome is not met. I want to enjoy the ride -- the first such ride in Cleveland Cavaliers history -- no matter where the train ultimately arrives, and without the baggage of expectations.

Tony Lastoria: Wow, what a scene Saturday night when the Cavaliers won Game Six of the Eastern Conference Finals and secured the rights to their first ever NBA Finals appearance. From the way the fans, players, local media and front office took in that win, you'd think we won the NBA Championship.

This, to me, is key in this upcoming series. At least for Game One. I see the

Cavaliers having a major hangover from the “celebration” of getting to the Finals, and they get beat soundly in Game One. It will serve as a much needed wakeup call to the team, so much so that they will steal Game Two. The rest of the series will be much like the Cavaliers-Pistons series where every game from Game Three on will come down to the last minute and final possessions. Those three home games at The Q should be absolutely awesome, and instant classics.

Unfortunately, I see the homecourt finals setup of 2-3-2 as a big disadvantage for the underdog. Even if the Cavaliers win one early in San Antonio, they have to come home and be perfect and win it in five games. I see the Cavaliers losing one of the home games, then going back to San Antonio up 3-2, then losing Game Six and losing a classic Game Seven.

Sorry folks, until “it” happens, I just don’t believe Lucy is ready for us to kick that football yet, and we are on the brink of another devastating loss. I hope I am wrong. Spurs in seven.

Cris Sykes: Holy sporking cow, the Cleveland Cavaliers are in the NBA Finals for the first time in their existence! What a great ride it has been, but my friends, they ain’t done nothing yet!

I expect the Cavaliers to continue the trend of shocking the world, and beat the San Antonio Spurs in “The Finals”, four games to one. The two, three, two format fits perfectly into the hands of a young, upstart team with nothing to lose, which this Cavalier team is.

The first step is to get a win on the Spurs home court, and I believe the best chance for getting that done will be in Game 1. The Spurs will enter that game not having played a game in over a week’s time so there should be a little rust. Combine that with an age-old thought, a little confidence can go a long way, and the Cavs will be ripe for an upset.

The Cavs come into this series with the best perimeter player, a ton of confidence and not enough experience to know they are supposed to lose. With all of the National Media once again telling them that they have no business winning, it should add just enough fuel to get them over the hump.

Hiko: As numerous individuals have pointed out to me, I've been pronouncing the Cavs dead for some time now, and I've been wrong the whole way. I said

there was no way in hell they'd get the 2nd seed - they got the 2nd seed. I said there was no way in hell they'd come back from 0-2 down against Detroit - they did. So I'm in no way going to screw with a good system: *There's no way in hell the Cavs can beat the Spurs.*

The Spurs are the perfect team. They can play fast or slow. They can play low post or from behind the arc. They play good defense and they rebound. They're deep, experienced, and used to the limelight. The Cavs have had a fantastic run, and I believe can match up surpisingly well against San Antonio, but, unfortunately, I think they'll come up just short, losing in 6 or 7.

Please let me be wrong again.

Erik Cassano: Cavaliers in six.

Few people outside of Ohio are going to believe me at this juncture, but I really think the Cavs' 3-1 record against the Spurs since Mike Brown took over is a very telling stat.

It's not just that they beat them, it's how they beat them. Two of the Cavs' best all-around efforts this season came against San Antonio. Why? The Cavs were prepared to play.

While playing the Spurs won't be easy, it's a lucky draw. No, really, it is. Luckier than facing Dallas or Phoenix, anyway.

Brown has an insider's knowledge of the Spurs that only a former top assistant coach could bring. He knows the Spurs. He knows their play sets, he knows the tendencies of their star players, and above all, he knows the tendencies and coaching style of Gregg Popovich. Thank heaven for the Spurs' stability. Preparing to face them now isn't much different than preparing to face them four years ago.

If the Cavs come out and stumble, it won't be for lack of preparation. Not when they have a walking Spurs encyclopedia pacing the sideline.

In the end, I think it will be Brown's ability to prepare his team combined with LeBron's ability to neutralize Bruce Bowen and the Spurs defense that will swing the series in Cleveland's favor.

I say the series is tied 2-2 after four games, and the Cavs win the final two, including a nailbiter Game 6 on the road.

What? It's a Cleveland championship run. You thought you could put away the antacid?

Todd Dery: I never thought I would see the day where I would be having to make a prediction of what the Cleveland Cavaliers would do in the NBA Finals. But here we are. Unfortunately for the fans of Cleveland, I think we are a little ahead of ourselves. The celebration in this city Saturday night was as if the Cavaliers had won it all; both the Cavaliers players and staff and the people of this great city. In many ways, that was our title.

Want to know where this series will be decided? Take a look at the guard matchups. Would you rather have Larry Hughes, Sasha Pavlovic, and Daniel Gibson or Tony Parker, Michael Finley, and Manu Ginobili? While Cleveland has Lebron James, the Spurs possess maybe the best on ball defender in the NBA in Bruce Bowen. Tim Duncan may be the best Power Forward in NBA history when its all said and done. Gregg Popovich may be the most underrated coach in all of pro sports. The Spurs been here before.

I think the Cavaliers get blown out in game one, but steal game two in San Antonio. Coming back to a raucous Q crowd, they take game three as Lebron scored 38 and dishes 12 assists to go with 10 rebounds. That’s where the wheels will come off the wagon. The Spurs win the next three and take the series in six. Larry Hughes will continue to gut it out, but will not be able to be any sort of factor. Damon Jones will have to play big minutes and it will cost the Cavaliers dearly as he cannot guard any Spurs guard other than Jacque Vaughn. Drew Gooden will resort to good Drew/evil Drew every other game and that just wont fly. Same goes for Pavlovic. Spurs in six.

Jeff Rickel: My heart wants me to pick the Cavs, but my head tells me to go with the experience. I believe the Spurs will win in six games. I also picked the Pistons to win in six, so I hope I'm similarly wrong this time out. While I do pick the Spurs, I do believe that the Cavs have a fair chance to win. The greatest problem will be containing Tony Parker. His speed causes problems and he can spot an open lane from a mile away. Defense is important once more and the Cavs have risen to the occasion when they've needed to, but Parker is still scary. Duncan will also generate problems and possibly get Z to pick up a lot of fouls. If Z can watch the

fouls and still defend Duncan well (he's done it in the past) then there's a chance.

I do think that LeBron will have an easier time in this series but it's essential that his teammates hit their shots and properly move the ball around on offense. The emergence of Daniel Gibson in the Detroit series will give San Antonio problems and may give LeBron some single coverage. If Boobie can continue to drain those wide open shots then this series gets a lot more interesting.

One more thing, Mike Brown needs to be less predictable. Maybe we'll start a game WITHOUT giving Z the first shot for once?