The most important, most analyzed, most scrutinized and most worried-about left index finger in the world currently resides adjacent to the palm of LeBron James. While the injury appears to be very minor, and nothing that will sideline our superstar for any great length of time, that didn't stop a tidal wave of consternation from washing over Cleveland. Erik Cassano talks about LeBron's injury, and the towns overreaction to it in his latest column.

The most important, most analyzed, most scrutinized and most worried-about left index finger in the world currently resides adjacent to the palm of LeBron James.

LeBron injured the finger during the second quarter of Wednesday night's blowout loss to the Pistons when Detroit center
Nazr
Mohammed
went for the ball and got a fistful of
LeBron's
hand instead.

LeBron played the remainder of the quarter, but returned to the bench in the second half wearing street clothes, his index finger buddy-taped to his middle finger. X-rays were negative, but that didn't stop a tidal wave of consternation from washing over Cleveland.

The worrying started with the Cavs' postgame shows on radio and TV, and continued this morning with a rare overreaction by The Plain Dealer's usual voice of reason, Terry Pluto, who previewed the apocalypse of the Cavs

without
LeBron
in a way that would have made Nostradamus proud.

Yes, the prospect of an extended period without LeBron is terrifying to any Cavs fan, and with good reason.
LeBron
is the only person standing between the
Cavs
and the draft lottery. More than that,
LeBron
is the difference between a
Cavs
team that is a serious conference championship threat and a
Cavs
team destined for ping-pong balls in May.

The big-market pimps in the national media can make their cases for Kobe Bryant and Kevin Garnett in the MVP race, but there isn't much of a debate about which superstar is the most integral to his team's success. LeBron legitimately represents a 25-game swing in record for the
Cavs
over the course of a season. With
LeBron
, the
Cavs
are a 50-win team. Without him, likely a 25-to-30 win team. No other star can make that claim.

But, having said that, can I please ask the good folks in Cavstown to come to their senses for a second?

LeBron sprained the index finger on his left hand. It's not an injury that affects his shooting hand. It's not an injury that involves a weight-bearing joint. The C avs
themselves listed the injury as
day-to-day
, according to the Akron Beacon Journal's Brian
Windhorst

.

This isn't fragile Larry Hughes we're talking about. LeBron has played through a broken nose, numerous ankle sprains and maybe even a concussion or two. And you think a sprained finger is going to vanquish him, taking the Cavs ' season right along with him?

Even if subsequent tests had revealed a hairline fracture, there is no reason to believe the Cavs season was going to be flushed into the NBA sewer.

LeBron knows what he means to this team. He'll get out there and play if it's at all possible, even with two fingers taped. It might affect his ability to go to his left. It might even affect his rebounding. But I find it hard to believe that anything short of a clean bone break that requires surgery would sideline LeBron for more than a few games. Based on a report Thursday, it doesn't look like his injured finger comes anywhere close to that level of damage.

Hasn't watching LeBron for the last four years taught you anything about resiliency? This is a guy who takes shots to the face, chips teeth, and still gets back up to play some more.

I know, as Cleveland fans, we all have an image of LeBron crumpled on the floor, writhing in pain, holding his shredded knee to his chest, stored somewhere in the dark recesses of our minds. But this isn't one of those times.

LeBron will be fine, based on everything that has been written and said as of Thursday afternoon. Even if he has to miss a few games, it will be an opportunity for the rest of the Cavs roster to (once again) prove that they aren't a band of mannequins filling the open space around LeBron .

The Cavs are 9-3 over the past four years when LeBron has had to sit. It's not good to have to make a habit of playing without your superstar, but sometimes the atrophied limbs on a team need to learn to stand on their own. Hopefully, should LeBron have to miss time, when he returns, the team will be stronger for having endured

some time without him.