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With one month left in the regular season, the Cleveland Cavaliers are still finding their way. The old is still trying to fit in with the new, the new still trying to understand its collective role. The result is a team that's more than just inconsistent from game to game; its also been up-and-down from quarter to quarter. In his latest, Sam Amico says that this team cannot wait until the playoffs to put this all together if they want to repeat last seasons Finals run.

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That may sound strange when you're talking about a team coming off an appearance in the NBA Finals, but these Cavs aren't like last year's version -- with Sunday's 98-91 win over visiting Charlotte serving as a prime example.

The Cavs played well enough to beat a so-so team at home, but things aren't nearly as smooth as they should be.

As you know, the Cavs made a couple of big trades three weeks ago, resulting in the acquisition of four key components -- power forwards Ben Wallace and Joe Smith (from Chicago), and guards Delonte West and Wally Szczerbiak (from Seattle).

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The offense is out of synch. The defense is shaky. The outcomes are usually in

doubt until the final moments, win or lose.

As for the rotation, even coach Mike Brown doesn't have a firm grasp of who to play and when to play them.

Injuries have been an issue all season, as is often the case when you're playing an 82-game schedule against some of the world's largest, strongest and most athletic men.

There's also plenty of concern about veteran center Zydrunas Ilgauskas' health. Ilgauskas has had issues with a disc in his lower back all season, and played his first game in a week Sunday (16 points in 31 minutes). He looked good, but nobody in the organization is overly confident he'll be able to sustain a long playoff run.

Then there's Wallace. One theory around the league is he has lost almost all of the explosiveness that made him a rebounding machine and one-time league defensive player of the year. He's definitely not the shotblocker he used to be, and he's never been much of a help on offense. There are plenty of reasons, insiders say, why the Bulls were happy to let him go.

But with Ilgauskas, Wallace, Smith and Anderson Varejao, the Cavs at least have a regular rotation among their big men.

The same cannot be said of the backcourt. It's crowded with no clear leader, or anyone who can be counted on to score regularly.

Szczerbiak, a career 49 percent shooter, can't make anything. He's hitting just 32 percent from the field since joining the Cavs 11 games ago -- and if the shots don't start dropping soon, he may not have to worry about defending anything other than the water cooler at the end of the bench.

Sasha Pavlovic has regained his starting shooting guard spot, but is still shaking off the rust after missing two months with an ankle injury.

Devin Brown has been solid, but is a role player in the truest sense. He won't lose you any games, but he's not likely to win you many, either.

West has been a nice addition at point guard -- and is the closest thing this

organization has had to a true floor general since the dark days of Andre Miller.

But what becomes of West or Brown or Pavlovic or Szczerbiak (or veteran Damon Jones) once Daniel Gibson returns from his own ankle problems? How will Brown juggle a lineup consisting of so many guys whose contributions are so very similar?

None of this is intended to sound like the voice of doom. In spite of all the injuries and newness, the Cavs would really have to pull a tank job to finish with anything lower than the No. 4 seed in the Eastern Conference.

And, of course, there's always LeBron James. If Cleveland fans learned anything last season, it's that all things are possible when you have a superstar -- or in the case of James, when you have perhaps the best player in the entire league.

So when all else fails, it's nice to know the Cavs still have something to hang their headbands on.

Then again, the Cavs made their recent moves so that James wouldn't need to be entirely responsible for the team's success. General manager Danny Ferry wanted a better supporting cast, and he believes he got one.

In time, that may prove to be the case. In time, everyone may find their rhythm and the Cavs will run like a well-oiled basketball machine. And in time, they may be glad they revamped the roster so late in the season.

But they also must know that time is running out -- and they are really kidding themselves if they're planning to wait until the playoffs to put it all together.