I'm sure you've heard by now from one of the paranoid Cavaliers fans out there that's been sucked into the ESPN LeBron to NY hype machine. At a Team USA media blitz, LeBron was asked to name his favorite city in America, and said New York, listing Akron fifth. ESPN ran with the story, and people were stressing out about it in our Cavs message forum minutes later. In his latest, Sam Amico says that LeBron revels in the attention comments like that create, and that Cavs fans shouldn't look too deeply into them.

LeBron James may list Akron, Ohio, a disappointing fifth among his favorite cities but the Cleveland Cavaliers don't need to worry. They don't play in Akron.

The latest talk stems from James' recent interview in New York, where he spoke to reporters as a member of Team USA. With rumors circulating that James might opt out of his contract in 2010, he took some time to list his five favorite places to visit.
Or perhaps live. No one really knows.

Anyway, James listed New York as No. 1. How fitting, considering both the Knicks and New Jersey (Brooklyn?) Nets have made it clear they are reshaping their rosters for a chance to nab James two years from now.

And now James -- not Team USA, not the Cavaliers, not anything really relevant to the here-and-now -- is all the rage. And that's exactly the way our basketball king likes it.

Don't think so? Try watching James when he slaps his hands together before every Cavs game, flinging powder in the air while he stands with his arms spread and head tilted back, as if he's some sort of angel on the rise.

Or watch him as he treats each bump, bruise and minor ding on the court as if it

warrants a frantic dial to 9-1-1.

There's also the matter of James donning a Yankees cap at the hometown Indians' playoff game, or making all of Cleveland anxiously chew its fingers to the nub as it waited for him to sign his previous contract. Even then, he took the shorter deal, adding more drama to a city that can conjure up images of sports heartbreakers faster than it can spit the name of Carlos Boozer.

Hey LeBron, THIS is how you treat the only fans who truly worship you, who act like they truly are a Witness to something special? That's a shame, because most other NBA types would still take Kobe Bryant.

To be fair, James really is still just a kid, barely 23 years old. Off the court, he conducts himself in the type of ultra-respectful manner that makes his franchise and league beam with joy. He's leading a new era of basketball superstar, a young millionaire who understands how to avoid controversy and create a positive image. James knows he's a role model and he wears the label with pride. He is more than an athletic icon. He's a downright upstanding citizen.

So what to make of James' little list, which members of the media are sure to be checking twice -- and three or four or 172 times more between now and 2010?

Well, how about this: Nothing.

Seriously. James' favorite cities are likely no more important to him than his favorite soft drink. Problem is, he's not gonna get a rise out of anyone if chooses Dr. Pepper over 7-Up.

In other words, before we all start hyperventilating over the idea that James could bolt from Cleveland, there are a few things to consider:

1). A lot can happen in two years. Just look at two years ago, when everyone thought the Miami Heat were on the verge of becoming a dynasty. Now they're just a disaster.

2). The New York teams, as currently constructed, just plain stink. So even if James fails to win a title with Cleveland in the next two years, what chance will he have with the Nets (yuck) or Knicks (double yuck)? Delonte West may not be Walt Frazier, but he's not Stephon Marbury, either.

3). Who's to say the Cavs aren't working on clearing some cap space of their own? Actually, that's exactly what they plan to do, setting themselves up for some financial wiggle room when James' current deal is up. And who's to say the Cavs won't land someone else's superstar -- perhaps a Dwyane Wade or a Chris Bosh? As one league executive predicted, "All the Cavs really need to do to keep LeBron is sign one of his friends."

Is it possible James could flee for New York or Brooklyn or anywhere else he listed among his Fav Five cities? Of course it is.

But one thing's for certain -- he won't be making that decision today. He won't even be making it at the end of the season.

He'll be making it two whole years from now. And until then, we should all just calm down and refuse to believe the hype.

No matter how much James seems to be enjoying it.

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