Lost in the wind and waves of the colossal USC-Ohio State and Browns-Steelers matchups this weekend, the Cavaliers made a little news of their own. Delonte West, whose restricted free agency stood as the last remaining barrier between the Cavs and a training camp free from contract issues, agreed to terms on Friday. Erik hits on the signing in his latest.

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The deal, according to the Akron Beacon Journal's Brian Windhorst, is reportedly for three years and about $13 million, with the final year as an option.

The acquisition of Mo Williams demoted West from the starting point guard's role to quite possibly the eighth or ninth man on the roster, depending on how the rotations shape up in the preseason.

West could end up as the starting shooting guard, but even though he's probably the best defensive player in the backcourt, it's still difficult to envision a rail-thin 6'-4" drive-and-pass combo guard with a spotty perimeter game scoring on and effectively defending the likes of Tracy
McGrady
, Michael Redd and Ray Allen. The best options for Mike Brown to start at the

two-guard are still likely Sasha
Pavlovic
and Wally
Szczerbiak
, in that order. So any realistic way you slice it, West is best suited for a bench role behind Williams.

But West's role on the team isn't the point right now. With training camp slated to start soon, the newsworthiness of West's signing is the signing itself.

Last year, the contract holdouts of Pavlovic and Anderson Varejao put the Cavs' season in quicksand from the get-go.
Pavlovic
didn't agree to terms on a new deal until the eve of the regular season, had to use the early part of the season as his training camp, and then became the first in a long line of
Cavs
players to miss time with injuries.

Varejao didn't make it back until the Charlotte Bobcats signed him to an offer sheet nearly a month into the season, which the Cavs matched. December was Vare
jao's
training camp.

The holdouts of two key players plus a late-November finger injury to LeBron James put the
Cavs
in a hole that they never really climbed out of. At one point, they were six games under .500. A roster-altering blockbuster trade later, they finished with 45 wins and the fourth seed in the Eastern Conference.

You know the story of the playoffs. The Cavs knocked out an inferior Wizards team in six games, only to fall one game short against the eventual world champion Celtics in the second round, a seven-game series in which the home team won every game.

If you rewind to last October, it's easy to see how the dominoes lined up to fall against the Cavs last season, and it all started with the holdouts of Varejao and P

avlovic
.

This season, that won't be a problem. With West in the fold, Brown and the coaching staff will have a full compliment of players from the outset. It's not a cure-all. Playing-time squabbles and injuries could still hinder the construction of team cohesion, but what is known is that every player who is supposed to be in camp will be there. Instead of starting the season with 15 players in varying states of readiness, the Cavs will start the season with 15 players who have been together, practicing and learning the playbook for more than a month.

With Brown, who is known for complex defensive schemes and lengthy play names, as the coach, the importance of that can't be underscored enough.

As NBA training camp approaches, I get the sense that the iron is getting hot for the Cavs, and the time to strike is approaching. This season might be the best chance the Cavs have to win an NBA title between now and the summer of 2010, when LeBron can opt out of his contract.

There will be no contract issues in training camp. Danny Ferry made a major addition in Williams. The three remaining players from last February's blockbuster -- West, Szczerbiak and Ben Wallace -- will start the season in Brown's system. J.J. Hickson might be the long-sought first-round pick who can actually help the Cavs as a rookie -- he had a monster summer league session to tease us.

Above all, LeBron appeared to take his leadership skills to the next level in the Olympics, proving once again that if LeBron James can't make you better as a basketball player, it's probably time to look for a new line of work.

Even the factors beyond the Cavs' control appear to be aligning in Cleveland's favor. The Pistons, after three straight eliminations in the Eastern Conference Finals, need to take the roster to the shop for a tune-up -- or maybe a total rebuild. They'll begin the season with a new head coach in Michael Curry and a roster that appears to be headed for a state of transition. Three of the team's pillars -- Chauncey Billups, Rip Hamilton and Rasheed Wallace -- are all in their 30s.
Tayshaun
Prince, like

LeBron
, will have to shake off Olympic fatigue early in the year. Their major offseason
addition was famous draft bust
Kwame
Brown, who at best is a serviceable role player.

The Celtics lost James Posey to the Hornets in free agency. You could make a case that without Posey, Boston doesn't hold off the Cavs in the second round last spring. Allen, Kevin
Garnett
and Paul Pierce are still a formidable trio, but will all be a year older. Pierce is the youngest, and he'll turn 31 in October.

Even if the Celtics' big three stay healthy all year, it will still be difficult for the whole team to play the the relentless defense and with the unwavering sense of purpose that allowed them to win 66 regular season games and a championship last year. Last year, the Celtics were a team on a mission. It remains to be seen whether Boston can mount the same effort this year for six months of regular season action and two months of playoffs.

I still expect the Celtics to be very good, but some of the edge will likely be worn away. And even at their best, the Cavs still almost beat them.

In the Western Conference, the Lakers and Spurs are still the top dogs in my book, even if the Spurs appeared to look like a team approaching the 19
th
hole in the Western Conference Finals. The
Lakers
looked soft against the Celtics in the NBA Finals, but a healthy Andrew
Bynum
will restore a great deal of toughness to L.A.'s interior game.

The Hornets are knocking on the door with the emergence of Chris Paul as an elite player, not just an elite point guard. The addition of Posey's defense and championship experience could vault New Orleans into the NBA Finals conversation out west.

Also not to be overlooked are the Rockets, who added Ron Artest this summer. If Houston can work with the potentially-volatile concoction of
Artest
,
McGrady
and
Yao
Ming, they could finally take T-Mac beyond the playoff cannon fodder role he's played throughout his career.

This is the right time for the Cavs to get their affairs in order and approach the season squarely focused on an NBA title. The East is winnable for a team like Cleveland, and though the West is perpetually the stronger conference, even the best teams out there have questions to answer. With the re-signing of
Delonte
West, the
Cavs
at least know that they can concentrate 100 percent on basketball once the season arrives.