When you think of Danny Ferry, what comes to mind? A player who never achieved the enormous expectations placed on him coming out of college? A general manager who hasn't achieved the enormous expectations of building a team around LeBron James? Many fans have been lukewarm on Ferry, but is it justified? In his latest, John Hnat takes a detailed look at Danny's resume as the Cavaliers GM.

When you think of Danny Ferry, what comes to mind? A player who never achieved the enormous expectations placed on him coming out of college? A general manager who hasn't achieved the enormous expectations of building a team around LeBron James?

The general consensus of Cleveland sports fans is that: the Browns suck! Oh wait, this isn't a football column, even though Cleveland may be a football town. When the topic does turn to Ferry, the average Cleveland fan seems to be ... underwhelmed. They see a rash of free agent signings when he came on board - most of which did not turn out well - and not much activity since then.

That view is not accurate. Ferry has actually done well to position the Cavs as a contender, both in the upcoming 2008-09 season and beyond. Disagree with that statement? Let's take a look at Danny's record.

What He Has Done

Ferry was named General Manager of the Cleveland Cavaliers on June 27, 2005.

Here is a list of all of the Cavs' notable transactions since that date. By "notable", I mean transactions that have affected the team; I am not talking about moves like waiving Mengke Bateer (*you can't possibly make up a name like that*) during training camp or signing 10-day contract players:

June 28, 2005: Traded G/F Jiri Welsch to Milwaukee for a second-round pick in 2006

On paper, this trade looks like a bomb: acquire Welsch in February for a first-round pick, then dump him four months later for a second-rounder. In fact, it was a coup by Ferry in his second day on the job, as the following line from the "Transactions" section would have been more believable:

June 28, 2005: Traded G/F Jiri Welsch to Milwaukee for a bowl of warm phlegm

Fans with season tickets directly behind the hoops at Quicken Loans Arena still wake from nightmares of Welsch-launched airballs smacking them in the face. Ferry did well to get anything for Welsch, who lasted one more obscure year in The Association. He can't do anything about the sins of Jim Paxson, his predecessor as Cavs GM. ("The Sins of Jim Paxson" will be a recurring theme, by the way.)

June 28, 2005: Traded a second-round pick in 2006 to Orlando for C Martynas Andriuskevicius

With no picks in the 2005 Draft, Ferry dealt for the skinny Lithuanian affectionately (well, maybe not) nicknamed "Marty Alphabet." The second round of the NBA Draft is essentially a game of darts after a few beers: you may hit the target once in a great while, but it won't happen often; and if you do, it will be because of luck more than skill. Martynas is smarter than all of us; he earned

$1,062,971 for a total of 9 (nine) minutes played in his NBA career (that's $118,108 per minute). (As long as we're throwing around small-sample-size numbers, consider this: Marty logged two steals in those nine minutes, which projects to 10.7 steals per 48 minutes!)

August 2, 2005: Signed free agents G Larry Hughes (five years) and F Donyell Marshall (four years); re-signed C Zydrunas Ilgauskas (four years with a fifth year player option)

It all seemed so right in the beginning. The Cavs had a wide open hole at shooting guard. Hughes, fresh off a 22.0 PPG/6.3 RPG/4.7 APG season with Washington, was the best available shooting guard on the free agent market. (*No te to those who are already firing up their e-mail to tell me that my hearing is muffled by the sound of my own butt: Ray Allen and Michael Redd were not coming here for less money, and a sign-and-trade for Joe Johnson would have required some combination of draft picks and good young talent, which the Cavs had none of aside from LeBron.*
) It seemed like a match made in heaven.

The Cavs also had a need for perimeter shooting. Enter Marshall, who had reinvented himself as a three-point specialist in his previous seasons with Toronto.

We all know how it turned out. Hughes spent two and a half semi-productive but underwhelming seasons in Cleveland before being traded. Marshall spent two and a half mostly-unproductive and very underwhelming seasons in Cleveland before being traded. The best laid plans something something something.

September 8, 2005: Signed free agent G Damon Jones (four years)

Still having a little bit of Dan Gilbert's money in his pocket, and still having a need

for outside shooting, Ferry threw four years and $16 million in the direction of Jones, a career journeyman who has never been seen stepping inside the three-point line on an NBA floor. Jones spent three up-and-down years with the Cavs (probably his most significant moment was hitting a game- and series-deciding three-pointer in the 2006 playoffs against Washington). He will hopefully be a cautionary tale against paying for a free agent coming off his best year: his 2004-05 season with Miami, when he averaged 11.6 points in 31.4 minutes per game, was far and away the best season of his career.

September 17, 2005: Signed free agent F Alan Henderson (one year)

Ferry recognized that the team lacked a Human Victory Cigar, so he signed Henderson, who performed that role admirably.

October 27, 2005: Waived G Kelenna Azuibuike

Azuibuike, a training camp invitee, was released on the eve of the season. A year later, he stuck with Golden State, and recently earned a nice three-year contract.

October 31, 2005: Exercised 2006-07 option on G/F Sasha Pavlovic

Not a bad move, as Sasha had shown enough promise to that point to warrant having his option exercised.

February 24, 2006: Acquired F Lee Nailon and a 2006 second-round pick from Philadelphia for a conditional 2006 second-round pick; acquired G Ronald Murray from the Seattle SuperSonics for G Mike Wilks and cash considerations; signed G/F Stephen Graham; waived F Lee Nailon

The Nailon trade was purely a favor to Philadelphia - we'll take Nailon (and his salary) off your hands so that you save a few bucks, and in exchange we'll take a low pick off your hands.

The Wilks/Murray deal was a wonderful little trade by Ferry; in exchange for a seldom-used point guard, he obtained Murray, an admittedly flawed player who nevertheless gave the team some much-needed spark during the playoff push.

June 27, 2006: Drafted G Shannon Brown (25th overall pick), G Daniel Gibson (42nd), and F Ejike Ugboaja (55th)

How about that - a draft in which the Cavs actually had all their picks! Brown, an athletic shooter from Michigan State, was projected as a slightly higher pick in most circles, so it was a bit of a surprise when he was available to the Cavs. Gibson, a second-year player from Texas, was definitely a target of the Cavs from the start - Ferry has said that he would have taken Gibson with the #25 pick had Brown not been available.

My best guess on the drafting of Ugboaja: Ferry bet one of his assistants twenty bucks that he could get NBA Deputy Commissioner Russ Granik (the former announcer of the second round picks on draft night) to look like he had just passed a watermelon when trying to announce the Cavs' pick.

July 13, 2006: Re-signed F LeBron James to a contract extension (three years with a fourth year player option)

With this signing, ESPN's Stephen A. Smith had to change his refrain from "LEBRON'S COMING TO NEW YORK IN 2007 WHEN HIS CONTRACT EXPIRES!" to "LEBRON'S COMING TO NEW YORK IN 2010 WHEN HIS CONTRACT EXPIRES!"

Much has been made of James signing "only" a three year deal, instead of the five year maximum allowed under the NBA's collective bargaining agreement. There's a simple explanation: money. Under the CBA, the maximum salary a player can receive is 25% of the team's salary cap if he has six or fewer years of experience ... but that number jumps to 30% once the player has been in the NBA for seven years. Care to guess when LeBron will be a seven-year veteran?

August 19, 2006: Signed C/F Scot Pollard (one year)

And so the Human Victory Cigar torch is handed from Alan Henderson to Pollard...

September 5, 2006: Signed G David Wesley (one year)

...and then gets some company. Actually, Wesley was signed to provide a few minutes per game off the bench in the backcourt; he would have been more like the ninth or tenth player in the rotation, instead of the twelfth.

September 11, 2006: Re-signed F Drew Gooden to a contract extension (three years)

A wonderful move by Ferry. Gooden had been making noises all offseason about getting a longer and larger deal; Ferry stuck to his guns and eventually found the middle ground between the two sides, agreeing to a three-year deal for reasonable dollars (roughly $7 million per season).

October 14, 2006: Traded G/F Luke Jackson and cash to Boston for C Dwayne Jones

Ferry should have been nicknamed "Toilet Paper" because of all the Paxsonian shit he had to wipe up. Jackson, who Paxson drafted #10 overall in the 2004 draft, was (a) injured, (b) ineffective, or (c) both during his entire time in Cleveland. (The next several picks after Jackson included Andris Biedrins, Al Jefferon, Josh Smith, and J.R. Smith. Not that we are bitter.)

Is it just me, or does Jackson look like Bobby Brady if you put his picture through one of those "and this is what he might look like ten years later" gizmos?

June 30, 2007: Extended qualifying offers to C Anderson Varejao and G/F Sasha Pavlovic, making both of them restricted free agents

With these qualifying offers, Ferry set the stage for protracted battles between the Cavs and each of these players.

September 29, 2007: Signed G Devin Brown

A minor signing on the eve of training camp, and a good one, as the Cavs signed Brown, who had played rather well for New Orleans/Oklahoma City the previous season, to a veteran minimum contract.

September 29, 2007: Traded G David Wesley to New Orleans for F/C Cedric Simmons

The Hornets, in search of some cap relief, dealt their top pick from 2006 to the Cavs for Wesley, who had been disappointing during his season in Cleveland (they immediately waived Wesley after the trade was finalized). Simmons had the three most important elements of being an Intriguing Young Prospect:

1. He was tall;
2. He was tall;
3. He was tall.

November 1, 2007: Exercised the third-year contract option on F/C Cedric Simmons; declined the third-year contract option on G Shannon Brown

Continuing the theme of Tall Is Good, the Cavs picked up the option on Simmons's rookie contract, based entirely on his potential and not at all on his production. In a mild surprise, the Cavs declined the option on Brown's rookie contract. Ultimately, Ferry was vindicated - after being dealt to Chicago later in the season (we'll get there in a minute), Brown played just as sparingly, and about as ineffectively, as he did in Cleveland.

November 2, 2007: Signed G/F Sasha Pavlovic (three years)

Stalemate #1 came to an end during the first week of the season, as Pavlovic agreed to a three-year contract. The numbers were right - the total value of the contract was approximately $14 million - but by that time, Sasha was several steps behind in getting ready for the season, a gap that he never quite bridged.

December 5, 2007: Matched Charlotte's offer sheet for C Anderson Varejao (two years with a player option for a third year)

And so Stalemate #2 ended, this time with a little help from the Bobcats. As with Pavlovic, Varejao never quite found his groove during the entire 2007-08 season, thanks at least in part to the late start he got.

February 21, 2008: Traded G Larry Hughes, F Drew Gooden, G Shannon Brown, and F/C Cedric Simmons to Chicago, and F Ira Newble and F Donyell Marshall to Seattle, receiving F/C Ben Wallace, F Joe Smith, G Wally Szczerbiak, G Delonte West, and Chicago's second-round pick in the 2009 draft

Cavs fans were clamoring to make some kind of move to shake up the roster. Ferry obliged them with this whopper of a trade, an 11-player deal that closed the book on the Larry Hughes Era. The deal was originally proposed as an even swap of Hughes for Wallace, but grew (and grew) (and grew) to include the other players.

At its core, this trade was about re-shuffling the deck. Hughes had worn out his welcome in Cleveland - he never meshed with LeBron on the court, and thanks to a jump shot that connected with lottery-winning frequency, he hadn't won himself many fans in Cleveland. Marshall's performance dropped precipitously - we have seen meteors crash to the earth with less speed. Gooden was a solid contributor on offense, but his continuous defensive lapses had Coach Mike Brown pulling his hair out. (*Yes, I know he is bald.*) Brown and Simmons, once viewed as young and full of promise, were now viewed as simply young.

The Cavs were able to get significant talent in return. Wallace was Chicago's version of Hughes: a high-priced free agent signing that had not worked out at all as planned. Smith and Szczerbiak were proven veterans - perhaps not as good as a few years prior, but still able to contribute. The wild card was West. Long coveted by Ferry, West had gone from starting point guard in Boston to benchwarmer in Seattle (that will happen when you have two high-priced players in front of you).

Let's not forget the money: the Cavs did not hurt their cap flexibility at all in making this deal. They still had plenty of expiring contracts in 2009 (in fact, Szczerbiak's $13 million deal, which expires in 2009, provided a huge trade chip for the future). The only one of these players signed past 2009 was Wallace, and the money owed to him for the 2009-10 season was essentially washed out by Hughes's contract.

February 22, 2008: Signed F Kaniel Dickens and G Billy Thomas to ten-day contracts

No, this was not a major move that affected the course of the franchise. But I am noting it because it gave rise to one of the great games in team history: the February 22nd contest against the Wizards in which a depleted Cavs team, thanks to injuries (Pavlovic, Varejao, and Gibson were all sidelined) and the big trade, edged Washington 90-89. (During the game, I texted longtime site fan Tom Oktavec that "we should go down to the Q and call winners.")

June 27, 2008: Drafted F J.J. Hickson (19th overall); traded the lower of the Cavs' two second-round draft picks in 2009 to Miami for the rights to F Darnell Jackson; traded cash considerations to Seattle for the rights to F/C Sasha Kaun

"J.J. HICKSON??? WHO THE #&$^@&(IS J.J. HICKSON?!?" was a popular response in the hours following the Cavs' selection of the former North Carolina

State freshman. That opinion has shifted 180 degrees (or 360 degrees, if you are Jason Kidd) in the past couple of months. Hickson dominated the Las Vegas Summer League and has the Cavs' brass optimistic that he can be a 15 to 20-minute per game contributor in his rookie season. If he falters, or shows that he needs some more seasoning, Jackson (a senior from Kansas) should be ready to step in and take those minutes.

July 16, 2008: Re-signed G Daniel Gibson to a contract extension (five years)

Ferry quickly locked up one of the team's two restricted free agents, signing the long-distance specialist to a five-year, $21 million deal. The contract is actually quite good from the Cavs' perspective: they have one of the game's top three-point shooters for several years at a very reasonable rate.

August 5, 2008: Signed G/F Tarence Kinsey (one year)

A true "under the radar" signing, one of those small moves that can pay big dividends. Kinsey played quite well in his rookie season for Memphis in 2006-07, especially in the season's final weeks. He was released by the Grizzlies midway through last season. When you are released by the league's worst team, it has to make you think twice. At the same time, Memphis did not get to where it is today through shrewd talent evaluation. Giving a minimum contract to a young veteran like Kinsey is a low-risk, high-potential-reward move. If he plays like he did in 2006-07, you have a valuable rotation player. If not ... you're out a few bucks and nothing more.

August 14, 2008: Traded F Joe Smith to Oklahoma City and G Damon Jones to Milwaukee, receiving G Mo Williams

This deal was the centerpiece of the offseason, and one that will likely determine whether one of the streets near Quicken Loans Arena will someday be renamed Danny Ferry Way. Williams gives the Cavs their first legitimate point guard in the Age of LeBron. (We could split hairs about Jeff McInnis, and an in-his-prime Eric Snow would have been interesting, but Williams is head and

shoulders above either of those players in their Cleveland incarnations.) Ferry was able to acquire Williams without giving up any significant talent ... ah, I already wrote about this trade ; no need to repeat myself here.

September 5, 2008: Signed C Lorenzen Wright (one year)

After a year in hiatus, the veteran Human Victory Cigar returns. Wright should do an excellent job as the third-string center (read: he'll play only if Z and Varejao both have their legs fall off in the same game) and as a mentor to Hickson, both on the court ("here's how you box out for a rebound") and off ("don't go in *there!* There's a *MUCH* better strip club down the street!").

September 12, 2008: Re-signed G Delonte West (three years)

And so Ferry completes the 2008 offseason, inking (ha!) the Wiyah Hangah to a very fair contract. Much like Pavlovic and Varejao the previous offseason, or Gooden before that, Delonte pressed for a larger and longer contract, while Ferry stuck to his guns. Like the Gooden situation (and unlike the Pavlovic and Varejao fiascos), Ferry was able to sign West prior to training camp, avoiding a distracting holdout.

Coming soon: Part II of "The Danny Ferry Record", where John gives his overall analysis on Ferry's tenure as General Manager of the Cavaliers.