The Cavaliers' final game of the 2007-08 season was played in Boston, a loss in Game 7 of the Eastern Conference semifinals. The Cavs' first game this year will be played in Boston, at 8 PM tonight in a game that marks the start of the NBA's 2008-09 season. In case that's not enough, a lot of experts are predicting that the Celtics are the only team in the East better than the Cavs. Anyone else smell a rivalry here? Sam does, and he talks about it in his latest piece.

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Since that last game in Boston last year, the Cavs have added a new starting point guard in Mo Williams (via Milwaukee). This was also the first training camp in which Delonte West, Ben Wallace and Wally Szczerbiak were on the team. Hard to believe when you consider the big roles played by each (particularly West) in that final playoff series last year.

West is expected to line up next to Williams tonight to give the Cavs an all-new starting backcourt. Unlike last season's playoffs, West will start at shooting guard. LeBron James, Ben Wallace and Zydrunas Ilgauskas man the frontcourt -- with

guards Sasha Pavlovic, Szczerbiak, and Daniel Gibson, and forward Anderson Varejao, playing the biggest roles off the bench.

The key subtraction is Joe Smith, who was shipped to Oklahoma City as part of the Williams deal. The Cavs led the league in offensive rebounds (13.3 per game) and second-chance points (15.3) last season, and will clearly miss Smith's desire around the rim and scoring ability. (At least, they are destined to do so early.)

And while they will still focus mostly on defense, the addition of Williams has been hailed as a move that will help them to get out and move a little more on offense - as opposed to standing around and watching LeBron pound the ball as he waits for everyone else to get out of his way.

As Cavs GM Danny Ferry told Sports Illustrated, "Now we have a group that can push the tempo and play a little faster. I don't think that's always been a strength of ours."

Uh, gee. Ya think?

Sarcasm aside, the Cavs spent a big part of training camp talking about a championship, and who better to test their mettle against right away than the defending NBA champs?

The Celtics are basically the same squad that won it all last season, with the veteran three-headed basketball monster of Kevin Garnett, Paul Pierce and Ray Allen leading the way. Rounding out the starting lineup are third-year point guard Rajon Rondo and young and energetic center Kendrick Perkins.

But unlike last season, the Celtics will no longer have forward P.J. Brown around to kill the Cavs. At least, it was Brown who hit the biggest shot in Game 7 to keep the Celtics on top in the closing moments. He has since retired (for now, anyway).

The Celtics are also without veteran swingman James Posey, the former energy player and top defender off the bench who signed with New Orleans. The losses of Posey and Brown aren't considered huge, but could become a factor in the playoffs -- when young players have been known to wilt.

That is why Celtics coach Doc Rivers will need increased production from the likes of forwards Leon Powe and Glen (Big Baby) Davis, as well as swingman Tony

Allen.

Oh, and who could forget about rookie guard Bill Walker, the former high school teammate of O.J. Mayo who was a second-round pick. Walker has been called a steal by more than a few experts, who claim his recent knee issues were the only thing that resulted in him falling out of the draft's first round.

He displayed loads of athleticism in the preseason -- including a dunk against the Cavs in which he gave none other than LeBron an in-your-face bump on his way back down the court.

Afterward, James gave the rookie credit, but also made it known that Walker's extracurricular activity won't be forgotten.

The Cavs? The Celtics? A rivalry?

It sure is starting to look that way.

Sam Amico is the editor of ProBasketballNews.com and a frequent contributor to TheClevelandFan.com and SportsTime Ohio. Contact him at amico@probasketballnews.com.