Earlier this week, Adrian Wojnarowski (of Yahoo Sports) wrote yet another column about how LeBron James is destined to leave Cleveland after his contract expires in 2010. We should not be surprised; just a week prior, Wojnarowski decreed that LeBron already had "one foot out the door". Now ... we should probably not dignify columns as baseless as this one with a response. But John Hnat couldn't resist.

We can be clear about one thing: Adrian Wojnarowski hates Cleveland. At the very least, he can't stand the Cavs.

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Now, Wojnarowski is not a particularly credible commentator; I'm not sure that could be said about anybody whose columns are followed with a tagline of "Do You Yahoo!?" But he does have a national audience, and represents exactly the type of
National Media
(Non-Screamin' A. Smith Division) that is continually pounding the "LeBron will leave the Cavs" drumbeat.

The interesting aspect of Wojnarowski's most recent column is how his tune has changed. The only constant theme is that
LeBron must leave Cleveland when his contract expires
.

But the reasons for leaving, and the desired destination, have completely changed.

The conventional thinking has long been that should James leave Cleveland, he will bolt for a mega-market (i.e., New York or Los Angeles), where he can earn even more endorsement dollars and become a truly global icon. The quality of the teams involved were never considered - it was just *assumed* that LeBron would want to play for a strip-mined Knicks or Nets team, and be content with a future of 45-win teams that exit in the first round of the playoffs, simply because he would be in the Big Apple.

Wojnarowski's initial article tapped into that sentiment, calling the Nets "James' preferred destination", and also mentioning the Knicks and Lakers as strong candidates to land The Chosen One. (Never mind that if the Nets or Knicks were ships, they'd have a string quartet on the deck playing "Nearer, My God to Thee.") He acknowledged that Cavs General Manager Danny Ferry had done a "good, creative job" in building a competitive team to surround James, but labeled James's seemingly inevitable departure as not being "a basketball decision as much as it will be James believing he needs the platform of a major market to transport himself into a bigger global entity."

As of this week, according to Wojnarowski's latest column, that major market exists in ... Detroit.

Yes, Detroit.

A city that has approximately the same glamour, glitz, and cachet as ... well, Cleveland.

A city that may be more Cleveland than Cleveland itself.

To his credit, Wojnarowski does not even try to argue that James will have more endorsement opportunities in Detroit than in Cleveland. Instead, he says that the Pistons' Joe Dumars can provide James "the right coach, the right teammates, [and] the right atmosphere to chase championships for a long, long time."

As Bill Murray said in *Kingpin* , "nice flip-flop; way to go." Apparently the bright lights of the big city are no longer enough to sway James, and he is now all about winning titles.

(Never mind that James himself has consistently said that he is about winning titles.

Looks like actually listening to what James himself says ranks far down the list of ways to determine what he is thinking.)

And the Pistons are that team, according to Wojnarowski, because they have plenty of young talent while also having the cap space to ink LeBron.

The hypothesis seems to be that with this week's trade of Allen Iverson to the Pistons, Detroit no longer has Chauncey Billups' contract on the books for the next four years (Iverson's deal expires at the end of this season). That move will give the Pistons will have enough cap space to chase LeBron while retaining their core of Rip Hamilton, Tayshaun Prince, and young'uns Rodney Stuckey, Jason Maxiell, and Amir Johnson.

The numbers do work. Even with Hamilton's rumored extension, Detroit would have the cap space to offer a maximum contract to LeBron in 2010. The question that Wojnarowski never quite gets around to answering is:

why would LeBron take less money to play alongside that cast in Detroit?

In 2010, the Cavs' non-LeBron roster will consist of Mo Williams, Delonte West, Daniel Gibson, and J.J. Hickson at a minimum.

Yes, Hamilton and Prince have longer resumes; they also have less tread left on their tires.

(Particularly Hamilton, who will be 32 years old in that fateful summer of 2010; shooting guards typically do not age well into their 30s, especially ones like Hamilton who rely on their speed and quickness.)

But we are getting away from the point: why is the national media in general, and Wojnarowski in particular, so enamored with seeing LeBron leave Cleveland?

And why is he so adamant that LeBron will leave that he will cast about from team to team, trying to find one that makes sense as a destination?

(Interestingly, and almost laughably, Wojnarowski dropped the name of advisor William Wesley as a reason why James would leave for New York ... AND as a reason why James would leave for Detroit!

One can only wonder if next week, LeBron will be headed to the Kings because of Wesley's ties to Sacramento.)

Do I know where James will be playing basketball in the 2010-11 season? No. Neither do you.

LeBron himself probably does not know, in all candor.

This particular poker game still has a lot of cards that are laying face down on the table.

If the Cavs challenge for (or, perish the thought, *win*) a championship or two in the next two seasons, James would be hard-pressed to depart for a situation with more question marks.

Should the Cavs implode, then the talk of James leaving will make more sense.

Only LeBron himself knows what is truly important to him, and what factors are going to drive his decision to stay or leave.

Adrian Wojnarowski does not know either. And as Cavs fans, we simply have to ignore his apparent belief that he does. Even when the reasons for that belief change on a weekly basis.