Well, we've had time to decompress, think about what happened, and talk about the Cavs loss to the Magic in the message forums here on the site. So what happened? Why is this Cavs team the latest on an extremely short list of NBA teams to cross the 65-win threshold and not even make it to the NBA Finals? Before you knee-jerk "Because it's Cleveland" out of your mouth, let's take a look at things a little more rationally.

Let's set one record straight before I delve into the circumstances that ended the Cavaliers season on Saturday night: The Cavs did not choke, at least according to how I define choking in sports.

I define a choke in one of two ways: Either a team gains control of a series and suddenly falls apart, or a team simply tanks and falls to team to which it had no business losing.

The Cavs' fate at the hands of the Magic falls under neither heading. They certainly did not have control of this series at any point, and based on the overall trend of the past six games, I'd say the Cavs very much had business losing to Orlando.

So what happened? Why is this Cavs team the latest on an extremely short list of NBA teams to cross the 65-win threshold and not even make it to the NBA Finals? Before you knee-jerk "Because it's Cleveland" out of your mouth, let's take a look at things a little more rationally.

1. Teamwork augments talent, it doesn't compensate for it

All season long, the Cavs were celebrated both locally and nationally for their tight locker room. In an era of millionaire athletes, millionaire egos and ESPN face time, the Cavs behaved more like a small-college team than a filthy-rich NBA squad piloted by one of the most famous people on the planet. They hung out with

each other on their free time. They made fake TV commercials together. They all showed up in Akron for LeBron's MVP press conference.

All season long, we banked on the idea that the Cavs' tremendous team chemistry would carry them past more-talented, but perhaps less-unified, teams like the Lakers and Celtics (and as it turns out, the Magic).

The trouble with that theory is the more-talented teams have to perform below their potential for the less-talented team to catch up. The more-talented teams have to be marred by infighting and selfish play in order for the less-talented team to make up the ground with their teamwork.

Against Orlando, the Cavs ran into a more-talented, taller and more athletic roster performing at an optimum level. When the approach that had worked all year started to not work for the Cavs, they panicked, and the entire offense regressed to LeBron-on-five.

2. The problem with those 66 wins

No team can really boast that it has the roster of a 66-win team. It is a rare enough feat to reach 66 regular season wins that, with any team that does so, some amount of overachieving is involved.

But if you take off the wine-colored glasses, you might see that how this Cavs team arrived at 66 wins involves a tremendous amount of overachieving. Namely, two factors that you simply cannot count on from year to year.

First, the Cavs defended their home court with just one honest slip-up in February against the Lakers. A full-strength effort in the season finale against Philadelphia ensures a record-tying 40-1 home record. As it stands, they finished 39-2.

Second, and perhaps even more glaringly, the Cavs absolutely owned the Western Conference this season. They finished 26-4 against the opposite conference, with only three road losses at the Lakers, Rockets and Hornets. They went on two West Coast jaunts, and though they had close calls against the Clippers, Warriors and Kings, they still managed to emerge with just that lonely loss against L.A.'s varsity team.

That is a fluke, plain and simple. Jet lag and general road weariness get to even

the best NBA teams on long road trips. This season, it didn't. Next season, the Cavs will almost certainly lose more road games against the West. If they do, combined with a few extra home losses, that's the difference between 66 wins and 57 or 58 wins, which is probably more in line with the current roster's talent level. And if that happens, we're not looking at a playoff loss to a 59-win Magic team in the same way we are right now.

The Cavs were exceptionally good at beating up on the lesser 90 percent of the league this year. They had very few slip-ups against lesser competition, which helped cushion the blows landed by the Lakers, Magic and Celtics (combined 3-6 record). But in the end, what the Cavs' record says is that they were really good at winning the games they should have won. But against teams that had a legitimate chance of beating them? Different story.

3. The Cavs might have peaked early in the season

It's tough to really say that about a team that racked up wins from start to finish, but the Cavs most resembled a juggernaut early in the season, when they piled winning streak on top of winning streak. LeBron first emerged as an MVP-level force, Mo Williams and Delonte West looked like an elite backcourt, Zydrunas Ilgauskas was stroking shots out to three-point range and even Ben Wallace had a spring in his step.

But Z hurt his ankle in December and his already-limited mobility suffered even further. Daniel Gibson's string of injuries slowly led us to the conclusion that he was bound for a down year. West broke his wrist, and even though it was his non-shooting wrist, his jumper was inconsistent for the rest of the season. Ben Wallace broke his leg, was replaced by Anderson Varejao in the starting lineup, and has now officially reached has-been status.

Though the wins kept coming, the potency of the Cavs roster as a whole really slid downhill as the season progressed. It didn't prevent them from sweeping the Pistons and Hawks out of the playoffs, but when they faced a top-shelf team, the sagging spots on the roster were exposed and exploited.

4. Too short, too old

When first presented with the idea of running with a starting backcourt of Williams and West, Mike Brown was reportedly slow to warm. It took some convincing from

Danny Ferry before Brown would put the 6'-1" Williams and 6'-3" West in the same backcourt. Brown apparently felt that with the lack of height, the Cavs would be at a matchup disadvantage on too many nights.

In the frontcourt, Z, Wallace and Joe Smith continued to succumb to Father Time while Andy's offensive skills and defensive girth remained limited. These are problems that no amount of coaching and strategizing can overcome.

It took seven months, but eventually the chickens came home to roost. The tall, athletic Magic roster posed the Cavs with a number of large matchup problems for which they had no real answer. The Lakers would have posed many of the same challenges.

There is no real way around it: The Cavs' backcourt is very small by NBA standards, and their big men are extremely limited in terms of skill and athleticism.

Based on their performances over most of the season, Williams and West are a worthy starting backcourt for an NBA contender, even with a lack of size. But an undersized starting backcourt creates a need for size and skill in other areas of the roster.

The Cavs can get away with an undersized backcourt if they would have an all-star caliber power forward or center who could have effectively guarded Dwight Howard one-on-one, or posted up Rashard Lewis, Orlando's rail-thin sniper of a power forward.

The Cavs can get away with a small starting backcourt if they could go to a skilled 6'-6" or 6'-7" swingman off the bench, much like Orlando has in Mickael Pietrus. Aging Wally Szczerbiak and perpetual project player Sasha Pavlovic don't cut it.

Williams and West should be the kind of players who can hurt another team when flying under the radar, when the opponent is more concerned with stopping the frontline players on the roster. Instead, Williams and West are LeBron's primary wingmen. the second and third-best players on the roster. As much as I like what Williams and West bring to the table, they're miscast as top lieutenants on a championship-level team.

5. Mike Brown needs to look in the mirror

Brown deserves the NBA Coach of the Year Award he received. He did a great job with this team for most of the year. But he fell back into some bad habits against the Magic, habits that didn't exactly make him a rock in stormy seas.

Once again, Brown started to shuffle his rotations like a blackjack dealer. He needed to find a lineup that worked, but flip-flopping among Gibson, Pavlovic and Szczerbiak coming off the bench, stapling Joe Smith to the bench while playing Wallace more minutes, none of it had a settling effect on a Cavs team that was already skittish after blowing huge leads in the first two games.

Brown accepted mismatches, like West on 6'-10" Hedo Turkoglu, for way too long. He let Varejao guard the bigger and faster Dwight Howard at the outset of overtime in Game 4, surrendering three critical buckets in the process. Brown also seemed to encourage LeBron to play one-on-five late in games. Yes, you want the ball in the hands of your superstar at critical moments. But you also have to run plays and get open shots.

Telling LeBron "Take us home, big guy" for an entire quarter isn't an offensive strategy. It's crossing your fingers. LeBron is an amazing player, capable of singlehandedly winning games, but Brown still has to do more coaching than that.

Stan Van Gundy, for all the cracks he receives about his weight and resemblance to Ron Jeremy, coached circles around Brown for large stretches of this series.