What a sweet sight for sore eyes. John Hnat on the front page of the site. And actual columns talking about a regular season Cleveland Cavaliers basketball game. And we're fired up to have both back. Today, John unveils his first "The Good, The Bad, & The Summary" piece of the year, which has been a reader favorite for years here. This season, it will be a weekly piece, every Tuesday. And today, John hits on everything Cavalier related you could possibly want to read about as we get ready for tonight's mega-opener against the vile Boston Celtics.

THE SUMMARY:

The summary right now? That's easy. This season is the most anticipated season in Cleveland Cavaliers history, and possibly in Cleveland sports history.

For the second time in most of our lifetimes, a Cleveland sports team enters the season with a legitimate chance to Win It All Baby. (The other team being the 1995-96 vintage Cleveland Indians. The Browns don't even come close, unless you're quite a bit older than I am; and I am now at an age marked by gray on the sides and annual checkups that better resemble the shower room at Folsom.

Not only do they have a chance, they are more or less *expected* to win the title. Anything less will be regarded as failure.

(Which is literally true in every other season too, but it has more meaning this time around.)

Oh, and did we mention that LeBron James, who is probably the best player in the game right now (Kobe Bryant fans, I'll listen to your arguments why I'm wrong; everybody else, thanks for playing), is a free agent at the end of this season?

Make no mistake: this season is the Mother of All Poker Hands, and every last chip the Cavs own is in the center of the table.

A WORD ABOUT THIS COLUMN:

In a word, it's changing.

Over the past three seasons, I've written 127 game summaries. (*I have no idea if that number is correct or way off, but it sounds impressive, so we'll go with it.*
)

And I know that a lot of folks out there liked it.

Problem is, it is a bear to do. It's tough enough to write a decent summary in a short amount of time when it is your job. When you finish a game summary at 1:00 AM and have to get up in five hours to drop the kids off at day care and then put in a full day of work ... it's not sustainable.

So the choice was this: Either scale back to a more sustainable level (such as a weekly summary column), or put the keyboard away entirely.

Once a week it is.

ANOTHER WORD ABOUT THIS COLUMN:

For those of you who are new to GBS, here are a few things to know:

1. I am the Ultimate Cavs Homer™. I won't even pretend to be objective here. The Cavs are Luke Skywalker, and the rest of the NBA is The Empire.

If you want dispassionate, objective journalism, you're in the wrong place.

2. Before you send me a message saying that I am an idiot because I am not objective (as I've read more than a few times), or that this is just some fan blog, see point #1 above. Better yet, look at the URL you typed.

http://www.theclevelandfan.com/
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The.

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That probably should have been your first clue that we're not trying to be Anderson Cooper here.

It's like going to the North Pole and then complaining that it's cold.

Really, did you expect something else?

3. Homerism aside, I'll lob grenades when I think they should be lobbed. And I'll try to keep it fair.

4. A part of me is really, really, really disappointed that Sasha Pavlovic is no longer with this team, because he was good for several paragraphs of material per night. I regret that we never got to see if Sasha could put the round pegs in the round holes on my daughter's old toy set. (*Point #3 above, about being fair, is completely out the window at this point.*
)

5. The rest of me, which happens to be the part that appreciates good basketball, will not miss him one bit.

6. While this is normally a Cavs/basketball column, I will not hesitate to veer off topic if I feel

like it. Other Cleveland sports, offbeat news stories, late night infomercials about colon cleansing - nothing is off limits.

At this point, I've written more about myself than I plan to for the rest of the season. Let's move on to evaluating the offseason and preseason.

THE GOOD:

Cleaning Out His Closet: Say this about Cavs GM Danny Ferry: he does not like to stand pat.

Within weeks after the Cavs season ended - a season in which the Cavs won a league-best and franchise-record 66 games, swept through the first two rounds of the playoffs, and then ran into a smoking hot Orlando Magic team in the Eastern Conference finals - The Balded One took a crowbar and started pulling apart the roster. Gone are Pavlovic, Ben Wallace, Joe Smith, and Wally Szczerbiak. In their place are Shaquille O'Neal, Jamario Moon, Anthony Parker, and Leon Powe.

Normally, that would be a lot of turnover for an elite team. But it is exactly what the Cavs needed. The Cavs didn't need more star players; they needed to eliminate the black holes from the rotation.

They needed to upgrade the second unit so that it will not squander the leads earned by the starters.

(If you doubt that statement in the least, keep watching last season's ECF on an endless loop until you change your mind.)

AP: Of course, the biggest acquisition this offseason (*yes, in more ways than* one) was Shaq. The story of the 2009-10 season depends on how well The Big Shaquisition and LeBron play together.

But signing Parker will prove to be almost as significant. The Cavs had a crying need for a tall guard who can hit a jumper somewhat reliably and harass opposing two-guards.

Pavlovic was supposed to be that guard, but he choked away the opportunity of a career.

(Just wondering here:

was Pavlovic the Cavs' Derek Anderson?

Tall, goofy guys who are prone to unforced errors.

I'm not sure I ever saw Sasha throw a pass into triple coverage, and certainly DA has much more effect on the Browns than Sasha ever would; but the similarities are there.)

I already said this three paragraphs ago, but it bears repeating. The weakness on the Cavs' 2008-09 roster was not in the top players.

They have The Best Player On The Planet (we'll just abbreviate him as TBPOTP), a borderline All-Star type in Mo Williams, a pair of consummate team players in Delonte West and Anderson Varejao, and a Good Enough For Government Work center in Zydrunas Ilgauskas.

Those guys weren't the problem last season. The problem was turning the reins over to guys like Wallace, Pavlovic, and Szczerbiak - three players whose tanks were very close to empty - when the starters needed a break. The problem was having to give substantial minutes to Daniel Gibson, who has shown at this point that he is a half-dimensional player (his one dimension is shooting, and even at that he's pretty worthless unless he's behind the arc).

Parker (as well as O'Neal and Moon) upgrade the Cavs' one-through-nine talent, and that's why they are so critical. They don't need to be superstars; they just need to Not Suck.

The Lottery Ticket: One other signing by The Balded One that mostly flew under the radar was picking up Leon Powe, the power forward who played so well for Boston until he shredded his knee last spring. In the wake of his injury, the Celtics treated him as though he had leprosy, declining to sign him for the 2009-10 season.

The Cavs swooped in and inked Powe to a two-year deal (with the second year being a team option).

This signing could be brilliant. Actually, it is brilliant, without even knowing how it will turn out. Powe will definitely miss the first part of the season as he continues to rehabilitate his knee; but if he is ready to go, he'll essentially be the Cavs' mid-season pickup.

(Not to mention one with a reputation for playing his best in big games.)

If he isn't ready to go, the Cavs are barely out anything; they are paying him the veteran's minimum salary, and Dan Gilbert probably spends more than that on valet parking in an average month.

THE BAD:

Referees, Injuries, And ...: The schedule is a given. Every team plays 82 games. Every team plays half of those games at home and half on the road.

It more or less evens out for all teams; and even if it doesn't, excuses never won a title.

That said, don't be surprised if the Cavs start a bit slow this season. Not only are they integrating all those new players (which will take some time), but they have seven sets of back-to-back games in the first five weeks of the season.

That's a tough road, even if most of those games are against the Charlottes and Minnesotas of the Association.

Wherefore Art Thou Brother Red?: West's struggles this offseason have been well-documented; no need to rehash them here. (*Okay, a little hashing:*

if you are going to go kazoo, do it on a three-wheeled motorcycle while carrying enough arms to invade Afghanistan.

They'll never bother to check the guitar case on your back, trust me.

)

As much as anything, we have to treat his illness as any other injury - just one with a much more uncertain prognosis.

He may start tonight, or he may be out two months; we can't be sure.

It's a bit of a side note, but I have to say this to those who blame Delonte for his struggles: gro w the eff up.

It is not as though Delonte were sitting at home this summer, saying to himself, "my career has never been going better, and my team is on the verge of a title ... let's see, how can I really screw this up?"

MORE OF THE GOOD:

"Crisis-Tunity!": While the West situation is not ideal, the Cavs are clearly not about to let it derail their season. TBO is apparently on the verge of signing veteran point guard Antonio Daniels, last seen in Washington, as a Delonte insurance policy. If Delonte is going to be something of a question mark this season, the Cavs need to move on, and to get another player who is reliable.

That's not easy to do on the eve of the season, but that appears to be exactly what the Cavs have done.

Anything Else?: Not really, not at this point. Let the games begin.

WHAT LIES AHEAD:

The Cavs open the 2009-10 season tonight at Quicken Loans Arena against the Celtics (like

you needed me to tell you that). That game will begin a hectic week for the Wine and Gold: th ey'll hop on a plane after tonight's contest and face Toronto tomorrow night, get a day off, and then have another back-to-back (at Minnesota and then at home against Charlotte) to end the week.

By then, the bitter aftertaste of the Indians' season (we won't even mention the festival of crap being held weekly at Cleveland Browns Stadium) should be washed away, and the hoped-for magic carpet ride will be on.