With today's game in Utah, the Cavaliers will have reached the midpoint of the 2009-10 season. Next Monday, January 18, will mark one month and counting until the NBA's trade deadline. In the often-referenced words of Yogi Berra, it gets late early around here. For the Cavs, a team pulling out all the stops to try and win the NBA title this spring, time is especially of the essence. Danny Ferry isn't just trying to win a championship. He's making his closing arguments to LeBron James, who will dive headfirst into the free agent waters on July 1. If the Cavaliers do make a move, its likely to be the addition of a power forward. Erik Cassano gives us his thoughts on a few of the options Ferry might conisder.

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A general manager's ability to piece together that kind of team is often governed by circumstances he largely can't control. Primarily, money and opportunity. A GM needs access to well-stocked coffers supplied by the team's owner, and he needs other GMs who want to make a deal.

In the past two years, Ferry has turned Dan Gilbert's money and several trade opportunities into Delonte West, Mo Williams and Shaquille O'Neal. This summer, after acquiring Shaq, he took the free agent money that Ron Artest and Trevor Ariza turned down, and used it to sign Anthony Parker and Jamario Moon.

The Cavs roster is more athletic and versatile than it was even a year ago. Over the past two years, through several rounds of trades and opportunistic signings, the Cavs have done a lot to close the talent gap on the likes of the Lakers, Magic and Celtics.

But when you're trying to win a title and keep your everything-star from seriously considering flying the coop, the roster is subject to a few extra layers of scrutiny from eyes both inside and outside the organization. Every scratch, dent, pit, chip and dimple is held up to the light and examined for its championship-derailing potential.

For the Cavs, the eyes keep going to one area on the floor in particular: The power forward position.

J.J. Hickson has started there for most of the season. He's a second-year player, and while he has demonstrated tremendous athletic ability at times, he also coasts through long stretches of games, sometimes looking lost on the floor, sometimes just looking like he's not all that interested in competing hard.

No one player has probably made Mike Brown's blood pressure rise more this season than Hickson. He's benched Hickson for remainders of games after a mental goof, usually at the defensive end. Sometimes Hickson responds well, but often, the message seems to whistle over his head.

Hickson isn't a bad apple. But he is out of place as the starting power forward on this team. He's working on remedial coursework while the veterans on the team are enrolled in the doctoral program. Honestly, Hickson probably belongs on a young, rebuilding team where he can grow with players who are similar in age, with a coach who can afford to keep playing him through his mistakes.

The Cavs' situation is simply too high-pressure for the team to live with Hickson's growing pains, particularly as the stretch run and playoffs approach.

The other option is starting Anderson Varejao alongside Shaq, which Brown tried

at the outset of the year. But Varejao seems to be at his best when he's coming off the bench as a change of pace. His game most closely resembles that of a center, anyway. Outside of the paint, he's really not much of a scoring threat.

That leaves an outside acquisition as the only other means of upgrading the power forward spot between now and the deadline. Ferry apparently has recognized the need for a legitimate starting big forward, and all signs point to him being aggressive in attempting to make a trade in the next month.

But Ferry has to find a dance partner before he can make a trade. Fortunately, there are a few teams that might be willing to give the Cavs a starting forward for the right price. And thanks to the expiring contract of Zydrunas Ilgauskas, the Cavs would be able to pay the price.

Here are a few of the options Ferry might conisder:

Antawn Jamison, Washington Wizards

He's by far the player the Cavs -- and the fans -- want the most. At 6'-8" and about 235 pounds, Jamison is actually something of a small forward-power forward combo. He was utilized mostly as a small forward during earlier-career stops in Golden State and Dallas, but switched exclusively to the four-spot after arriving in Washington, where he's in his sixth season with the team.

Jamison is 33, so he's not as spry and athletic as he used to be. But he's aged gracefully, all things considered. He has managed to stay away from major injuries throughout his career and has kept himself in great shape, so he plays younger than his age.

The most attractive aspect of Jamison is the balance of his game. He really has no fundamental weaknesses for a player at his position. He can spot up and shoot jumpers with range out to three-point territory, he can put the ball on the floor both facing the basket and posting up, he can defend bigger players and he rebounds.

To boot, he's one of the game's really good guys. In the midst of the recent Gilbert Arenas gun flap -- which included a widely-circulated picture of Arenas making a pistol-gesture with his fingers while other players, Jamison included, laughed -- it was Jamison who stepped up, apologized for the picture and appealed to Wizards fans to keep supporting the team.

In short, Jamison is the kind of guy you'd never not want on your team. That's the biggest problem where the Cavs are concerned. The Wizards appear to be on the precipice of a major rebuild, so whether they can get the league to void the remainder of Arenas' contract or not, the logical plan of attack would be to start trading off veterans for younger players and more cap flexibility down the road. But the Wizards are so hungry for good PR right now, they might view Jamison as the guy they need to be the face of their franchise until his contract ends in two more seasons.

If the Wizards did decide to trade Jamison to the Cavs, Z's expiring contract and Hickson would likely be theirs. Even if Washington GM Ernie Grunfeld abhors the idea of trading Jamison to the team that tormented the Wizards in the playoffs for three straight years, that's still a pretty good haul for a team looking to get younger and cheaper.

Troy Murphy, Indiana Pacers

This might actually end up becoming the most likely trade scenario for the Cavs. Some fans will undoubtely be upset if the trade deadline yields Murphy instead of Jamison, but the truth is, Murphy might be the most readily-available power forward out there for a team like Cleveland.

The Pacers probably wouldn't try to extort a king's ransom for Murphy. Rumors have swirled that Murphy isn't all that happy with Pacers management, and he's not a centerpiece player for Indiana in the same way Jamison is for the Wizards. He's owed about $12 million next year, and it's entirely possible that the non-contending Pacers would take an expiring deal in return just to get him off their books.

Murphy isn't the dynamic all-around player that Jamison is, but he does bring some assets to the table that fit what the Cavs need. He's a "stretch four" -- a power forward with three-point range on his shot, who will force opposing big men to venture out of the paint to contest shots. The benefit of having a big man who can shoot from long range is that it opens up more operating space for Shaq inside. Throughout his career, Shaq's teams have always had the most success with him when they could pair him with a perimeter-shooting power forward.

Murphy will rebound to the tune of eight to nine a game, so he's not adverse to

going inside and mixing it up a bit. He's slow afoot and not regarded as a good defender, but Brown once got Sasha Pavlovic to play good defense in stretches. After that, I believe anything is possible.

At 6'-11", adding Murphy is virtually like adding another seven-footer to the roster. Against other teams with tall frontcourts, like the Lakers and Magic, the more height, the better. And if none of that fits Murphy into the Cavs' long-term plans, his $12 million expiring could become a major trade chip for next year's deadline.

David West, New Orleans Hornets

The Hornets have been on every media member's short list of teams most likely to blow up the roster and start over. The Hornets have been among the NBA's biggest disappointments for going on two years and a rebuild appears inevitable.

If that's the case, West will likely be among the first out the door since he can fetch both cap relief and young talent in return.

West was a 20-point, eight-rebound player heading into this season. This year, however, he's attempting more than two fewer shots per game over last year, and his scoring average is down to 17.5 per game. Still very good, but not trending in the right direction.

There is a school of thought shared by members of the media and message board communities that says West is riding the coattails of Chris Paul, benefitting from the attention paid to Paul by defenses, combining it with a consistent midrange jumper, and using it all to masquerade as a borderline-elite scoring forward. West has some obvious scoring talent, but he was a bit player prior to Paul's arrival. You can look up his career stats and be the judge.

LeBron could have much the same effect on West, and he would certainly be an upgrade over what the Cavs currently trot out at the power forward. But there are better options out there.

Mehmet Okur, Utah Jazz

At this point, it's a stretch to think Utah would start shedding salary. They're still in the playoff hunt in the Western Conference. But if Utah did decide to punt away a

big contract to save some money, Okur would be high on their list. He makes $9 million this year, and is signed for two more years.

Okur is a step down from even Murphy as an overall player, especially if the Cavs were to play him at power forward. But Okur does fit the stretch-four mold. He is a 6'-11" natural center who can step back and shoot the three. He's a career 37.8 percent three point shooter, and shooting the longball at a 39-percent clip this season. If you need a catch-and-shoot three-point gunner with height, Okur can fit the mold.

While we're on the subject of the Jazz, let's get the Carlos Boozer thing out of the way now: No. He has an expiring contract, the Cavs have an expiring contract to trade, so that's not going to work -- even if the hatchet has been completely buried and forgotten from Boozer's defection in the summer of '04.

Zach Randolph, Memphis Grizzlies

If all else fails, why not take a stab? He's insane and locker-room powder keg, but he's having a monster season, averaging 20 points and 11 rebounds per game. A motivated Z-Bo is an absolute beast on the block.

The Grizzlies are actually one of the surprises of the league so far. They're in the playoff hunt, and that alone will probably keep Randolph off the market. But if Memphis suddenly falls out of contention and wants to trade Randolph, and if the Cavs have had nothing but doors slammed in their face on their power forward quest, maybe Z-Bo fits in some kind of freaky, alternate-universe way.