Ending the drama very shortly after the midnight moratorium period ended, LeBron James officially signed his contract extension with the Cavaliers early Wednesday morning. The deal locks King James up in CTown for four more seasons total, or until the summer of 2010. I've got all the latest in this morning's column.

It's official. And the reports we got from ESPN starting Sunday night were correct. LeBron James has signed a three year contract extension with the Cavaliers worth 43.9 million dollars. The deal also has a fourth year player option worth 17.7 million bucks. The deal keeps King James in Cleveland for at least four more seasons before James could potentially become an unrestricted free agent during the summer of the year 2010.

"I knew all along -- and I had always said -- that I wanted to stay here in Cleveland, so it's a terrific day for me and my family to actually make it official," James said in an interview on the Cavs official website. "Now I can continue to concentrate on basketball and helping bring a championship to Cleveland."

"We did extensive research and with the way the CBA is set up, it makes the most business sense to sign this extension and then look at another new contract in four years. If I didn't believe in this team and this organization and the direction that we're headed, I wouldn't have signed the extension," James said.

As I predicted in my column yesterday , it now appears fellow superstar Dwayne Wade is poised to follow suit and sign a shorter deal as well.
ESPN's Ric Bucher is reporting this morning
that Wade has decided to sign a contract identical to LeBron's for three years with a fourth year option.

James has proven to be a shrewd businessman from the first day he arrived upon

the NBA scene as an 18-year old. Signing the three year extension is clearly in the young stars best interest, and was unexpected by all of those that follow the NBA. It appears that even Dwayne Wade and Carmelo Anthony and their agents didn't even weigh this option until after the news on James deal broke either.

When one takes an objective look at the evidence, James would have been insane to do anything other than what he did. The fact that he did the financially sound thing should not ring as an indcitment to cynical Cavs fans that James wants out. He wants to stay here. He said it again this morning. He's simply doing the smart thing here, and protecting himself in the event the 2010 Cavaliers morph into the 2006 Timberwolves.

The fact that James would still likely attract max money offers in the event of an injury, combined with blossoming NBA revenues made this an easy decision for James. Additionally, four years from now James will have seven years experience in the league, which will entitle him to a max contract worth 30% of NBA salary cap as opposed to the 25% he will recieve starting next year in the first year of his present max money extension.

Despite the fact that many Cavs fans will be disappointed by the fact that LeBron did not take the full length extension, I see this as a great day for Cleveland and nothing but a positive for the Cavaliers and their fans. This was a business decision by James, who has said repeatedly that he wants to continue to play and win championships in this city. Even if LeBron had taken the full five year extension, the last year of that would have been a player option anyway. So the deal he just signed is actually just one year less than what he passed on, which wrongly has most Cavs fans are in full panic mode.

And as I said yesterday, even if James has signed the full five year extension, if he didn't like the direction the team was going once 2010 came around, he could have easily forced his way out via trade ... as many star players have done in this league. The NBA is a league where if star players want out of their current situation, they can make it happen.

Where this team is at in 2009-2010, and not the length of this extension, will determine whether of not James is here for another contract after that.

Now chill out everyone. This is great news, and a great day.