As much as Miamians would like to believe differently, it is not a pre-ordained slam-dunk that their Heat will win the NBA's Eastern Conference championship. The same can be said about Celtic fanatics in Boston and Magic fanatics in Orlando (if there is such a thing).

Each of the three top teams in the East has question marks in regard to their rosters. But the defending Central Division champion Cleveland Cavaliers have many, many more problems of their own.

No Scoring, Experience

Perhaps the Cavs' biggest question mark is a lack of scoring punch. Consider this:

If every player on the Cavs roster hit his career average for one game, the team would score 103.8 points. If every Orlando player hit his career average for one game, the Magic would score 137.9 points. If every Boston player hit his career average for one game, the Celtics would score 162.3 points. If every Miami player hit his career average for one game, the Heat would score 167.4 points.

Is it fair to compare the Cavs to the top three teams in the conference? Some would say no … but at some point in the future those comparisons will, hopefully, become more valid.

Power forward Antawn Jamison has a career scoring average of 19.8 ppg, but he's in his mid-30s, and fans have to be wondering how he will hold up with added offensive responsibilities -- especially if Coach Byron Scott's run-and-stun offense results in long periods of hard running from baseline to baseline.

Another huge problem is at center, where power forward Anderson Varejao is the only player on the roster with extensive experience. Yes, the Cavs have two seven-footers, but Coach Scott cannot depend on either of them to play huge roles unless one (Ryan Hollins or Loren Woods) inexplicably and surprisingly explodes onto the scene. Don't hold your breath for that.

Problem No. 3 is the small forward spot, thanks to The Traitorous Scuzball Who Shall Remain Nameless. Coach Scott has his choice of Joey Graham (6.0 ppg), Jamario Moon (7.0 ppg) and Jawad Williams (3.7 ppg) -- and that's not much of a choice. The Cavs will be losing at least 20 points per game at that one position alone.

COMPARING THE NBA EASTERN DIVISION 2010-2011

TEAM	AVG. HT.	AVG. WT.	AVG. EXP.	PTS.*
Miami	6 ft. 6.8 in.	230.7 lb.	6.5 yrs.	167.4
Boston	6 ft. 6.7 in.	229.9 lb.	7.2 yrs.	162.3
Orlando	6 ft. 6.8 in.	223.9 lb.	6.2 yrs.	137.9
Cleveland	6 ft. 7.1 in.	221.1 lb.	3.6 yrs.	103.8

**total points per game, based on career averages of every player on the team's roster at the writing of this article (10/13/10)*

One more thing. Overall, the Cavaliers have one of the least-experienced teams in the NBA: an average of just 3.6 years per player.

To the East Crown

National basketball pundits overwhelmingly predict that Miami, Boston and Orlando will be in a three-team race to the Eastern Conference title.

Defending champion **Boston** has the most problematic journey, based on having put another long year of mileage on its top players, most of whom are approaching Social Security eligibility.

Head Coach Doc Rivers has the oldest, creakiest lineup in the league, having added Shaquille O'Neal to geriatrics Ray Allen, Paul Pierce, Kevin Garnett and Jermaine O'Neal.

Shaq, who will be asked to provide some bulk off the bench but not much else, will be 39 years old when the playoffs start. Allen will be 35. So will Garnett. Pierce will be 33, and Jermaine O'Neal will be 32.

Miami is everybody's new favorite team -- unless you live in Cleveland or Toronto. But all is not roses and lollipops for President Pat Riley, who had to explode his roster in order to free enough salary cap space to sign forward Chris Bosh and The Traitorous Scuzball Who Shall Remain Nameless. Beyond the top three players -- each of whom sports a 20-plus career scoring average -- the Heat must count on players like holdover Udonis Haslem (10.0 ppg), journeyman forward Mike Miller (13.7 ppg) and forward Juwan Howard, who may be the only remaining member of the University of Michigan's "Fab Five" who is actually ambulatory.

If even one of its top three goes down with a lengthy injury, the Heat will struggle to put five decent players on the court at the same time, to say nothing of its sorry bench. (Guard Dwyane Wade has an injury history, although he's played 79 and 77 games the last two seasons.) However, with those three proven All-Stars, Head Coach Erik Spoelstra has the luxury of resting one and still having two on the court at all times, thereby avoiding excess wear and tear on their bodies.

Orlando is interesting. The Magic, the once and future Eastern Conference kings, now find themselves scrambling to catch up to Miami and Boston. Depth-wise, the Magic are not the same team that beat the Cavs in the 2009 playoffs, but they still have the best center in the league, backed up by three good scorers. (That doesn't even count Vince Carter, who showed signs of greatly slowing down last season.)

Center Dwight Howard, of course, is everyone's nemesis, because he is capable of changing

any game in favor of the Magic simply by his presence on the defensive end. He is surrounded by an admirable set of role players. Besides Carter, there's tall, lanky forward Rashard Lewis (16.7 ppg) and sharpshooting guards Quentin Richardson (11.2 ppg), Jason Williams (10.8 ppg), Mickael Pietrus (8.7 ppg) and J.J. Redick (7.0 ppg).

No Delusions

Can the Cavaliers compete with any of the East's "Big Three"? Only a delusional fan would answer yes to that particular question. Perhaps the more appropriate question is whether the Cavs can contend for the fifth playoff spot, which will allow them to avoid any of the "Big Three" in the first round.

Good luck with that, Coach Scott. There's work to be done.