My first memory of watching NBA basketball was of the Cleveland Cavaliers defeating the Washington Bullets to advance to the Eastern Conference Finals and face the Boston Celtics. The Cavaliers lost that series, but a new Cavs fan had emerged.

I have been there, through thick and thin, every season since that glorious 1975-76 season. I have enjoyed the highs and suffered through the lows. “The Shot” was one of the worst moments of my life and being there, in person, as the Cavaliers defeated the Detroit Pistons in Game Six of the 2006-07 Eastern Conference Finals to win the first and only conference championship in franchise history.

It took me an hour-and-a-half to get from the parking garage next to Fat Fish Blue to the Rt. 71 on ramp that night, and I enjoyed each and every inch of that drive as the streets were alive in celebration. That night seems like it happened so long ago.

It is pointless to rehash everything that has happened to the Cleveland Cavaliers franchise over the last year. We all know the story, we all understand we were rooting for an immature, self-absorbed coward for seven years…and the rest of the country knows this as well. This is old news.

In my 35 years as a Cavaliers fan there have been a number of players I became very fond of. The first was Austin Carr who, if his feet and knees would have held up, would be mentioned as one of the top scorers in NBA history. But it was not to be as a broken foot, followed by a series of knee problems, severely limited his productivity. I am not blowing smoke here…ESPN recently named Carr, who averaged over 35 points per game during his college career at Notre Dame, as the 22nd greatest player in NCAA history.

When Carr left the Cavaliers after the 1979 season I became a Mike Mitchell fan. Mitchell was an amazing scorer as well, but was on some incredibly bad basketball teams. My next favorite, after Mitchell, was World B. Free who, by the way, is the only reason we still have NBA basketball in Cleveland. The Cavaliers, prior to trading for World, were a nightmare. They weren't drawing many fans and weren't winning any games, but World came along and electrified the franchise for a few years with his high-arcing jumpers and confusing, hilarious quotes. He put fannies in the seats, let the team to the playoffs and made the Cavaliers relevant again.

Then came the Lenny Wilkins era. I still contend that this particular era was among the greatest in NBA history never to win a championship…even better than the LeBron era because there were no weaknesses on the floor. Brad Daugherty was a great center until his back injury. Larry Nance was one of the greatest shot-blocking power forwards in the history of the game, and could score as well. Mark Price was a lights-out shooter who could make the big shot, bury the triple and never missed at the line. Hot Rod Williams was stellar off the bench, rebounding and scoring while playing above-average defense. Craig Ehlo did all the little things a team needs, diving for balls, playing solid defense on the opposition's best scorer (don't give me that "Jordan torched Ehlo" crap. Jordan himself has admitted that Ehlo was one of the most challenging defenders he faced). Even Mike Sanders, the starting small forward, was solid…giving the team a few baskets, a few rebounds and no mistakes.

LeBron was never a real team player. He said all the right things and acted like his teammates meant the world to him, but the only teammates he ever cared about were his buddies from St. Vincent-St. Mary. And he has been their meal ticket ever since.

Looking back at all these teams and all these players brings back a lot of memories. There were a lot of good character guys in the bunch, and quite a few exceptional leaders. But in my opinion, the classiest Cavalier in history and the greatest example of a true team guy is playing out in this, probably the worst season in franchise history.

Antawn Jamison was traded to the Cavaliers to give them the “stretch four” LeBron thought he needed to win an NBA title. And make no mistake; LeBron was the one calling the shots as far as roster moves. No, he wasn’t doing the actual negotiating, but his opinion was sought and the team did not make a move without his approval.

Jamison was brought in to a winning situation, playing on a team that won 60 games two consecutive seasons. At this point in his career Jamison, now in his 12th season, did not come to Cleveland to take part in a total rebuild. He has never won a championship and if he plays out his contract in Cleveland will not win one any time soon. He has two years left at over $13 million per…not an attractive contract to a would-be trade partner, but it isn’t like he is totally untradeable. Jamison is the kind of player that will give you around 20 points and around 10 rebounds a night, play good defense and not make many mistakes. He could help a contender get over the top.

But here he is, languishing in Cleveland on the worst team I can remember (due to injuries more than lack of personnel, but both are factors), playing hard and not saying a peep to the media. He is a team leader that leads by example.

After the Cavaliers broke the mammoth losing streak with the win over the Clippers, Jamison was interviewed on NBA TV by Rick Kambla and Steve Smith. They asked him how difficult this season has been, and his response told me a lot about the kind of person he is.

Instead of talking about how difficult it has been to lose as much as the Cavs have lost this season, Jamison instead talked about his role on the team. He discussed being a veteran that the other players looked at, that if he hung his head or became outwardly frustrated it would have been a green light for the younger players to do the same. Jamison talked about the importance of him practicing hard every time, taking the preparation and gameplanning seriously for every game and expecting to win when he hit the floor. The last thing Jamison wanted to do was send the wrong message to Manny Harris, Christian Eyenga, Samardo Samuels or even J.J. Hickson…the younger players that are still trying to figure out what it takes to be an NBA player.

And, through everything – the “decision/betrayal,” the early-season ups and downs and the brutal 26-game losing streak – you have never heard Jamison complain or talk about wanting to

play anywhere other than Cleveland. He has made no trade requests. He is in a situation he could not have anticipated when he originally came to the Cavaliers, but he is doing whatever he can to make the team better.

Jamison might end up getting traded, who knows? And if he is I hope he is very successful with his next team. In fact, wherever Jamison goes this season, if traded, is who I am going to pull for in the playoffs (unless, of course, he ends up taking his talents to South Beach).

But a part of me hopes he stays put because his contribution to the team, both on the floor and everywhere else, will do nothing but help the franchise. Every coach needs a player he can point at and say to a younger player, “Watch him, he’ll show you how to do it.” Jamison is just that kind of player.