On the day of the 2010 NBA trade deadline, the Cleveland Cavaliers had an NBA-best record of 43-11. After winning 66 games in the prior season and losing in the conference finals, Danny Ferry and company made a trade for Shaquille O'Neal in an attempt to bolster the front-court and be more competitive against Dwight Howard and the Orlando Magic. Implementing Shaquille O'Neal into the offense is something that requires not only chemistry adjustments, but the right personnel as well.

The Shaquille O'Neal and Amare Stoudemire front-court was not particularly seamless in Phoenix. Stoudemire is not known for his defensive effort and O'Neal was not quick and nimble. Their style of play was not conducive to working together. The paint was often packed and the two members of the starting front-court for the Suns had a penchant for being in each other's way.

This is not to say that an ideal situation for Cleveland would be to trade for Amar'e despite the

fact that he does not play well with O'Neal. Trading for a talent as great as Stoudemire is an easy decision to make. Declining his services because of having reservations about including JJ Hickson in the package or questions about his fit with a thirty-seven year old does not pass the common sense test.

Although we do not know that this did not happen, it does seem fair to give the Cavaliers benefit of the doubt. Most people are not willing to afford that luxury to Cleveland because it fits in with the "incompetent front office" stereotype that you never heard about when the Cavaliers were winning over 60 games in back-to-back seasons.

Let us consider some different factors that could have led to Cleveland trading for Antawn Jamison instead of Amar'e Stoudemire:

Cleveland liked the way Antawn Jamison fit with the team better: This scenario does not seem very likely to me, but it must be addressed. The Cavaliers management team must have had an idea that this very well could be the last season that the team would be competing for a championship for a long while. Perhaps Danny Ferry liked the idea of having a stretch-four to play along O'Neal and LeBron James. This situation seems feasible, but that is doubtful considering the options that were supposedly available to Cleveland.

Cleveland did not want to deal JJ Hickson in any trades: Young, athletic big men who can score and (sometimes) rebound are not easy to find in the NBA. JJ Hickson played well with LeBron James, which was ultimately the most important factor for any move that the Cavaliers considered making. Once again, rejecting a trade for Amar'e Stoudemire because of JJ Hickson is a questionable decision. Of course this is a possible version of history, but it appears unlikely t **o myself.**

Phoenix was not enamored with Cleveland's offer of Zydrunas Ilgauskas, JJ Hickson and a 1st round pick: Amar'e Stoudemire is an elite player. It is possible that the team that had cold feet wasn't Cleveland. Phoenix managed to make it all the way to the conference finals with Amar'e Stoudemire and that arguably made the risk of losing Amar'e Stoudemire to the New York Knicks worth it.

Is an Amar'e Stoudemire rental worth it? This is perhaps the most vexing thing about the

hindsight discussion of that particular trade deadline. After JJ Hickson was eventually traded for Omri Casspi and a heavily-protected first round pick, the jokes were heard from many different sources about how the Cavaliers could have had Stoudemire and they settled on Casspi. Perhaps this is true. One factor that is never discussed is whether making that trade with Stoudemire only having half a season under contract and LeBron James entering unrestricted free agency. Does giving up one of your best trade assets in exchange for renting a star player help in any way? Cleveland may have won a championship in 2010, but the more realistic end-result is one where LeBron James still decides on joining the Miami Heat and Amar'e Stoudemire walks in free agency as well. The 2010-2011 season for the Cavaliers was awful and it would have been worse had the aforementioned situation panned-out.

Cleveland did not want to commit to giving Amar'e Stoudemire a maximum salary:
During the 2010 trade deadline, Amar'e Stoudemire was in the middle of his eighth year in the NBA. He has a history of being injured. For argument's sake, let's say that Stoudemire was interested in re-signing with the Cavaliers. Giving a maximum salary contract to a veteran who has had major knee issues is a risky move. The New York Knicks took a gamble in guaranteeing that kind of money to Stoudemire.

Many conversations between general managers and other team personnel go into making trades. Even in the state of the twenty-four hour rumor mill, fans never know everything that happens during trade negotiations. Smokescreens happen, conversations are had that we never hear about and other trades that are discussed ad-nauseum were never a realistic possibility in the first place.

The biggest grievance that Cleveland fans should have with bloggers and media members perpetuating the idea that the Cavaliers "screwed up" by not parting with JJ Hickson is that it may not be based on any reality. The sole purpose of this discussion is to paint the Cavaliers front office as one that is incompetent and to offer an explanation for why LeBron James did the right thing in leaving for a better team. There are conflicting reports from reputable sources on what Cleveland actually offered to the Phoenix Suns. It is time to put this discussion to bed and look ahead at the future of the team. There are many different potential outcomes of what could have happened after the 2010 trade-deadline. Perhaps Amar'e Stoudemire would have become a member of the Cavaliers and helped win the team it's first championship in forty attemps setting off a chain reaction where both star player re-signed with the Cavaliers. On the contrary, the Cavaliers could have made a trade that did not complement the other pieces and given up one of the better trade assets in the process and be left empty-handed after the 2010 season.

People who make dismissive comments about Cleveland not being willing to include JJ Hickson in a trade for Amar'e Stoudemire probably have an agenda. Likewise, Cavaliers fans who claim that the reason Amar'e stayed in Phoenix was Steve Kerr are also speaking with an agenda in mind. Cavaliers fans who maintain this opinion are vocal because it helps them justify a poor decision made by the front office that could have directly led to the Cavaliers being lottery bound for the foreseeable future. Very few people actually know what happened during those negotiations. A smart decision would be to look to the future of the team instead of playing the "what if" game.

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