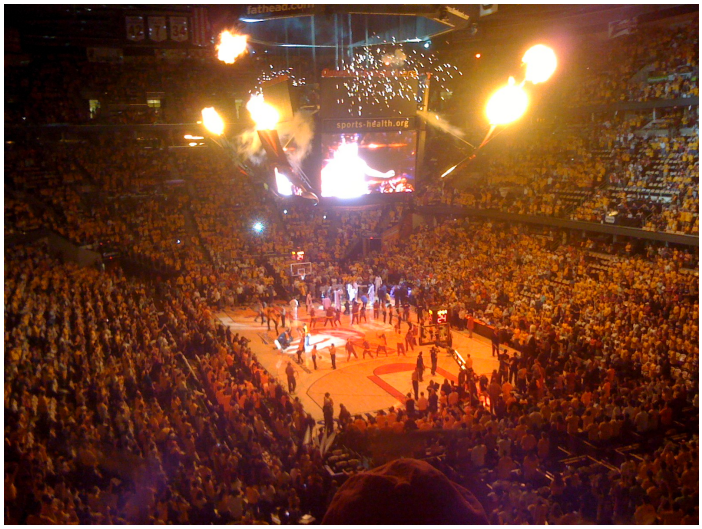

For the second time in four months, the NBA has officially released the 2011-2012 schedule. The first edition of the schedule featured eighty-two games in five and a half months and had approximately a zero percent chance of happening. The revised schedule features sixty-six games in about four months. Because of the condensed nature of the schedule, there is an unorthodox amount of games per month.

For the first time in three years, the Cavs do not open the season against the Boston Celtics. Instead, the season will open at home against the Raptors. Things get more interesting after the home opener because the Cavs will play nine of their next eleven games on the road. This road trip will find the Cavs making their way through just about every part of the country. The next most interesting sequence for the Cavs is when they play nine straight games at the Quicken Loans Arena. One of the last stretches of games will have a dreaded back-to-back-to-back that will also feature ten games in fourteen nights. The Cavs will play five games in December, seventeen in January, thirteen in February and seventeen in March. As expected, the Cavs will not be playing on ABC, ESPN or TNT.

Because of the lockout-shortened season, some teams will not make their annual trip to Cleveland. Those teams are the Los Angeles Lakers, Memphis Grizzlies, Minnesota Timberwolves, Oklahoma City Thunder and Portland Trailblazers. The Cavs will not travel to play the Dallas Mavericks, Houston Rockets, New Orleans Hornets, Golden State Warriors, Los Angeles Clippers and Sacramento Kings.

One of the more fascinating aspects of sports are the storylines. Mike Brown will not make his first appearance as an opposing head coach in Cleveland this season. Kyrie Irving will not play against the team that originally had his draft pick. In addition, Baron Davis is not going to make

his return to Los Angeles and the Cavs will not compete against Mo Williams. Instead of focussing on the lost storylines, here are the five most interesting games in chronological order:

December 26, 2011 against Toronto: Kyrie Irving is going to make his NBA debut against a team that starts Jose Calderon. Irving dodged a bullet by bypassing his first game against the defensive-minded Rajon Rondo. This will additionally be Tristan Thompson's debut and it is going to be against the team that drafted Jonas Valanciunas, who was the player most experts assumed Cleveland would pick fourth overall. Because of his contract buyout issues with Lietuvos Rytas, it is highly unlikely that Valanciunas will be with the Raptors until at least the 2012-2013 season.

January 6, 2012 at Minnesota: Although there was a debate about who the Cavs should select, Cleveland selected Kyrie Irving first overall. It was almost a foregone conclusion that this would happen. Some draft experts suggested that Cleveland should draft Derrick Williams first and the next-best available point guard with the fourth pick. Derrick Williams is going to want to put on a show and show Cleveland that they made a mistake. This has the potential to be a very entertaining game.

February 4, 2012 against Dallas: The visiting champions come to Cleveland. This is usually a guaranteed fact, but the lockout has changed that. How will Cleveland fans react to Dallas during the introduction? Will Cavs fans give them a warm reception during the introduction and then get back to rooting for the home team? This game has potential to be interesting, however a debate could materialize on sports radio and social media that could make this matchup suffer.

February 8, 2012 against the Los Angeles Clippers: The last time the Clippers visited Cleveland, the Cavs ended their twenty-six game losing streak partially because JJ Hickson outplayed Blake Griffin. Mo Williams came off the bench and had seventeen points and fourteen assists. Any time Blake Griffin plays, there is plenty of potential for the game to be great. The question is how will Mo Williams play as a guest on the Cavs home floor.

February 17, 2012 against Miami: LeBron James makes another return to Cleveland. The Heat played two games in Cleveland last year and both games could not have been more different. In James' first return, the Cavs appeared to throw in the towel and they lost by twenty-eight points. The Cavs won the second game in what may have been the most exciting game of the season. This visit by LeBron James will not be as historic as his first, but it's

always a circus when the Heat come to town.

The 2011-2012 season will be an interesting one for every team. Nine game home streaks are unheard of as are back-to-back-to-backs. Because of this disparity in scheduling, rested bad teams may be able to win games against weary playoff teams.
Besides the fact that it is even happening, this season should be an interesting one.