Sometimes, we just tend to let things slide. And hey, that's a good thing; don't sweat the small stuff, bigger fish to fry, that kind of thing. We all have different boiling points, varying levels of tolerance for certain things, like the difference between the kid who burns a jersey in front of TV cameras and the adult that simply stops wearing it.

Well, you can chalk me up amongst the latter demographic, and it's funny because, to this very day, people learn I'm from Cleveland and ask if I burned my jersey. It's the first thing they say to me, in fact. I did own one, by the way, and I eventually threw it out, practically without ceremony. But before I get too much into that guy, I should let you know that this is my tale of dissatisfaction with another South Beach traitor, and for events that pre-date his decision on July 13, 2010.

You see, I don't think that it's so difficult to spot a bum. Last Tuesday, after the premiere of another season of American Idol, my local FOX affiliate did its requisite Idol follow-up story with a local wanna-be, and this particular contestant didn't make the cut. The story ends with some jazz about how he's still pursuing his dream by performing in public, using his guitar case as his pan-handling receptacle. I guess I could be nicer, perhaps I could call this bum an "artist," but in the back of my head this particular "artist" is still a bum.

Now, I'm very much in the minority in classifying Zydrunas Ilgauskas a bum to an audience of Cavaliers fans, I understand that. There's a certain connection you gain with certain athletes, especially those who wear one uniform for such a long time. In fact, no one has played in more games as a Cavalier than "Big Z". Let me also acknowledge that the man blocked more shots,

grabbed more rebounds, and committed more fouls than anyone else who has worn the Wine & Gold
,
Black & Lavender
, or
Blue & Orange
. He even took what was left of his talents out of town with
some semblance of grace
. That so-called grace only goes so far, there's not even a way to salvage style points if you were to leave FedEx for UPS, or Coke for Pepsi.

So, we're supposed to consider him a class act? We should hang his #11 up in the rafters along with the numbers of Price, Nance, Daugherty, Bingo, Thurmond, AC, and Joe Tait's microphone
? World B Free still isn't up there. So, we want to honor the 14 seasons he spent in Cleveland, fine, but I'm trying to figure out his contribution from 1998-2004. I look at his career numbers, and his stat sheet screams that he's a 7'3" small forward who couldn't defend a ball rack and just blocks shots because he's 7'3". He basically disappeared in the playoffs, with his best playoff performance coming in a Black & Lavender season, where he was part of a Big 3 that included
Shawn Kemp
and
Derek Anderson
.

I understand, we want to love him, and to overcompensate because he's not "that guy", and our

adoration for "Z" will really show "that guy" the love of which we're capable. Ultimately, he did the same thing "that guy" did, except without the television special, and really, without the fanfare. We want to compare and contrast here, so I'll say that the Lithuainian's departure and the respect that's its received has really given momentum to the fight of those simply angry at the way "that guy" did it. We are saying we love this guy for walking away from us the right way.

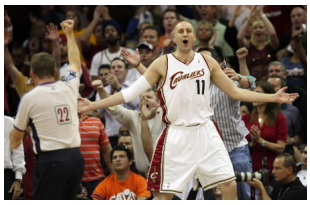
Look, we were all angry. Before Miami's first visit to Quicken Loans Arena in December 2010, many decided that a good way to show "that guy" their discontent was to honor the other guy. A few even suggested that the number 11 find its way into the rafters that very night, which was just plain silly. The way that the crowd differentiated their jeers and cheers for the introduction of the Heat starters, and the lack of "Kaunas hates you" chants , illustrated Cleveland's point of discontent on the night the eventual NBA Finals participants handed the Cavaliers their lunch on the court.

Now, we all know it didn't work out for the team that plays near South Beach last spring, but even for someone as level-headed as myself, I have to admit that it got scary. By the time the Chicago Bulls were exposed as an inadequate suitor for the Eastern Conference Championship, I began to enter the bargaining stage of grief. A ring for "Z", maybe he deserves it, I thought. I clearly wasn't of completely sound body and mind at that point, the pure shame of allowing that thought to cross my mind disgusts me. After all, he did hang up the Size 17's after one season in Florida, delivering exactly the same number of Championships to Miami that he did to Cleveland.

Jim Paxon and Danny Ferry jokes aside, the Cavaliers were actually rumored to be a candidate to offer a job to a bum, a real live homeless man , last year. Because Ted Williams wasn't ready for the limelight that came with being a media sensation,
the offer was retracted to that bum
, but last week it was announced that the Bum of the Hour, Ilgauskas,

was hired as a Special Assistant to the General Manager
, Chris Grant.

I don't know exactly what the Former Cavalier's duties are as a Special Assistant to the GM, but I don't like that he has any role with this organization right now. Grant already has an outstanding Lieutenant, David Griffin, who really should be the GM of the Phoenix Suns right now . The fact that Lance Blanks is in Phoenix and Griffin is in Cleveland is a very unheralded coup for Cavs owner Dan Gilbert. If Griffin, who spent 17 years in the Suns organization, doesn't get hired away to be a GM elsewhere, and I think he will be, the Cavs will be in very good hands with that ace up their sleeves.



By the way, Zydrunas Ilgauskas will always be a Former Cavalier to me; he's been that since being traded to the Washington Wizards for Antawn Jamison, even though he came back after being bought out in Washington. It may have been the fault of his head coach, but even Z's biggest fans admitted he never really checked back into the game with Cleveland after that. To back off the scrutiny of the big guy, I will state that he didn't really quit, just that being sent off temporarily could have drained the motivation he may have had to play meaningful minutes at the sunset of something far from a Hall of Fame career. I know the organization is struggling to keep former players active in the organization, but I don't know that Ilgauskas is exactly the Mr. Cavalier I want being sold to me.

It's true, aside from Jim Chones , Austin Carr , and Campy Russell , who are currently with the Cavaliers broadcast team, the team did not employ any former players before bringing Ilgauskas on board. How much is that worth though? Danny Ferry was a former player, but that didn't make him a great GM, or even a credible one. Steve Kerr played four years with the Cavaliers, and was a terrible GM for the Suns
, who originally drafted him from Arizona. Personally, I'm a fan of Scott Brooks, who played 43 games along side Ilgauskas in 1997-98, but you aren't prying the one-time Cavalier
off of
Seattle's
Oklahoma City's bench.

Inserting former players in your front office might not be the best approach. For every Danny Ainge and John Paxon that can be successful after their playing days are over, there's an Isaiah Thomas and a Michael Jordan, whose names sell tickets, but they bring little else to the table. With Ilgauskas, I don't remember anyone in the last fourteen years talking up his basketball intelligence, so I don't really know what savvy he adds to the equation, if any. It's my assumption that this is nothing more than an honorary title because the Cavs want to show him some gratitude. If that's the case I would guess that his duties will impact the future about as much as the guy who fetches Chris Grant's coffee. That's my hope; no harm, no foul there.

The worst case scenario is someone that is not trustworthy has just been granted access to the inner workings of the Cleveland Cavaliers. Even worse, maybe he's being groomed to replace David Griffin or Chris Grant. I can handle the losing, the media witch-hunt of Dan Gilbert, and the lack of depth on the current roster, but I cannot handle poor leadership in the Front Office, and "Z" never showed me a lick of leadership on the hardwood. You might think I'm overreacting to all of this, and I'll be the first one to tell you that you're right. He just went to play for a team that we really would have preferred that he would not have, he never stabbed a blind man in the back or anything. Does that really mean we cannot trust him? It's enough for me to ask questions, but I don't have the pessimistic bones in my body to declare this will most assuredly end badly. He might even be a great guy to have in the organization going forward, maybe we should trust that Grant knows him well enough to believe that to be the case.

Z