

There is no worse feeling in sports than being eliminated in the playoffs. It's an exclamation point on a disappointing season. Like everyone else, I try to look back and see what we did right and wrong and look forward to see where we stand for the upcoming and future seasons.

We made mistakes, no question. We took the start of the regular season for granted. The entire staff wanted to avoid another meltdown like we had against Golden State, so we started off the season with a willingness to experiment. We wanted to try different combinations of players to see what worked and didn't work, thinking we would still win games, but that we could evaluate players and let them try new things. Unfortunately, we didn't win as many games as we thought we should. To make matters worse, we lost games we thought we should have won easily, particularly on the road.

When we didn't win those games, we put more pressure on ourselves and tried even more lineups. We just couldn't find the right combination of players that allowed us to click. We used 556 lineup combinations. (by comparison, the Lakers used 313, the Suns 231).

One of my favorite history books from High School was [Why Men Rebel](#), its point is that the further a person's reality diverges from their expectations, the more likely there are to be cultural problems. Which is exactly what started to happen to the Mavs. Everyone had their own solution to the problems. Some were voiced, some were internalized. Some were ignored. All made it harder for everyone to get on the same page.

You could see how these issues manifested themselves in games as well. We track pct of possessions that were stopped on both sides of the ball. In the 1st quarter, the Mavs were the most unstoppable team in the league. We scored on 55pct of our possessions. By the 3rd quarter, we were 16Th, dropping to 50pct, before improving some in the 4Th. On defense ,it was the same kind of thing. We got stops 51pct of the time in the 1st quarter,(4Th in league) dropping down to 47pct of the time in the 4Th (24Th in league).

We thought we would get on a roll at some point, but that point never came. The disparity between our home and road record really drove home the point that we needed some level of change. That without it, things could possibly get better, or they could get worse. But there was no denying the amount of pressure and tension that was being felt by players, coaches, management and fans. We all stayed optimistic, but we all had an element of doubt as well.

When we got to the trade deadline, the entire organization realized that we weren't "just going to turn it around". We needed a spark.

In discussing trades, Avery and Donnie take the role of determining which trades can help the team. Its my job to manage the financial and long term impact. No trade is done unless we all agree we should do it. We all have veto power.

We had the opportunity to make a trade with the Clippers, but contrary to reports, we turned that down immediately. There were a lot of preliminary discussions with different teams, but nothing really seemed to take hold. Even the discussions with New Jersey didn't get very far initially.

One thing about making trades, as Nelly told me early on, 99pct of them that you think might happen, never happen. Here is what does happen. GMs get on the phone and talk and talk and talk. But rarely is the GM actually empowered to make a trade. So they play the game of "having to go back to their owners". I would tell Donnie all the time, "You have the authority to say yes, when they get to the point of commitment". When we thought things would get close, we would get the "Now I have to get my owners permission". Its almost comical how unable some GMs are to pull the trigger in the NBA. Its a game they all agree to play. They pretend they have authority, until its go time. I have never seen so much time wasted in my life. i feel sorry for Donnie having to deal with all that nonsense.

So back to the trade deadline. We went back and forth about whether or not we should trade Devin. We knew he was a good point guard, with the potential to be amazing. What we didn't know was how long that would take. On one hand, we didn't have enough confidence in him to let him call his own plays, but on the other, he is a one man fast break, his shooting was improving by the minute, he is a good defender and his potential was undeniable. In Jason Kidd, we felt we would get a player that would make ti easier for Dirk, Josh, Jet to get open shots. That Avery would no longer have to scream to push the ball, that JK was the best in the business at pushing the ball in the open court. Plus, our rebounding had suffered this year vs last, JKidd is a great rebounder and the presses that had caused us problems, would no longer be a problem.

None of the other guys in the initial versions of trade were playing much at the time, other than Stack.

It wasn't an easy call. Between AJ, Donnie and I, we would change our minds by the minute. I don't think there is any doubt that the pressure and closeness of the Western Conference race had something to do with our decision making process. In my mind, this season was becoming analogous to the most agonizing season I had been through, the 04-05 season. We were having the same home vs road record delta, multiple players asking to be traded and even more internal tension about our lack of consistent performance than we had in 04-05.

But the current year wasn't really my personal deciding factor. Looking at our future cap structure was. In doing a deal for JKidd, we created a situation where Devin, Mo Ager, Hass and what we would have paid Ghana would no longer be on our cap. Which put us in a position for the future that I looked at as follows:

2008-9 We have a full training camp with a very motivated JKidd, the rest of our starters back, an improving Nasty Bassty (had to get that in there :), plus anyone we can add. We all thought (and still do), we would have a very strong nucleus to build around. We would also have a 1st round pick.

2009-10 Depending on how the previous season went, we would have several last year contracts available, the option of potentially having some cap room, and other options to improve the team. With the much lower potential salaries, not only could we use cap room if we went that direction to enable roster flexibility, we could also buy a pick. (there are almost always teams willing to sell a pick in the 20s for 3mm dollars)

2010-11 In this year we only have 2 fully guaranteed contracts and in 2011-12 We dint have any fully guaranteed contracts. So the options are endless in both years. Plus , its in one of these years that the new CBA comes up. With so little committed, depending on how hard a line the owners take, things could get very, very inter sting. Having so little contractually committed could be a great place to be when other teams look to dump salaries to avoid the risks of a lockout.

So with the changes, while we lost a great player in Devin, we felt like we were picking up someone who could spark the team and add energy on the court. At best, we re energized, at worst, it doesn't help, but we have improved the roster flexibility for the future and improved our opportunity to re invent ourselves, just as we had after the 04 05 season. And as far as the draft picks, there is no question there is risk there, but in the NBA, there is always the option to buy low first round draft picks, so we weren't as concerned there.

So from my my viewpoint, we accelerated salaries, which wasn't cheap, and in exchange, got a player that our basketball people thought could energize and help us.

The only thing remaining to be done was to actually execute the trade. Ab

out this time, the theme song to the Benny Hill Show comes to mind. I can't go into all the details, but there should be a rule in the NBA that any trade that is offered is considered a binding contract and the team is required to stick to it. This thing went from 2 teams to 3 teams to maybe 4, back to 3, back to 2 with players changing, players talking, players that wanted to be traded being told by their agents not to approve the trade, players who wanted to be traded excited to be part of the deal, then being worried that they were in the deal. it was crazy. There were many times I thought it was dead. But it finally got done.

Do I think we might the right deal, you never know till you know, but I know I would make the same deal again. i also know what I learned from Nash leaving. As great an offensive coach as Nellie is, Nash wasn't playing at MVP levels with us. A change of scenery and coaches and system, some payback motivation and he became a very, very deserving 2 time MVP.

My hope, is that with the changes that have taken place with our Mavs, we will see the same effect with JKidd this coming year, and that will lead to another great year and another and a Mavs championship along the way. If it doesn't work, we hopefully have limited our downside

And one last word on something. I have never, ever raised my voice to any coach or player on this team. Ever. I've been screamed at. which I have no problem with. I have no problem with someone venting at me or to me, even about me. In fact, if its necessary, I prefer it be to me. Its a sign of passion. In fact [i wrote a blog post about it 4 years ago](#)

Its going to be a fun summer, Go Mavs !

And BTW, here is hoping for a Stars vs Pens Stanley Cup !