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The NBA All-Star Game is over, and now it's time for the real part of the NBA season. If you have ever gone to an NBA basketball game, you have witnessed the slow lumbering that takes place in the first half of the game, versus the "playing for money" (and stats) feel that you get from the second half of the game. That is unless your star player cashed out in the first half.

Timberwolves superstar Al Jefferson did cash out in the first half of this year after an unfortunate injury, thus the remainder of the teams' season will pretty much amount to intense practice for budding stars Kevin Love and Randy Foye. Somehow, the Timberwolves product still attracts me because of the talent of those budding stars (add Rodney Carney to those two), and the workman approach of others like Ryan Gomes and veteran Brian Cardinal. One thing is for sure: Timberwolves fans should be acutely tuned in to the best college basketball players, because most likely one of them will be on your team next year. And in the event everyone comes back healthy, Timberwolves fans may have something fun on their hands.

In the meantime and in between time, how 'bout we talk about the lovely array of teams that will more than likely stomp the puppy chow out of the Timberwolves (all the more reason to catch a game, because the victories will be celebrated like Mardi Gras).

The NBA All-Star game was boring as usual, but the other competitions more than made up for it. The kryptonite and Superman dunk was classic, as was that ridiculous off-the-side-of-the-backboard dunk by Dwight Howard. All of these players and teams are coming to a city near you on their way to try and collect an NBA Championship. Naturally, the majority of discussion focuses on the 2008 NBA Finals incumbents, the Boston Celtics and Los Angeles Lakers.

The 2009 Celtics don't quite seem to be what they were last year. Likely, it simply comes down to the loss of hunger for the championship prize after the feast they devoured last year. Kevin Garnett seems mildly subdued, and the team overall seems to have fallen into the trap of thinking that they can turn their effort on and off at will, and still pull off victories. Most of the time that does seem to be the case, but it leads to a false sense of security.

The best remedy for a false sense of security is a 6'8" 250 lbs man who seems to be able to leap small buildings in a single bound. Of course that man is LeBron James, and he is on a basketball warpath like never before. Most importantly, James' team, the Cleveland Cavaliers, have managed to acquire the proper level of talent to be worthy of the "Kings" court. All of this, in addition to the simple fact that the Cavaliers took the Celtics to a full seven-game series last year. So in other words, there should be a changing of the guard from the Eastern Conference, and "King" James should reign supreme from that side of the Mississippi.

As far as the Western Conference goes, you already know the deal. The Los Angeles Lakers are running things despite the recent loss of their budding star center Andrew Bynum. Last year the Lakers made it to the NBA Finals without Bynum, and it seems likely that they should be able to do the same this year, unless they get some static from the perennial pain-in-the-butt San Antonio Spurs (in my Laker opinion).

Though you probably expect me to be a "homer" and predict that the Lakers will win the Championship, I have to appeal to my greater sports instincts and project the Cleveland Cavaliers as the 2009 NBA Champions. I do have to think that we may see one of the greatest NBA Finals ever if it involves Kobe and Lebron.

And yes, the only teams that matter are the ones mentioned in this article. Oh yeah, I guess I did mention the Timberwolves. That's just so everyone comes out and joins me at the wonderful social event known as the Timberwolves basketball games.

I was just kidding about the NBA Champions. As we like to say, "Lakers fool."