

At every professional basketball game, there is bound to be a “first-timer”, a little kid entering an arena, with a miffed dad ready for a beer and pretzel after hours of “are we there yet?” in their SUV. That game could be the best day of that kid’s life, the day they dreamed of seeing their favorite player dominate in person.

Excitement turns to disappointment when the starting five excludes the star and the jumbotron cuts to them, decked in a quality wool suit to dominate the benches instead of the floor for the night.

No matter how good the game may be, no matter who wins, this player’s lack of minutes will be replaced by the minutes of complaining from our “first-timer”. Dreams are shattered, kids are irate, and parents are infuriated. This is a representation of the allegory of load management, created by yours truly.

Why would a competent team do such a thing? Do they promote shattering the dreams of first timers? The main justification of doing so is by means of load management.

Essentially, the idea of load management is to rest star players during the regular season to insure their energy and health during the postseason.

Consider LeBron James. During his first stint with the Cavaliers, where he was the only star-caliber player on the team, he averaged 40 minutes a game in seven seasons. Since then, he took his talents to South Beach and averaged 38 minutes with the help of Dwayne Wade and Chris Bosh, returned to the Kyrie Irving-led Cavaliers to average 36, and joined forces with Anthony Davis on the Lakers to average 35.

While this may seem like a player with more help around him as he gets older, this stat doesn’t tell the full story. In his first five years, he played an average of 78 games during the regular season. In his last five, he’s averaged 55.

While 39 is normal for the average 9-5 worker, James is considered old in the basketball world. He’s more prone to injury and fatigue when he plays more, and

when a team has someone as gamebreaking as him, every year is a year to win the finals; it might pose a small challenge without one of the greatest players to walk the earth.

New rules have been enforced over last offseason to combat load management. The first part of the rules state no more than one star player can rest for the same game, star players cannot rest when their game is on national television and healthy players must be visible to fans when resting.

Money talks.

Teams also must maintain a balance of rest games between home and away and cannot shut down a non-contending star player late in the year. It should be noted that these rules have exceptions like age, injuries and personal reasons, but the system is still a flawed one.

The problem lies in perception: what dictates who are and aren't stars? Almost every player is dealing with a nagging injury; after all, it is an 82-game season, so couldn't a team cite that to sit their star? There is no clear answer, and it goes to highlight the errors in the NBA's ways.

No matter what they do, no matter how hard they try, they can't stop load management. If they were to take extreme measures, they'd be losing more profit than they would for seeing LeBron James on the bench, as these stars will be too worn-down and banged up from a long season to produce watchable basketball.

Bless their hearts, the multibillion dollar organization can't squeeze out more money. A price tag is never more valuable than player safety.