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The hottest team versus the hottest story.

Linsanity is on its way to Miami, and the Heat can finally say they're eager for the arrival.

It may be the NBA's marquee matchup so far this season, the phenomenon that is New York Knicks guard Jeremy Lin taking center stage in Miami on Thursday against the NBA-leading Heat in both sides' finale before the All-Star break. Online ticket brokers reported early Wednesday that the average price of a seat on the resale markets is about $600. Unless you want courtside seats, that is. They run about $8,000 - each.

"It's not about Jeremy Lin versus LeBron James," Heat guard Dwyane Wade said. "It's the

Miami Heat versus the New York Knicks."

And, sure, Heat-Knicks is a big deal. Always is, probably always will be, even though the teams' run of four straight years of playoff knockdown-drag outs ended nearly 12 years ago. But the Lin story has already seemed to crank the intensity of the rivalry up several more notches, to the point where some Heat players and coaches have been getting asked about this particular matchup for more than a week already.

Most had been hesitant to talk about the Lin story line, usually declining because there were other games on the schedule beforehand.

No more. When Miami finished off Sacramento on Tuesday night and the Knicks were officially the next order of Heat business, the questions - hardly any having to do with Carmelo Anthony, Amare Stoudemire or any other New York player - started coming in bunches.

"Who do we play?" Heat coach Erik Spoelstra asked with a sly grin.

Mm-hmm. Right.

He knows.

Everyone knows.

"It's the game right before All-Star," James said. "But it won't be like `that' game before All-Star, like people are accustomed to. Everybody always says, you know, the game before All-Star, people are ready to get to All-Star weekend. I don't think so. Just knowing the rivalry, knowing the history between the Heat and Knicks. It could be one of the most watched games we've had in a long time, especially with what Jeremy Lin is doing."

A couple weeks ago, there was probably no one who thought James would be touting Lin as a reason to watch this game.

Lin has played against the Heat before, a short stint best described as unremarkable.

A missed shot, an offensive rebound, two assists and a steal. That's what Lin managed against the Heat on Dec. 10, 2010, when he checked in for the final 3:20 of a blowout Miami victory against Golden State. He was inactive when the Warriors came to Miami three weeks later, and didn't play on Jan. 27 when the Knicks visited the Heat and lost 99-89.

Linsanity started about a week later, when the point guard who was a career 12.9-point-per-game scorer at Harvard came off the bench and scored 25 points in a 99-92 Knicks victory over New Jersey. Entering Wednesday's game against Atlanta at Madison Square Garden, New York - suddenly a strong playoff hopeful after a dreadful start - is 8-2 with Lin in the rotation, and he's averaging 24.6 points and 9.2 assists in that stretch.

"The kid deserves it, he's worked hard, he's a great story," Wade said. "But for us, it's another game - a big game - and a chance to get a win."

Celebrities are expected in droves. Floyd Mayweather Jr., who's been to many Heat games since James, Wade and Chris Bosh decided in 2010 to play together in Miami, has tickets. Knicks superfan Spike Lee is almost certain to be courtside.

Rest assured, Lin won't be the only star visiting Miami on Thursday night.

Oh, there's even rumors that former President Bill Clinton - who watched the Heat beat Orlando on Sunday from a courtside seat - may be back Thursday. And President Barack Obama - a noted basketball fan - has some speaking engagements in nearby Coral Gables, Fla., on Thursday afternoon, wrapping up just a little while before Heat-Knicks will tip off.

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Spoelstra and Lin are both Asian-American. Spoelstra is of Filipino descent, while Lin's parents were born in Taiwan.

Miami will bring a seven-game winning streak and a 26-7 record into the game, both of those marks the best in the league. Each of Miami's wins during that streak have come by at least 12 points, and the Heat have won 17 of their last 20 games overall. The Knicks are 16-17 entering Wednesday.

Records rarely mean much in Knicks-Heat games, though.

"We love playing against them and they love playing against us," Wade said. "I don't have to pump it up. It's going to be pumped up enough."

Maybe that's why the two Heat players who will spend much of their time guarding Lin on Thursday added little fuel to the fire when asked about the matchup.

"It's a showdown. Everybody's been hyping this game up," Heat starting point guard Mario Chalmers said. "So it's going to be a lot of fun. Crazy atmosphere. It's not really personal. It's team. Team on team. Heat versus Knicks."

Added Heat backup point guard Norris Cole: "Definitely looking forward to it. I've heard about what he's done. I've watched the highlights. I've seen some of the games. He's produced. You've got to give the guy credit. He's been playing very well."

So have the Heat, of course.

Which means this one could be worthy of the hype.

"It's going to be a high-energy game," Wade said. "The crowd is going to be into it. Fans around the world are going to watch the game, obviously, for many different reasons, so it'll be great."