

A whirlwind summer for White

By Brendan Stiles

HawkeyeDrive.com

For Aaron White, the basketball player, this summer has been surreal. It started last month after getting his cell phone fixed when he discovered voicemails from Iowa assistant coach Sherman Dillard notifying him of an invite to the Kevin Durant Skills Academy in Washington, D.C. Then came last week, where White went to Las Vegas and participated in the LeBron James Skills Academy. Learning from the NBA's two best players has enabled White to hone his craft on the court.

For Aaron White, the Northeast Ohioan who naturally is a Cleveland sports fan, this summer has been surreal. It started with the aftermath ensuing the Browns' selection of Texas A&M quarterback Johnny Manziel in the NFL Draft and watching his favorite NFL team go from afterthought to being talked about on ESPN every day.

Then came last week at James' camp. Shortly after meeting James at an opening banquet and then getting an opportunity to play pick-up ball against him, White witnessed like everyone else as James made the decision to return home and play for the Cavaliers following a four-year stint with the Miami Heat.

Just having a chance to play basketball at James' camp would have made the experience memorable enough for White. Doing that and also seeing James return to his favorite NBA team made it even more so.

"Obviously being from Cleveland and having pride in being from there, I'm happy that he's back," White said during a teleconference call Tuesday. "In terms of what it means to the city, it's unbelievable. Cleveland fans are some of the most passionate fans in the country about sports and the way he

came back with that letter, talking about how it was more than basketball, how he feels Northeast Ohio is his home and how he owes it to the city to bring a championship back and with his family there, I think it's huge.

"I thought he did it in a tremendous way that brought the hearts of a lot of Cleveland fans back and really, for Ohio in general to be honest. The one thing I've learned being away from home as long as I have is there's a huge pride in being from Northeast Ohio and being from Cleveland. So it's a tremendous thing for him to come back."

As for the camps themselves, White said both had a similar structure in terms of drills and how days were planned since both camps are coordinated by former NBA player John Lucas and Nike EYB. He talked about the various drills that were done – full court 1-on-1, 2-on-2, 3-on-3, 5-on-5-on-5 where a new group of five players comes in for the previous offensive group if it doesn't score.

Offensively, White was advised to do what got him invited to both camps in the first place. Instead of trying to do too much, he said his mindset was to just stay active at both ends, take open shots when they were there and let the game come to him. Defensively, White found himself guarding all five spots on the floor throughout various points of both camps.

"It's good to be able to read the offensive player, move your feet and try and get there before they do, try to get to their spot before they do," White said. "A lot of times, kids go to these camps and think, 'I need to score the ball. I need to show my offensive game.' But that's the 'do what you do.'"

"What I do is I'm in the right place at the right time and move without the ball and just tried to work on my defense. That's how I was trying to affect the game because I'm aware there's a lot more to the game of basketball than just putting

the ball in the hole.”

For Aaron White, the Cleveland sports fan, the future looks promising. Not just to his hometown Browns and Cavs, but to the entire city as a whole. For Aaron White, the basketball player, the future appears just as promising now after having these interactions with Durant and James this summer.

The 6-8 forward said his two biggest takeaways from both NBA superstars were the mantra of never being satisfied – whether it’s one singular win during a season or a statistical feat – and knowing the intensity needed to play at a high level. As that pertains to his senior season with Iowa, White knows he’s being counted on to lead the Hawkeyes much like Durant and James lead their respective NBA teams.

“I just got back [Monday] and I was telling Gabe [Olaseni] that we’ve got to really ramp up the intensity,” White said. “Even if it’s chatter on the sideline or whatever it might be, you just got to do everything at a high level because that’s how the game’s played. The game is at a high level and a high pace and you can’t turn around and let the game start.

“Even though it’s July and even though it’s the summer, you got to get that engrained in you. Then it doesn’t become something that has to be challenged once the season comes.”