

## Delonte Back, Shaq In The Fold

Written by {ga=samamico}

Thursday, October 01 2009 7:00 PM -

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Delonte West finally showed up at practice yesterday. Sam Amico was out there for us, and had a chance to soak in the scene with the Cavs popular guard back in the fold with his teammates. In Sam's latest, he reports from practice yesterday, talks about Delonte, makes some observations on Shaquille O'Neal, says to keep an eye out for new Cav Rob Kurz, talks J.J. Hickson, and gives our readers info on the Cavs intarsquad scrimmage in Akron this Saturday.



INDEPENDENCE - Delonte West sat underneath the basket at Cleveland Clinic Courts, wearing a long-sleeve T-shirt with a towel wrapped around his neck.

That's pretty much all we learned about West on Thursday, when he practiced for the first time after two days of unexcused absences. We learned that West is in fact back with the Cavaliers. And for now, that's good enough.

"He had a great practice," said Cavs coach Mike Brown. "It was great having him on the floor."

West was the starting shooting guard on a team that finished with the league's best regular-season record last year. He admittedly suffers from mood disorders and was arrested a couple weeks ago while speeding on his motorcycle and carrying three loaded guns.

On Thursday, he sat under the basket next to point guard Mo Williams. The two talked and smiled and occasionally laughed at teammates who were working on free throws and other shooting drills. Williams has been very supportive of West,

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and the two seemed to be in good spirits.

But neither addressed the media, leaving the situation uncertain. Meanwhile, Cavaliers general manager Danny Ferry made it known he will talk about West's status during Saturday's Wine & Gold Scrimmage at the University of Akron.

While reporters wanted answers, Ferry is doing the smart thing. He's giving both the team and West a chance to regroup and evaluate matters before going public.

Most importantly, West is back and his teammates are happy to have him.

"He's a vital part to the team," said center Shaquille O'Neal. "I watched him play last year and he's a fabulous player. We're all brothers here, so we support him and stick by him."

### **MORE SHAQ STUFF**

\* Shaq is a career 52.8 percent free-throw shooter, but you never would have known it on this day. I watched Shaq take 18 or 19 foul shots, and he buried all but one of them. Then again, Ben Wallace used to make them in practice, too. (Heck, Wallace even made 3-pointers in practice, now that I think about it.)

\* When asked what he learned about LeBron James that he didn't know before, Shaq said LeBron is almost as big of a comedian as he is. During Monday's media day, O'Neal proclaimed that he himself is the "league's funniest man." So I asked him if that remained the case after three days of practicing with James. "I don't know; it's close," Shaq said with a smile. "It's very close."

\* Shaq does indeed have a way of working the room and making those around him laugh. After Thursday's practice, he spotted a heavy-set reporter who was sporting a long white beard, flowing white hair and a pair of eyeglasses. Shaq pointed at the reporter and yelled, "Hey, look. It's Santa Claus!"

\* Finally, O'Neal said he has no plans to sit out the second day of back-to-back games with the Cavs, as he occasionally did last season with Phoenix. "That wasn't my choice," he said. "If they need me to play all 82 games, I'll play all 82. I've never been the type of player who asks for time off."

### **MORE CAVS STUFF**

\* Keep an eye out for forward Rob Kurz, who is in camp with the Cavs after playing 40 games (including five starts) with Golden State last season. Kurz is a 6-foot-9 sharpshooter, and could give the Cavs what they once hoped for from guys like Wally Szczerbiak and Flip Murray. Namely, someone who can consistently knock down a shot and extend opposing defenses when he gets an open look. So far, so good, as Kurz has really been drilling 'em in practice.

\* I'll be honest, I forgot J.J. Hickson was even on the team until he nearly stepped on my foot Thursday (by accident). Granted, it's way too soon to give up on the second-year power forward, but he'll need to show drastic improvement if he is to crack an up-front rotation that consists of O'Neal, Zydrunas Ilgauskas, Anderson Varejao and Darnell Jackson -- a second-year big man with an outstanding work ethic.

\* Saturday's intra-squad scrimmage in Akron tips off at noon. There will be a FanFest outside of UA's Rhodes Arena at 10 a.m. Doors for the scrimmage open at 11 a.m. For more information visit [cavs.com](http://cavs.com).

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