

BLUESTAR MEDIA

West Coast Premier Spring Invitational

- Written by Mark Lewis
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RANCHO CUCAMONGA, Calif.-- As the NCAA continues to trim the recruiting calendar for Division I coaches the number of non-certified events continues to grow year after year. Participation in those events is up as well as evidenced by a record number of participants in the seventh annual West Coast Premier Spring Invitational. This year's lineup featured 16 more teams than last year and showcased programs from six different states and Canada. In all 104 teams took the floor this past weekend in front of a litany of D-II, III and NAIA coaches as well as virtually every premier recruiting and media service in girls grassroots basketball.

When all was said and done two Nike EYBL teams squared off in the finals of the top division with DFW T-Jack claiming top honors by way of a 59 – 45 win. The Cal Sparks Blue claimed bragging rights in the next bracket getting by the East Bay Explosion Black 47 – 35. For complete pool and bracket results follow the link below.

<http://www.quickscores.com/Orgs/index.php?OrgDir=wcpremier>

With a depth of talent on hand you can bet there were plenty of standout performances over the weekend. Here are some of the athletes who showed they're ready for a big summer on the club circuit. In deference to their winning performance we'll start with a few members of the DFW T-Jack Elite.



Teaira McCowan has been on the recruiting radar for many years now and as she approaches her senior season appears ready to find a greater consistency in her performances. The 6-7 post has shown flashes time and again of being among the elite in the 2015 class but also has struggled to string together a series of games that would set her apart from the crowd. This weekend McCowan demonstrated some of the dominance that she's capable of and offered up impact play at both ends. There were still moments where she would fall back into the bad habits of showing her frustration on the floor or standing on defense but for the most part looks ready to finally take her game to the next level. An added caveat to her efforts was her willingness to mix things up both on the boards and posting with a more aggressive approach. The challenge for McCowan will be to continue to advance her play each time out over the next two months and beyond.

The DFW backcourt got plenty of production from some of their younger standouts. Alexis Morris, a 5-6, 2017 point guard, seems to have found a confidence that is letting her play with the maturity of a much older athlete. Physically strong and aggressive with the ball, Morris seemed to be able to penetrate at will and showed off some well-honed individual skills. There's plenty of speed in place and Morris used it to push the tempo from makes, misses and turnovers. There's no hesitation about taking it into traffic although a few times her decision making was challenged by her having her mind made

up rather than reading defenders. Lots of tools are in place and ready for Morris to take advantage of and work on.

More youth in the DFW backcourt came from 2018 guard **Zarielle Green**. Standing somewhat short of her listed 6-0, Green does have good size to combine with exceptional athleticism and an assertive attack. Green has sharp ball skills that allow her to move defenders and slash into the paint time and again. She can get to the rim but also calls on a nice floater that will serve her well down the road both at the high school and college levels. Her jumper has a low release at this time and tends to come off her shoulder. Obviously, more strength and a massive amount of repetitions should help make her perimeter threat something that defenders will have to pay attention to and force tighter close outs. The sky is the limit.

Plenty of other athletes left an impression on us. Here are some more of the top performers from the 2014 West Coast Premier Spring Invitational.



One of the more impressive performances from a point guard over the weekend came from **Alecia Sutton** of the Missouri Phenom. The ultra-quick 5-7 2016 class member does a lot of things well and does them at a different speed than most. The ability is there to create both passes and shots and the decision making is there to know what the situation calls for as well. Her passing skills are sharp and she can exploit even the smallest gap in opposing defenses. Her change of speed and direction left defenders lunging and only dreaming of recovering. The step back Sutton utilizes creates plenty of separation and leads to plenty of clean looks at the rim. Her own form is sound and the elevation is there both on the jumper and the pull up.

The Cal Stars Nike Elite are getting plenty of support for highly effective Sabrina Ionescu from 2017 backcourt mate **Evina Westbrook**. The 5-10 guard has good length, impressive physical resources and a deep skill set for someone her age. She's pushing the ball at every opportunity and if it's not in her hands is getting out in the lanes and making herself an option time and again. On the drive she's efficient in traffic and gets off the floor among the bigs that rotate her way. On occasion she does get herself caught in the air but still finds a way to make a play. Defensively both the hands and the feet are exceptionally quick and could make her just as effective as a stopper as she is a scorer. The potential is there for the complete package with continued advancements to her game.

The Cal Ballaz have had their share of top tier talent over the last few years and **MaAne Mosley** fits right in with the talented alums of Leroy Hurt's program. The 5-10 guard is physically strong and has plenty of versatility to her game at both ends of the floor. She's active with and without the ball and is more than willing to work to create options for herself and her teammates. A left hander, the 2015 Mosley gets past the quickest of defenders and still has the bulk to take on the physical rotations of opposing bigs. Her vertical allows her to finish inside as well as be an asset on the glass offensively and defensively. Plenty of lateral speed is there on the defensive end and the tools are there to be a major asset in any type of pressing or trapping scheme.



The Power Blue Star 17 team has several weapons they can call on but **Armani Hawkins** may well be their most productive. Lean, agile and quick, the 5-9 Hawkins is challenging for any on ball defender. Add in a low quick ball handling attack and staying in front of her becomes a game long uphill battle. The hesitation move would get even the best on ball defender to come up out of her stance. Her individual skills allow her to develop looks for her teammates as well as herself. Hawkins has a "true" jumper and gets off the floor for a good look at the rim. On occasion her attack tends to go east - west more than north - south but she still finds a way to make more than her share of impact plays.

Aislinn Konig is a defenders worst nightmare. The 2016 combo from the BC Elite challenges defenders of both size and

quickness. With good size at 5-10, she creates effectively off the dribble with a very focused awareness of her match up and how to attack their footwork. She uses an impressive hesitation move that is followed with the kind of acceleration that leads to deep penetration into the paint. Konig can finish at the rim but calls on a soft touch floater as well. The form is there from the perimeter as well as the range to keep the opposition honest. She did struggle with some face guarding which in turn led to some forced shots but the willingness to give it up is also there and serves her well when pressured.

The ECBA Swish Black team grabbed the Silver Bracket honors in the top division getting solid play from several players at different times. From the perspective of recruiting and the future it was hard not to take notice once again of **Shalexus Aaron**. Long and lean, this 2017 wing / guard has the tools to take her game however far she's willing to put the work in for. Sharp ball skills go hand in hand with good speed and quickness to keep her on the attack. Aaron uses a change of speed and direction like a seasoned veteran and does a good job of reading how defenders react to those changes as she penetrates. The crossover is another weapon that is creating options for her when called upon. The biggest weakness right now is her play off the ball. As with many talented young skill players that instinct and willingness to stay active on the weakside is a little slower to come around than the rest of her skill set.



Amber Ramirez continues to define smart, skilled play each time we see her in action. The 2016 combo guard from Ray Caldwell's San Antonio's Finest program is the poster child for efficiency and production. Ramirez is shooting the ball as well as anyone tight now and in a brick laden landscape of club basketball she's a bright spot. Add to that a seemingly quicker release and she's becoming someone who will stretch defenders by the threat of her shot as well as the looks themselves. There could be some better movement off the ball at times but you can always count on her being involved in the action. Defensively she sees the floor and does a good job of anticipating two passes away.

Team Taurasi was without the services of talented Leaonna Odom this weekend but still managed to make their way into Sunday's final with DFW T-Jack. Several players stepped up at different points but a consistent spark came from **Brianjee Moore** at the point. Small but physically strong and explosive, Moore can be a catalyst for tempo and attack. Her penetration forced rotations and caused opponents to make decisions time and again. While she didn't finish particularly well, she got to the rim multiple times creating opportunities for both her teammates and herself. A strong on ball defender, several tips or steals led to transition scenarios and number situations on the break.

Elbert Kinnebrew's squad has a whole new look this year in terms of faces but despite a youthful appearance the talent is abundant once again. We've profiled **Jaelyn Brown** in the past and her play this weekend dictates that we do it once again. The combination of size, skills and athleticism the 2016 wing brings to the floor has her among the elite in the class and could see her profile elevate among that top tier with a continued, focused effort. Her physical approach to attacking and creating is something that often only reveals itself at the colligate level. She can create her own looks but also has the skills and decision making to develop options for her teammates as well. The consistency on her perimeter shooting is something that is going to have to evolve to keep defenders honest and allow her to capitalize on the ability to produce off the drive. Brown is a force on the boards offensively and has the tools to produce double – doubles at will with the same focus at the other end.

Kennedy Burke isn't a point guard in anyone's book but she did offer up some solid play for her West Coast Premier squad from the top both on the break and in the halfcourt. There's plenty of ballhandling in her arsenal including a long and low crossover that will get even the best defender lunging. Burke made good choices once in the paint both in terms of her own looks as well as decisions on where to deliver the ball when the rotations came her way. Several times she made herself a factor with sharp give and go cuts that made caught opponents standing and watching. Her own scoring comes both in traffic and from a sound perimeter shot that is effective mid to long range. Defensively the length serves her well but she'll need a more physical approach down the road at the college level.

QUICKHITTERS

Erika Bean (2015 – Point Guard – Cal Sparks NorCal) – Pushes it...Has pull up but can get to the rim...Solid form on shot

Desiree Caldwell (2018 – Point Guard – San Antonio's Finest) – Small, young and quick...Acceleration is there...Change of speed and direction...Reads defenders...Step back is in place

DiJonai Carrington (2016 – Guard / Wing – Cal Sparks) – Still coming off ACL...Had moments...Attacks...Floater is there...Makes plays...Needs to be sure she's healthy and not rush

Sabrina Haines (2015 – Guard – Power Blue Star 17) – Can create...Assertive with the ball...Pull up is there...Interior passing is sharp...Physical on the defensive end

Valerie Higgins (2016 – Wing – Team Taurasi) – Athletic and strong...Creates off the dribble...Gets to the boards...Upright at times...Makes plays

Tayla Jackson (2015 – Forward – BC Elite) – Agile and fundamental...Posts up but more a #4...Active cutter inside...Runs the floor well...Needs to add strength

Mallory McGwire (2016 – Post – Cal Stars Nike) – Text book play in the post...Lots of effort...Solid build...Deceiving

footspeed...Efficient on the boards

Kian McNair (2015 – Point Guard – Cal Ballaz) – Small but ultra-quick...Pushes it at every opportunity...Lots of speed with the ball...Quick on defense

Kallin Spiller (2017 – Wing / Forward – ECBA Swish) – Has a good skill set...Nice size with some ball skills...Strong boards and outlet...Plenty of potential

Cheyenne Wallace (2015 – Forward – West Coast Premier) – Underrated...Keeps herself involved...Physically strong...Active...Can put it on the floor some

Jayde Woods (2016 – Guard / Wing – Cal Swish) – Handling it more...Can create to a degree...Needs to be more active off the ball...Gets out in transition...Consistency is up and down



Mark Lewis

Mark Lewis is a national evaluator and photographer for Blue Star Basketball as well as the lead columnist for Blue Star Media. Twice ranked as one of the top 25 Division I assistant coaches in the game by the Women's Basketball Coaches Association (WBCA), he logged 25 years of college coaching experience at Memphis State, Cincinnati, Arizona State, Western Kentucky and Washington State. Lewis also serves as a member of the prestigious McDonald's All-American selection committee. He resides in Dublin, Ohio with his wife Carol and dog "Coach".

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