

Full-Time Hoops

with the Full-Time Dad

[Feb 14](#)

The young pups have their day- Earl Watson Elite Jr. All American Camp Report



Players from across the country crowded into Gahr High School in Cerritos this weekend for the inaugural Earl Watson Elite Jr. All-American Camp, powered by UnderArmour, and they didn't disappoint.

The event attracted a collection of the top lower- and middle-school talent from California, Nevada, Arizona, Colorado and even had cameos by players from as far as New York and New Jersey.

The two-day event had a number of stars. Here's just a few of the names.

Camp Most Valuable Players

Spencer Freedman, 5-10 PG, 2018

A so-so performance in the Top 20 game aside, Freedman was as good as advertised throughout the weekend. He was nearly automatic from the perimeter, but his passing, ball handling and play at the point guard position was even more impressive. Freedman delivered passes with either hand, and made the right pass to get the ball to teammates. He also showed a much-improved ability to attack

the basket with his right hand, and his lateral quickness on the defensive end has also improved over the past few months. Another thing that stood out was his dribble economy and overall efficiency as a scorer. In a camp where players often overdribbled and overpassed, he did most of his damage off of one or two dribbles. He's clearly one of the best point guards in the 2018 class.

Riley Battin, 6-6 PF/C, 2018

Battin was a matchup nightmare the entire weekend, largely as a result of his unique combination of size, skill and mobility in this setting. He would punish smaller defenders in the paint or take bigger defenders to the mid-post areas where he knocked down jumpshots or used his handle and quickness to get to the basket. While he doesn't possess ideal length, he was able alter or block a number of shots because of his willingness to contest shots. Battin may not be as palatable of a prospect as some of the other bigs on hand because of some of his physical shortcomings (length, mundane vertical athleticism), but he makes up for it with superior skill and a nonstop motor.

Best prospects

Wayne Arnold 6-1 SG, 2018

This was a coming-out party of sorts for Arnold, who is a standout for the I Am Rockfish program. The explosive wing type jumps out the gym, but he's not a one-trick pony. He uses his elite athleticism to get to the rim seemingly at will, and finishes through contact. He has also shown a much improved jump shot from both mid-range and out to the college-three, and he gets excellent lift on the shot as a result of his aforementioned athleticism. Defensively, he has the potential to be a menace on the ball due to his length and lateral quickness. He will need to continue to improve his consistency as a shooter, and clean up his perimeter handle, but there's no question that Arnold's upside is quite high.

Miles Norris, 6-6 PF, 2018

Norris, a long yearling of a post prospect, oozes with potential, and showed flashes of the potential throughout the weekend. He is a skilled and patient player in the post, and already has some go-to moves, including a jump hook over both shoulders and a nice drop step. He also has a solid-face up game, with feathery touch on his shot with range out to 15-18 feet with consistency. His frame at this stage is willowy, and added bulk in coming years should come with normal development. Additionally, Norris needs to develop a killer instinct on the court, as he often deferred to other players and went for stretches without making an impact. If he can improve on those aspects of his game, watch for Norris to be one of the top post prospects out west in coming years.

Biggest surprise

Isaiah Thompson, 6-4 PF, 2018

Thompson was one of three players from Sacramento's Crossover Basketball

program that came in with no more than a regional reputation. Thompson made an immediate impression because of his chiseled frame, which makes him look like a younger version of Patric Young of Florida note. His game, right now, is a work in progress, especially on the offensive end, where his skill set is quite raw. However, Thompson compensates for it with his quickness and athleticism and his tireless motor, especially on the glass, where he rebounds in and out of his area, and finishes on the offensive glass. It will be interesting to follow his development moving forward.

Most exciting

LaMelo Ball, 5-7 PG 2019

The youngest of the three Ball brothers, Melo continues to build his own reputation as one of the most fun players to watch on the youth circuit. His creativity with the pass and the dribble are well above the players in his peer group. And, in a bit of a change for the younger Ball, he showed restraint as a shooter, opting to get his teammates involved rather than his penchant for taking deep threes on every possession. That is a positive development.

Jack of all trades

Austin Gallupo, 6-2 SF 2018

If the camp were one day, Gallupo, a rangy wing type from Santa Clarita, would have been the MVP. He was virtually unstoppable on Saturday, showing off his offensive toolbox and scoring from all three levels with pull-ups, step-backs, and strong drives to the rim. He also showed off some excellent vision in transition with several high-level passes, and rebounded and defended as well. On Sunday, however, Gallupo settled far too much for his outside shot, which is streaky at best. Moving forward he will need to change the mechanics of his shot, which starts from his chest. He can get away with it at this level, but will struggle with bigger defenders at the high school level.

Most Improved

Maka Ellis, 6-2 SF 2018

Ellis continues to show major strides in his development, largely due to improved conditioning, and, along with it, improved mobility. The fundamentally sound Las Vegas prospect does many things well: he is capable of advancing the ball in transition, is a dead-eye shooter from mid-range, and rebounds at a high rate. Like several other prospects, I would like to see Ellis become more assertive, as he goes through stretches where he doesn't have the impact on the game that he should.

Chairman of the board (best rebounder)

Joseph "JoJo" Bush IV, 6-5 2018

Bush is a known commodity on the AAU circuit from his play with the I-10 Celtics, but that doesn't take away from how impressed I was with Bush's hard work on the boards. He did an excellent job boxing out his man, exploding to the ball, securing the rebound and chinning the ball and advancing it with the pass to ball handlers. Bush was tough to keep off of the offensive glass, securing second- and third-chance possessions for his team. Offensively, his game is still rudimentary, consisting of a couple of basic power moves, but nobody worked harder on the boards the entire weekend.

Mr. Hustle

Devin Garcia, 6-3 F 2018

Garcia, who plays for Long Beach Gold AAU, is a player who is not afraid to leave a camp with knicks, bruises and floor burns. He is a tremendous defender who is capable of checking both wings and post players, and his motor is nonstop. He dives after loose balls, battles for rebounds and plays with an intensity that is definitely infectious. His skillset will need to catch up with his motor, but he shows some promise as a face-up four because of his quickness and mid-range shooting ability. He will need to continue to improve his handle, though, in order to graduate to the wing, where he's likely to end up.

Young guns

Isaiah Mobley, 6-4 F 2018

While a number of the top prospects in the camp were a year (and in some cases, two years) older than players in the class, several "age-appropriate" prospects stood out, including Mobley, a long, lanky face-up four who is as smooth as they come. Mobley was able to repeatedly take bigger defenders off the dribble from the perimeter, and showed an array of move on the low block. And while his outward demeanor rarely changed, Mobley showed some feistiness as he battled for defensive and offensive position on the low block. Moving forward, added strength will be key in his development, as well as increased explosiveness, both vertically and laterally.

Lunden Taylor 6-0 G and Je'ylon Parrish, 5-9 GG 2018

The pair of Fresno-area guards took advantage of the big stage to showcase what many Central Valley observers have been touting for years. Parrish, who turned 14 in December, is a bulldog of a lead guard who is as physical a defender on the ball as was on display this weekend. His quick hands led to a number of steals both on the ball and in passing lanes. On offense, Parrish did a good job attacking the rim to set up teammates on the perimeter, and canned shots from deep as well. Moving forward, it will be paramount for Parrish to harness that unbridled energy, as he had some moments where he was out of control.

Taylor, who doesn't turn 14 until July, is a combo guard prospect who has good size for the position and does a really good job attacking off the dribble and

finishing through contact. He has feathery touch from the perimeter, but made his money hitting from midrange. He also showed some flashes of being a very good passer in the half court, though more often than not he looked to score. While Taylor' forte was scoring, he did it in a very unselfish and efficient manner. Like so many young prospects, Taylor had a tendency to disappear when the ball was not in his hands on offense, so attention to movement without the ball will be a priority.

Best shooter

Lucas Hobbs, 5-11 G 2019

Clearly, the camp's top shooter was Freedman, but we have to recognize what Hobbs did throughout the weekend. He's got textbook form and release on his shot, and the results were usually positive. Hobbs is not just a shooter, though, as he showed throughout the weekend the ability to attack off the dribble and also make plays with the pass. He was rewarded for his play with a berth in the Top 40 game, where he showed off the picturesque form once more.

Best lower grade players

Paris Dawson, 5-8 G 2020

Dawson had several dominant performances during the camp, and it's not difficult to see why. He's an explosive scoring guard and slasher who shows great potential. While he did have a couple of nice passes during the proceedings, we'd like to see him improve his court vision (head up) and continue to develop his off hand.

Dylan Andrews, 5-foot PG 2021

Andrews was one of two fifth graders to participate in the 6th grade All-Star Game, and it was easy to see why. The dynamic point guard possesses great basketball instincts and a flair that makes him fun to watch. He needs to continue to develop a more consistent perimeter shot, as well as make plays going to his left, his weaker hand.

Top 20 players:

Amani Harris 5-10 PG 2019 The big combo guard had an uneven camp performance, with flashes of the high level ball handling and penetration ability, as well as some very strong on-ball defense. However, there were other times where he lacked attention to detail in terms of his passes, committing unforced turnovers, and struggled to connect on perimeter shots. Harris has the physical intangibles to one day be one of the premier guards in his class with consistency of effort, execution and results.

Tahjan Comeaux, 6-1 F 2018- The Las Vegas product possesses prototypical length, which he uses well on the defensive end. He had several good straight line drives to the rim, but overall, he still needs to develop his offensive game, including improvement on his perimeter shooting.

Charley Wadler, 5-5 PG 2018- Wadler was one of the best shooters in the gym, but continued to show improvement scoring from mid-range with an array of floaters and runners. He is still missing that third level of scoring, largely due to size and pedestrian lateral quickness, the latter of which will need to improve moving forward.

Wes Slajchert, 5-10 SG 2018- Slajchert is a very fundamentally sound and crafty shooting guard who possesses solid handle and a crisp, quick release on his three point shot, though he was not shooting it with consistency over the weekend. Slajchert did a solid job setting up teammates with the pass, and also made several assertive drives to the basket both days. While he is good at everything, Slajchert does not have one superlative skill, so continuing to improve his handle, consistency on his jump shot and improving his lateral quickness should be priorities.

Kobe Craig, 6-4 SF 2019- Craig is a – It is only a matter of time before Craig, who has the prototypical small-forward frame, puts it together, but his game is a work in progress. Part of the reason is because he settles far too often for perimeter shots – with inconsistent results - as opposed to getting to the rim and scoring or drawing fouls. Still, his physical gifts – impressive wingspan, quick feet and solid frame – make me believe that it will be sooner rather than later that Craig realizes his significant potential.

Elysha Jackson, 5-10 PG 2018- Jackson is an aggressive lockdown defender at the point guard position. He moves extremely well laterally and cuts off penetration lanes without using his hands, or forearms, which makes his defense adaptable to the new “freedom of movement” rules. Offensively, he is a capable ball handler and a solid penetrator, but his shooting from the perimeter and free-throw line need improvement.

Taieem Comeaux- 6-2 F 2018 – The third Vegas product to play in the top 20 game, Comeaux has a great basketball frame and does a good job rebounding and defending. Offensively, he is much unpolished, and needs to work on his handle, which is shaky, and consistency of his shooting.

Kris “Scooter” Smith- 6-0 G/F 2018- Smith is yet another promising wing type that possesses prototypical length and build, and showed the ability to defend multiple positions. He is a pure scorer who does a good job slashing to the rim and scoring through contact. His jumpshot has a smooth release, but needs to be more consistent. Still, Smith has made significant strides in the area of assertiveness

Isaiah Johnson- 6-0 G 2018- The stocky combo guard might have had one of the more underrated camp performances, as he showed the ability to score at all three levels with regularity. His perimeter shot, while more of a set shot than a jumper, is an effective weapon, but his strength is using his big frame to power his way to the rim for easy scoring opportunities, where he absorbs contact and finishes at a high rate. As is the case in previous viewings, the one concern about Johnson is that he appears physically mature, so much of his upside will depend on

if he can continue to add increased lateral quickness to his repertoire.

Harrison Butler- 6-3 G/F 2018 – Butler is a tall, long combo guard prospect who has a great frame and basketball instincts. He is a scorer, through and through, who uses his athleticism to blow by defenders on strong drives to the rim. His jump shot is very good from mid-range, as he gets nice lift and has a feathery release. The slasher needs to incorporate his left hand into his game, as he almost exclusively drives, penetrates and finishes with his right hand. He also needs to contribute to the game in other aspects of the game other than scoring, such as rebounding on both ends and off-ball movement.

Taeshon Cherry- 6-6 F 2014 – Cherry is one of two San Diego forwards who had solid showings at the camp. Cherry is a rangy four man who has a similar build to Miles Norris (long arms, willowy build) and looks like he could grow several more inches before finishing. Cherry is a face-up four who is a solid mid-range shooter and a decent ball handler for a kid his size. He shows promise as a rim protector, as he blocked shots with regularity throughout the camp due his length and good timing. Like Norris, Cherry still looks like he is growing into his frame, so at times he looks clumsy on the court, but that is expected. We'd like to see him continue to work on finishing through contact and being stronger with the ball, as well as being more efficient with his dribble in transition, as he sometimes over dribbled on the break, which resulted in turnovers.

Ivan Escatel – 5-8 G 2018- Escatel, a Temecula-area guard, is a capable perimeter shooter whose high-arching threes usually find the bottom of the hoop. But he showed throughout the camp an ability to penetrate and make the right pass off the dribble. Still, he needs to continue to improve his ball handling and decision making to make up for his lack of elite size and quickness.

Bill Williams- 5-10 PG 2018- Williams is an ultra-athletic combo guard prospect who possesses incredible foot speed and quickness off the dribble – which is both his major strength and weakness. He tends to overdribble and creates unnecessary turnovers. Still, I love the kid's motor, which was go from the first game to the last, and his jump shot, while streaky, was effective.

Jamaal Hartwell- 5-10 PG 2018 – Hartwell is a score-first point guard who is a quick ball handler and capable scorer from all three levels. His best offensive move is his mid-range pull-up, which he sets up with a devastating left-to-right crossover. He has also improved Physically, what holds Hartwell back is his very slight frame, and his lack of ideal length (short wingspan, small hands), which sometimes makes it difficult for to get by guards with similar quickness but larger frames. It will be interesting to see how much he grows, or if he can add some strength to the frame without losing some of the quickness that makes him a special prospect.

Jonathan Hill- 5-7 PG 2019- Hill is a bulldog of a point guard prospect who has a stocky frame, but an explosive first step and is a solid passer in traffic. One area of Hill's game that needs attention is his off hand, as, much like several high-level prospects on hand, he predominantly uses his right hand, which limits his effectiveness to one side of the court.

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