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Stars of the Future: Preston, McWilliams shine

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NORWALK, Calif. -- For the final day of Rivals.com's SoCal swing for July's second evaluation period for college basketball coaches, we headed to the campus of Cerritos College for the Pangos Stars of the Future event. Designed to showcase some of the area's top rising talent from the classes of 2016, 2017 and 2018, it certainly served as a spot for rising sophomore forward **Billy Preston** to showcase his considerable talent.



Billy Preston sees himself as a wing in college but can play almost anywhere.

Preston has huge upside

During Thursday's coverage of the Battle of the Beach, we wrote some about 6-foot-8 combo forward Billy Preston of Redondo Beach (Calif.) Redondo Union who had been playing up for the Compton Magic's 17U elite squad. At Cerritos, though, the rising sophomore had a chance to play against his peers in a camp setting.

Preston's talent stood out, and he was easily the best prospect in attendance.

For a kid with his height and body (already a solid 220 pounds) who is just preparing for his second year of high school, Preston is already quite skilled with the ball. He can handle a bit, he can make jumpers to the three-point line and is a capable scorer in the post.

While Preston is quite talented, he doesn't always play to his strengths. He can float or look disinterested on the floor at times. But as he's getting older, he is learning the right approach.

"It's coming along for me," Preston said of his game. "I'm improving every day. Especially with my speed and my motor."

With his inside/out ability, Preston has the tools to be a very high-level player as he continues to develop. College programs have certainly taken notice as he already has offers from [New Mexico State](#), [UNLV](#) and [USC](#). He says that he has also heard from most of the Pac 12. Preston also said that early on he's thinking that he might prefer to stay closer to home, and he mentioned that he's grown up a fan of both the Trojans and [UCLA](#) (which has also been in touch).

For now, Preston is looking to develop his game as much as possible and is happy playing wherever his coach tells him. Long term, he's preparing himself to play on the wing.

"I'm versatile so I can see myself at the two, three, four or five," said Preston. "At the next level, I would like to be a three."

McWilliams lights it up

Like Preston, 6-foot-4 shooting guard [Johnny McWilliams](#) has been playing up on the Compton Magic's 17U Elite squad. Playing in a situation where he could showcase his individual game, the rising junior from San Marcos (Calif.) High did his thing.

A very good defensive player with good lateral quickness, McWilliams showed that he is quite good on the offensive end as well. He was pretty much in the zone on Sunday as he hit several deep threes, got to the rim with strong and decisive drives and then outran others in transition.

McWilliams still has plenty of room to get stronger, and given that his father is a former NFL player, genetics suggest that he won't have any trouble adding weight to his currently lanky frame.

According to McWilliams, he has yet to pick up a scholarship offer but he has started to hear from USC (where his father played his college football), [Utah](#), [Arizona State](#), [Vanderbilt](#), [San Diego State](#), [California](#) and many other west coast programs.

"I think that I shoot the ball well," McWilliams said. "I crash the boards hard and I'm a pretty good slasher on offense."

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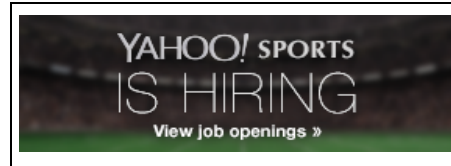
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Others to keep an eye on

Because it wasn't a long event and because it was more of a pickup-game style setting, the Stars of the Future wasn't a place to form many strong opinions. However, it was a great opportunity to see many young players and to form a baseline evaluation of their games and where they can go from here. Here's a quick look at some others who caught the attention of Rivals.com:

- Playing at Chatsworth (Calif.) Sierra Canyon, guard [Terrance McBride](#) is part of a team loaded with young talent. He hasn't exactly been overlooked, but he hasn't yet earned the acclaim some of his teammates have. The 6-foot-2 rising sophomore is a smart and sound basketball player who makes good decisions. He can get to the rim, doesn't mind contact and is a good defender. McBride is certainly one to watch moving forward.

- He is a sub six-footer and doesn't have much strength yet, but rising freshman [Spencer Freedman](#) is already a deadly shooter from the perimeter. His shot is a little bit of a push shot (which should be corrected with strength) but he isn't going to miss very often if he gets a clean look at the rim. On top of his shooting, Freedman has a deft feel for passing the basketball.

- During the game that Rivals.com watched, rising sophomore [Ethan Thompson](#) struggled to convert shots from deep and finishes at the rim. A 6-foot-2 combo guard, Thompson was however able to get any kind of look he wanted and whenever he wanted to do so. Having also seen Thompson at the Best of Summer event earlier in the weekend, it is evident that he is a potential high-major talent. The younger brother of class of 2015 four-star [Stephen Thompson](#), his father is a newly hired assistant at [Oregon State](#).

- Another player who impressed earlier in the week with his club team (Compton Magic 16U) and again at Stars of the Future was shooting guard [Jordan Griffin](#). The 6-foot-3 rising junior at Corona (Calif.) Centennial is armed with a very nice looking jump shot and he is already adept at one and two dribble pull-ups and the transition 3-pointer.

- Based on the players who surfaced during the trip to SoCal, the talent in the San Diego area looks pretty good for the 2017 class, and [Claude Robinson](#) is part of it. A 6-foot-7 power forward from San Diego (Calif.) Kearny, Robinson has a good frame, is pretty mobile and is already a very capable face-up jump shooter out to 18 feet. As he fills out and diversifies his game, the base tools to be a very good prospect are all in place.

Finally, the most highly ranked player at the event was [Vance Jackson](#). No. 40 in the class of 2016, Jackson is a tall gunslinger who likes to let it fly from deep. While he has always been able to fill it up from beyond the 3-point line, Jackson has added the ability to create and finish through contact in traffic. His body has filled out and Jackson is learning how to use that newfound strength. Jackson's size and shooting ability are already tickets to high-major scholarship offers, but if he continues to become more versatile he will be more impactful early in college.




It won't be long before Johnny McWilliams has some scholarship offers.

Eric Bossi is the national basketball recruiting analyst for Rivals.com. You can [click here to follow him on Twitter](#).

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