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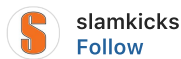
Jordan Brand Brings Outdoor Hoops Back to Los Angeles with 'The Playground'

With Blake Griffin in attendance, Cassius Stanley and other top high school players went back to the asphalt.

By Drew Ruiz (<http://www.slamonline.com/author/drewruiz/?rel=author>)  (<https://twitter.com/@drewruiz90>)

"The playground, or as I like to think about it; the beginning."

These were the exact words Blake Griffin opened up with in Jordan Brand's campaign video earlier this month for the Super.Fly 2017, a performance silhouette Griffin has been the face of since 2012, to describe playing basketball outdoors. The video takes place in a park where people are playing 5-on-5, kids are on the sidelines, a group of friends is chilling nearby and Griffin talks about how playing basketball on the blacktop molded him into the player he is today.



The blacktop was where a person earned their stripes and where your toughness was tested. Long before social media, performance facilities, apps like Open Runs and Infinite Hoops and Instagram trainers, the perfect place to play basketball was to travel to a local park in your neighborhood with a group of friends in hopes of finding others to get some run in.

There were no mixtapes, rankings, individual workouts or AAU tournaments every other day—just your five versus another five doing everything possible to win and remain on the court.

It's where "I got next" are the three universal words that imply you and your squad face the winners and you can match up with someone to show you belong despite age, race or size. Where you had to earn respect—enough to be given a nickname and have other players pick you up if they needed an extra guy. Where arguments (and sometimes altercations) over points and foul calls are the norm, rims have missing nets or little remains of the chain are visible, and the intensity when it's point-up feels like the final seconds of Game 7.

SLAM OG Scoop Jackson best described hooping outdoors in "Heaven: Playground Basketball," (<https://air.jordan.com/card/playground-basketball-by-scoop-jackson/>) an ode to the blacktop to coincide with the Super.Fly 2017 release on Jordan's website.

"There's a feel, spirit, connection and beauty to this game when played away from the lights, cameras, corporate impurity, insanity and pageantry that is close to indescribable," says Jackson. "The words fail to do justice for or justify."

Being a Los Angeles native, playing basketball outdoors is really a thing of the past. And while the whole L.A.-New York basketball debate is a never ending topic, the one thing I can respect about New York other than the fact that there's damn near a court on every block, is that you can more than likely find a run somewhere at anytime of the day.

But this past weekend, Jordan Brand restored that feeling of competitive outdoor basketball in L.A. with “The Playground,” an all-day, win-or-go-home-style tournament that featured some of the highly touted high school players in the Los Angeles area.

Outfitted in different colorways of the Super.Fly 2017 and custom-made shorts made by Don C, four players served as team captains, handpicking a group of their closest friends for bragging rights to show who was the best team in front of Griffin and the spectators that hovered around an outdoor court in the heart of Downtown L.A.

Although Cassius Stanley (<http://www.slamonline.com/college-hs/kenyon-martin-jr-cassius-stanley-mixtape/#rbVcBpVHz5bVzsCJ.97>)'s Team Saiyans came up short in the semifinals and Harvard-bound Spencer Freedman and Beyond the Arc won The Playground's first-ever championship, the experience was a memorable one.

"It's been nothing but just fun stuff with all of my friends like Shareef [O'Neal], Bol Bol and Josh Christopher," says Stanley (<http://www.slamonline.com/college-hs/top-10-hs-sophomore-cassius-stanley-incredible-bounce/#pJlUqGwCMycm03kzw.97>), ESPN's No. 11-ranked player in the Class of 2019 from Sierra Canyon (CA) HS. "It's interesting because in the beginning it's a little weird to get acclimated, but once you start playing, it's just basketball and it's fun."

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