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We've been hearing for months that 6'1 Jr **Brandon Jennings** from Mouth of Wilson (Oak Hill) VA, who is the #1-ranked junior nationally in by the *HOOP SCOOP*, may renege on the verbal commitment that he made last fall to USC. But now it's official, as Jennings himself has confirmed that he has told the Trojans coaching staff that he plans to re-open his recruitment. He also tells us that USC is still on his list, but adds that he wants to make official visits to both Connecticut and Arizona. "If I decide I still want to go USC, I hope they still have a scholarship for me," says Jennings. "But I want to look around, take a couple of visits, and make sure I'm making the right decision." It's our guess that Jennings is doing the same thing that 6'3 **Jerryd Bayless** did early last summer when he reneged on his commitment to Arizona.

Remember, it still turned out well for the Wildcats, as Bayless reaffirmed his commitment two months later and signed with the Wildcats during the *Fall Signing Period*. We also gave Jennings the edge over 6'3 Jr **Willie Warren** from Ft. Worth (North Crowley) TX in the big match-up that featured two of the top juniors in the nation when Team Texas and the Southern Cal All-Stars squared off on Saturday morning at the *Las Vegas Easter Classic* in Las Vegas, NV. Jennings not only took over the game down the stretch, as he scored 23 of his 30 points in the second half, but his outside shot started falling and he was unstoppable in transition, as he drew foul after foul with his jet-like speed and quickness and uncanny ability to get to the basket. However, Warren, who made most of the big plays at the end of the game to ensure Team Texas' 85-78 victory, also more than lived up to the billing, as he impressed us with his incredible athleticism, unbelievable moves to the basket, and tremendous outside shooting, which often comes from well beyond the arc. And, if Warren, who is a lot more under control than when we last saw him last summer, continues to play like he did in this game the rest of the spring and summer, then he will be right up there with Jennings and 6'4 Jr **Tyreke Evans** from Aston (American Christian) PA, as a serious candidate for National Player-of-the-Year honors in the Class of 2008. And making the story even more interesting is the fact that Warren also is an unbelievable kid, as he gave us an interesting perspective yesterday about what college coaches have been telling him during the recruiting process and how he's bounced back after being sidelined with back problems a year ago. Warren tells us that his list of schools includes like Kentucky, Kansas, Baylor, Cincinnati, Texas, Texas A&M, Florida, Marquette, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Connecticut. But we think Kentucky is suddenly the team to beat due to the fact that **Billy Gillispie** is now the new head coach of the Wildcats. We also thought we would get a chance to see these two players for a second time this weekend when the Southern Cal All-Stars and Team Texas both advanced into the semi-finals of the Platinum Division, along with the Las Vegas Prospects and Branch West Team Reebok, of the *Las Vegas Easter Classic*. However, Branch West Team Reebok head coach **Bob Gottlieb** had other plans, as he used a triangle and two to shut down Team Texas' outside shooting and guys like 6'7 Jr **Tyreese Breshers** from Los Angeles (Price) CA, 6'7 **Zareh Zagaryan** from Glendale (Hoover) CA, 6'0 **Alex Tucker** from Redondo Beach (Redondo Union) CA, 6'2 **Cosmo Morabbi** from Beverly Hills (H.S.) CA executed Gottlieb's offense to perfection. Breshers needs to get into better shape, but he's got good post moves, rebounds and blocks shots, and has deceptive athleticism. Zagaryan will probably have to go the prep school route, but he was one of our favorite players in the entire tournament, as he shoots the three, handles and passes, rebounds well for size, and plays every possession like it might be his last. All Zagaryan lacks is big time athleticism, but this multi-dimensional blue collar player could end being recruited at the high major level two years from now. Tucker and Morabbi are both too small to attract any higher than low Division I and II interest, but they both made a number of big shots that broke Team Texas' back down the stretch. Unfortunately for Branch West Team Reebok, they didn't have enough left in their tank to make things interesting in the championship game, as the Southern Cal All-Stars jumped out early and never looked back en route to a 65-54 victory in the title game. This marks the third consecutive year that the Southern Cal All-Stars have won the *Las Vegas Easter Classic*, but this time the big hero was 6'1 Jr **Brandon Jennings** from Mouth of Wilson (Oak Hill) VA. Not only did Jennings finish with 28 points in the championship game, but he was so good that even our Texas Editor **Tim Miller**, who is one of **Willie Warren's** biggest fans, conceded that Jennings was the best player in the tournament. We also were extremely impressed all weekend with 6'7 Jr **Troy Gillenwater** from Simi Valley (Stoneridge Prep) CA, who had 13 points in the championship game, 21 points in the semi-finals, and 24 points in the game against Team Texas and for our money was the third best player in the tournament. In other words,

Gillenwater, who is ranked #6 nationally in the junior class by the *HOOP SCOOP* and is a long athletic undersized power forward with the killer instinct, is an absolute steal for Oklahoma State. So it came as no surprise to us that Oklahoma State head coach **Sean Sutton** was at all of Gillenwater's games all weekend. And, as an added bonus, Gillenwater also showed he has the ability to step outside and hit the open 3-point shot, which leads us to believe that he will be able to make the conversation necessary to play at the wing forward spot someday in the NBA. Several other unsung heroes on the Southern Cal All-Stars were 6'5 Jr **Malik Story** from Lakewood (Artesia) CA, who scored 10 points in the championship game, but also did a lot of the little things that helped his team win and shot it from long range better than we've seen him shot it in a long time, and 6'4 Soph **Demetrius Walker** from Fontana (H.S.) CA, who has 17 points in the semi-finals and impressed us with his 3-point shooting, passing, and ability to get to the basket. Yes, it looks like Walker, who was the #1-ranked 8th Grader in the nation, but went south after being touted as the next **LaBron James** in an article two years ago that appeared in *Sports Illustrated*, is making a serious comeback, as he now appears to be a legit top 30 sophomore nationally. We also couldn't believe how much athletically that 6'0 Jr **Rotnei Clarke** from Claremore (Verdigris) OH has improved, how quickly he gets his shot off, and how deep he can shoot it. There is no doubt that Clarke is one of the best 3-point shooter that we've seen in a long time, as his shots frequently hit nothing but net and he reminds us of **Lee Humphrey** in a lot of ways. So when Clarke, **Willie Warren**, and 6'3 Jr **Faisal Aden** from Irving (God's Academy) TX all get hot at the same time, which was the case on Saturday when Team Texas was up by 20 points at the end of the first half against the Southern Cal All-Stars, they can beat anybody. However, when you live by the sword, you also die by the sword, which is what happened when they ran up against Branch West Team Reebok in the semi-finals. Team Texas also had plenty of depth in the backcourt with 6'0 Frosh **K.C. Miller** from Irving (God's Academy) TX, but they didn't have an answer inside for 6'7 Jr **Tyrese Breshers** from Los Angeles (Price) CA, who potentially could make the same type of improvement this summer that North Carolina's 6'8 Frosh **Deon Thompson** made two years ago when he played for Gottlieb in the Branch West Team Reebok program. The fourth team in the final four of the Platinum Division of the *Las Vegas Easter Classic* was the Las Vegas Prospects, which featured players like 6'8 Jr **Luke Babbitt** from Reno (Galena) NV, 6'0 **Chris James** from Las Vegas (Cimarron) NV, and 6'8 Jr **Olek Czyz** from Reno (H.S.) NV. Babbitt doesn't have great athleticism, but he's got excellent post moves and rebounding skills, plus he can step out and beat you with his outside shot, which makes him a perfect fit for the way they play at Ohio State. James, who had five 3-pointers and 23 points the first time we saw him play and 27 points in his team's semi-finals lost to the Southern Cal All-Stars, was one of the best shooters that we saw all weekend. He's also excellent at getting his shot, well built physically, has good athleticism, and is reported to have no offers on the table. So obviously he would be steal at the mid-major level. Czyz is more athletic than he looks and is not afraid to use his body to bang people around inside, which makes him intriguing for schools at the mid-to-high Division I level, especially if he is able to develop a mid-range jump shot. Another one of the best players in the tournament was UCLA-bound 6'4 Jr **Malcolm Lee** from Riverside (J.W. North) CA. He hasn't grown to 6'5 or 6'6, which is what had been reported, but Lee has the ball handling and passing skills necessary to play point guard and the athleticism and outside shooting necessary to project as one of the top 20-ranked juniors nationally. Lee also is great in the clutch, as he hit a number of big shots, and his upside and potential are unlimited, as we suspect he's still only just beginning to scratch the surface of how good he can become. The first time we saw Belmont Shore their best player was 6'5 Jr **J.P. Olukemi** from Simi Valley (Stoneridge) Prep) CA. We're talking about a 5th Year Junior with explosive athleticism, a toughness on the boards, and improving perimeter skills. The second time we saw Belmont Shore the guy who came up big was 6'7 Jr **Renaldo Woolridge** from North Hollywood (Harvard-Westlake) CA, who finished with 24 points and impressed us with ability to both make outside shoots and get to the basket. We also were impressed with the M33M Magic, which featured 6'5 Jr **Elliott Williams** from Collierville (St. Georges) TN, 6'8 Soph **Christian Watford** from Trussville (Hewitt Trussville) AL, 6'8 Jr **Sampson Carter** from Memphis (Hamilton) TN, 6'2 **Dwight Buycks** from Milwaukee (Bayview) TN, 6'5 Soph **Jarrod Bryant** from Salisbury (Prep) CT, and 6'9 **Genesis Maciel** from Compton (Centennial) CA. Williams is a multi-dimensional athlete who more than lived up his reputation as the best junior in Tennessee and top 60-ranked player nationally in the Class of 2008. Watford is good enough to be ranked #19 nationally in the sophomore class by the *HOOP SCOOP*, thanks to his ability to shoot the three, excellent moves to the basket, and big time athleticism. Carter is ranked #34 in the state by our Tennessee Correspondent **Andre Whitehead**, but that might be about 30 spots too low, as he impressed us with his quickness and high energy level, ability to score around the basket and willingness to get it done on the boards, despite he slender frame and lack of strength.

Buycks, who originally signed with Bradley, but is expected to go the prep school route, is an athletic combo guard who makes solid decisions and finds ways to get to the basket. Bryant is an excellent passer for his size and is good at getting to the hole, but he's really a reclassified sophomore, which means his upside potential might not be as great as some other players. Maciel is a project, but we like his size and potential. The Compton Magic, which featured 6'3 Soph **Justin Hawkins** from Woodland Hills (Taft) CA, 6'3 Soph **Xavier Thames** from Sacramento (Pleasant Valley) CA, 6'5 Soph **Jamual Bryant** from Salisbury (Prep) CT, 6'5 Soph **Craig Payne** from Etiwanda (H.S.) CA, and 6'6 Soph **Terran Carter** from Woodland Hills (Taft) CA, had one of the best young teams in the 17-Under Division of the *Las Vegas Easter Classic*. The two players that we liked the best on Next Level Basketball Australia Elite were 6'7 Jr **Mathiang Maout** from Lenoir (Patterson School) NC and 6'10 **Ater Majok** from the Sudan via American International in Australia. Neither scored many points, but Maout has good moves to the basket and good ball handling and passing skills, which means he might be able to project as a point guard down the road, and Majok is a high energy athletic shot blocker who runs the court like a deer and dunks in your face. 5'9 **Isaiah Thomas** from South Kent (Prep) CT put up prolific numbers, but he took a lot of shots to do it. And we're still trying to figure out what all the hype is about with regards to 6'4 Jr **Brendon Lavender** from Mesa (Mountain View) AZ. Instead, the two other players who intrigued us on the Arizona Magic were 6'7 Jr **Aaron Fuller** from Mesa (H.S.) AZ, who was active on the boards, and 6'4 **Shayar Lee** from Glendale (Apollo) AZ. One of the biggest sleepers in the tournament was to be 6'8 **Isiah Brown** from Miami (South Miami) FL. This skinny athlete scored 15 points when we saw him and he flat out got it done, as he dunks in your face, gets more than his share of rebounds, and has a knack for finding the open man when he gets double-teamed inside. 6'6 **Orane Chin** from Miramar (H.S.) FL didn't set the world on fire when we saw the Broward Bobcats Elite, but he did draw some rave reviews when he had 37 points in a game later in the tournament. We also were really impressed with 6'4 Jr **Iman Shumpert** from Hobart (H.S.) IN, who was another one of the biggest sleepers to emerge in this tournament. And we might even be tempted to rank this explosive athlete who thrives in transition among the top 100 juniors nationally, if we thought he could keep you honest from beyond the arc. One of the biggest disappointments in the entire tournament was 6'9 Jr **Stanley Simpson** from Chicago (Leo) IL, who was plagued by foul trouble when we saw him and did not even come close throughout the tournament to resembling the same guy that we saw last December at the *Big Dipper Tournament* in the *Big Dipper Tournament* at Rich South High School in Richton Park, IL. The Houston Hoops, which featured 6'2 Soph **Junior Cadougan** from Humble (Christian Life) TX, 6'7 Jr **Olu Ashalou** from Humble (Christian Life) TX, 6'3 Jr **Jeremy Green** from Austin (Bowie) TX, 6'2 Soph **Elijah Johnson** from Las Vegas (Cheyenne) NV, 6'6 Jr **Jeremy McCarty** from Houston (Westside) TX, 6'8 Soph **Keith Gallon** from Houston (Timberwood) TX, 6'6 Jr **Corbin Ray** from Katy (Taylor) TX, and 6'7 Jr **Brian Stafford** from Humble (Christian Life) TX, never seemed to get things clicking, as they were upset in the first round of the playoffs by the Arizona Rage Seniors. However, the Houston Hoops was without their best player - 5'10 Soph **Tommy Griffin** from Houston (Madison) TX, who is out with an injury until the summer. The Portland Legends lost to Team Texas in the round of 16 of the playoffs, but 6'8 Jr **John Meyhew** from Eugene (South Eugene) OR, 6'2 Jr **Anthony Golden** from Portland (Madison) OR, 6'8 Jr **DeAngelo Casto** from Spokane (Ferris) WA, 6'0 Jr **Blair Wheadon** from Johnson City (H.S.) OR, 6'5 Soph **Anthony Brown** from Spokane, 6'8 Soph **Brock Osweiler** from Kalispell (Flathead) WA, 6'2 Soph **Avery Bradley** from Tacoma (Bellarmine) WSA, 6'0 Soph **Jordan Ellis** from Medford (North Medford) OR all will get recruited at varying levels of the Division I spectrum. Another well balanced and very fundamentally sound team was Utah Pump N' Run, which featured 6'4 **Charles Aboud** from Logan (H.S.) UT, 6'9 Jr **Ben Aird** from Bountiful (H.S.) UT, 6'7 Jr **Brady Hurst** from Kaysville (Davis) UT, 6'4 Jr **Nick Thompson** from Clearfield (H.S.) UT, 6'0 Jr **Holton Hanaker** from Woods Cross (H.S.) UT, 6'5 Jr **Taylor Brown** from Sandy (Alta) UT, 6'10 Jr **Jordan Stone** from Smithfield (Skyview) UT, and 6'1 Jr **Davis Emery** from Bountiful (Viewmont) UT. We also have to mention 6'4 Jr **Brad Tinsley** from Oregon City (H.S.) OR, who was one of the more skilled and best 3-point shooters that we saw in the tournament, and 6'9 Soph **Colin Borchert** from Glendale (Mountain Ridge) AZ, who apparently has grown several inches already this year. Not only is Borchert one of the top young prospects on the West Coast, but he is an excellent passing and very skilled big man with surprising athleticism and mobility for somebody his size and a rainbow like shoot from beyond the arc, which goes in more often than it should. And one to write down for the future is 6'4 Soph **Trent Lockett** from Minnetonka (Hopkins) MN. Apparently Lockett has grown six inches during the last year and this multi-dimensional athlete who sees the floor, shoot the three, handles well for his size, blocks shots, rules the boards, is extremely quick and athletic, and has a 4.0 gpa is just only just beginning to scratch the surface. We also have to mention that while this year's *Las*

*Vegas Easter Classic* didn't have as much star power as it did a year ago, the quality of deep was much better and, as a result, it's easy to see why an overwhelming number of Division I head coaches, including Marquette's **Tom Crean**, Oklahoma State's **Sean Sutton**, Miami-FL's **Frank Haith**, Georgia Tech's **Paul Hewitt**, UNLV's **Lon Kruger**, Virginia's **Dave Leitao**, California's **Ben Braun**, New Mexico's **Steve Alford**, South Florida's **Stan Heath**, Pepperdine's **Vance Walberg**, Western Kentucky's **Darrin Horn**, San Francisco's **Jesse Evans**, Santa Clara's **Kerry Keating**, Southeast Missouri State's **Scott Edgar**, and Fairfield's **Ed Cooley**.