

2018 Burger King Classic Preview

The 35th Annual Burger King Classic, the number one four team basketball tournament in the nation according to MaxPreps will be held at the Cathedral Prep Events Center starting tonight, Friday, Jan. 12, and concluding on Saturday night. This year's tournament hosts three elite out-of-town opponents: St. John's College High School from Washington D.C., St. Rita's from Chicago, and All Hallows High School from the Bronx in New York.

The first match up of this year's tournament debuts St. John's College High School and All Hallows High School. They will tip off at 6 p.m. The host Cathedral Prep Ramblers will tip off against St. Rita's in the second game, with tipoff scheduled for 7:30 p.m. All games will be available on live stream throughout the weekend.

St. John's is a powerhouse team that relies on its deep roster to help them win games. They feature Casey Morsell, a 6'2" guard that looks to be the leader of this program. He has already picked up attention from Georgetown, Oklahoma State, and Virginia, and he is only a junior. On the floor with Morsell will be 6'0" senior point guard Tre Wood, who signed with Massachusetts. Richard Njoku, the 6'6" center will be the big man on the floor for St. John's, and he will play at the Naval Academy next fall. Sophomore guard Darius Maddox will look to provide a huge boost off the bench already reviving an offer from UMass. 6'3" junior guard Nick Johnson has already been offered by Division I Drexel and Manhattan while 5'11" senior guard Donald Hartley is also getting college attention.

All Hallows High School boasts 6'3" junior guard Nick Johnson. He is the main factor in St. Rita's court presence, and that hasn't gone unnoticed. He has been offered by Division I

Drexel and Manhattan already. Donald Hartley, the 5'11" guard who plays alongside Johnson, is also getting college attention.

The 7:30 p.m. game will pit St. Rita's against the Cathedral Prep Rambler basketball team. Led by 6'7" junior Jeremiah Oden, St. Rita's will look to give the Ramblers all they can handle. His play has earned him offers from Villanova and Michigan already. He will lead a young group of talent against the Ramblers. Prep heads into this tournament for the 35th year, having claimed the title three times. Led by Adam Upperman, Aaron McBride, Tommy Russo and Joe Mischler, the Ramblers will look to make some noise this year. After an up and down season so far they look for the tournament to be a positive move in the right direction heading into the rest of their season. Also on the floor for Prep is 6'6" center Josh Charlery who is a transfer from the Virgin Islands.

Look for the 2018 edition of the Burger King Classic to feature some exciting basketball on display as some of the best teams and players on the east coast duke it out for the title this weekend at the Burger King Classic.

2017-18 CYO Preseason Guide

(Most teams have played three games at this point, but since this article was primarily written prior to the season, the title and content reflects the authors' preseason predictions.)

#7 St. Pete's

Matching last season's success will be hard to come by, considering St. Pete's brings in a brand new coaching staff

and returns only one senior. However, this team is the future of CYO basketball and is just going to have to trust the process. They have gone in a completely different direction from the sidelines and will look much different out on the court. Let's see what the youngsters can muster up this year.

Back court: Dominic MacArthur will be given all he can handle as the centerpiece of this rebuilding program. The former JV Prep player looks to lead his young team and steer them in the right direction. Fellow junior Elijah Lyons brings experience to the team and figures to be a key part of the back court rotation. If this were a singing competition, Lyons would have the championship trophy already given to him. Let's hope he can sing his way to at least a few wins this year. Matt DeMarco also has a chance to make an impact. Better known for being a 2x state champ on the tennis court, he is athletic and skilled enough to make a difference right away. Lastly, Jimmy Lynch looks to make an impact on the defensive side of the ball using his athleticism.

Front court: Both Tim Klebanski and Matt Berry will be charged with holding down the paint this year for the Dukes. Skill isn't exactly a word to describe their games, but the energy, toughness, tenacity, and confidence they bring to each and every game shows up. Both lack in height, so it will be a major challenge for them to get involved in the games. Joe DeMarco will team up with his brother, bringing leadership as the lone senior.

Analysis: Ms. Lion will be taking over the reigns as head coach this year assisted by new Prep gym teacher, Mr. Schreffler. Schreffler is most known for losing in the intramural 3-on-3 tournament just a few months back, and he may seek some vengeance on those players. Too bad it will be hard to come by with this team. It will be interesting to see what direction Lion takes this extremely young and talent-lacking squad. If CYO had a tennis team, these guys would be incredible, but this is basketball, so good luck Saint Pete's.

Again, be patient. It's gonna be a tough go around for Dukes fans. But, there's always next year...right?

#6 St. Luke's

St. Luke's renaissance begins this season. After not having a squad last year, the Crusaders look to march their way onto the scene. They bring in many new faces from years past and no one really knows what to expect from this group. It is reassuring to see the team re-emerge in the league, showing the growing interest in CYO. It is still a relatively young squad, but all in all, they should still be competitive come game time.

Back court: Anthony Gulick (probably the best player ever) will team up with former Prep JV players Stan Kinecki and Alex Ruler to form the back court. This should easily be the most productive unit of this team considering how amazing Gulick truly is. They will be paired with Dante McLauren as well (not quite Gulick but he has some skills that could surprise people.) Joey Nicolia is a nice addition from Collegiate Academy as well and he has the ability to score in bunches (much like Gulick does whenever he is on the court.) Additionally, senior Max Malinowski looks to play a big role in the rotation. It's been quite a long time since we've heard such an unproven group talk themselves up so much in the preseason. But, confidence is not the issue. Pure talent may be though. No one knows much about this back court other than the self-hyped Gulick.

Front court: Depth will be an issue here all year long. Center Anthony Roth comes to town from Mercyhurst where he formerly played basketball. He's a big presence, but stamina may be a lingering problem for this big man. The same could be said for junior Logan Brandel. Both front court pieces have size, and Roth has potential, experience, and ability, but mobility may be a problem. Expect the Crusaders to play a lot of small ball and really try to only keep one of their bigs on the floor at

a time. Andy Samuels may emerge as a key piece as well as he brings size, physicality, strength, and athleticism. They may have the largest front court in the league, but teams tend to be going smaller these days, and Gulick may even have to play some center. Gulick at center shouldn't be problem for him, however. Think of it much like Magic Johnson starting for the injured Kareem in the NBA Finals.

Analysis: This is yet another team that looks primed for the future. They should be competitive this year, but don't expect a big number in the win column. They have plenty of young talent that needs to be refined before being considered as a contender. A lot depends on their big guys and how they can move with the pace of their guards. The Crusaders need to play to their strengths if they hope to win anything this year. Don't expect anything more than a middle-of-the-pack finish from St. Luke's...not this year at least.

#5 St. James

Who's on this team? Saint James seems to be the San Antonio Spurs of CYO. No matter what the roster looks like, never count them out. St. James has a winning formula. Put pressure on the offense and be disciplined against defenses. Every year the Panthers are contenders, and this season is no different. They lost some key pieces from last year's dominant squad, but they have enough coming back to still make a run at the championship. They may not boast much depth, but St. James knows how to play together and really make their opponent's nights difficult.

Back court: As Joe Campbell goes, so go the Panthers. He is a consensus First Team All-CYO this season and is the engine that drives this team. Campbell is the leader and knows how to flat out win. His killer dance moves might lead to a few travels here and there, but he should have a great year. He finishes strong in the paint, can really stroke it from outside, has nice touch, and can run the offense. Christian

Babo (who?) looks to make an impact next to Campbell as well. The Harborcreek track and field star has taken his athleticism to the gym and hopes to ignite St. James' transition attack. Both Alex and Carter Clement, along with Cayden Lombard will be relied on for bench production.

Front court: Not only does St. James boast talent from the guards, but big men Linden Hoover (who?) and Ryan Krusiewski are big time players. Krusiewski is a huge body down low and flashes of his brute strength from football can be seen on the court. He's skilled around the basket and has a knack for the offensive glass. Hoover is longer and much more versatile. He can shoot it but also uses his length and height to have his way in the paint and on defense. Joe Campbell's younger brother, John, looks to make an impact as well. It's going to be quite a difficult task following in the footsteps of Joe, but he'll give it a shot.

Analysis: Look for the Panthers to be competitive night in and night out. They are extremely well-coached and a disciplined club. The biggest "if" is depth. If a starter gets in foul trouble, the offense's upside takes a huge dip. They need one or two steady contributors to come off the bench. Regardless, everyone hates playing St. James due to their tiny court, long commute, pressure defense, athleticism, offensive versatility, and patience. We don't see that changing anytime soon. They can only hope to not crumble like they did last year against Saint Jude's.

#4 St. George

Unfortunately, we are contractually obligated to cover St. George this year. St. George is easily one of the deepest teams in the league and has plenty of talent, like always. They lost major contributors Trey Dietrick and Charlie Lichtenwalter to graduation, but they return plenty of talent, along with highly touted transfers to overshadow the losses. If everyone gets on the same page sooner rather than later,

we're talking about a tough out come playoff time.

Back court: Again, we are legally bound to talk about the Lancers this year. But, they return John Lupo, Mike Bevan, Paul "Fats" Causgrove, and Mike Rahner. Lupo should have the ball in his hands most of the time, but Bevan is in the conversation for being the best shooter in all of CY0.

Rahner could be a breakout candidate. After showing flashes of athleticism, shooting range, and guard skills, he could be in for minutes off the bench. Add in Fats Causgrove for more depth, and this is a very formidable back line.

Transfer and All-State kicker Anthony Lupo will be among the starters this year. Despite being short in stature, he is tough, strong, competitive, and a menace on defense.

Front court: Yes, we still have to write about their forwards. We apologize. For the first time in a while, the Lancers will be reliant on their front court. Despite no player standing even 6'0", this should be one of the best units in the league.

It all starts with senior Nick Wisinski and the energy he brings to each and every game. He's penciled in as our Defensive Player of the Year and rightfully so. He is the best defender and can do it out on the perimeter or go to battle with big guys inside. He gets the job done and also makes plays on the offensive end. Wisinski will fight night in and night out and is a coach's dream and opponent's nightmare. Hopefully he will not foul out often. If he can control his emotions, we may be looking at the most valuable piece to this team.

A teammate of Wisinski's on the football field as well, Matt Lupo, will be wearing a basketball uniform for the first time since freshman year with Prep. St. George is lacking that go-to scorer, and Lupo may be the one to fill that void. He is very strong but needs to get acclimated to basketball once again. Seniors Noah Noble and Matt Zupan will finish off the

front court. Noble will get the starting edge. He is extremely versatile and will throw up a lot of 3s. Noble will also be in charge of keeping the rest of the team in check. Saint George is full of players who have been known to be a little hot-headed, but Noble should be able to keep them together. He's worked on diversifying his game. Standout Prep soccer player, Matt Zupan, will look to build off a successful grade school basketball career with the Lancers. Zupan is without a doubt the best player to ever touch a ball for Saint George, and many expect him to eventually take his talents to the big leagues. It's truly amazing how unstoppable he is.

Analysis: Last paragraph, I promise. Does this team look familiar to you? If it does, that's because five of the seven best players return from the 8th grade team that made the run to states in 2014 for the Lancers. That team lacked true size, too. So maybe all these concerns are irrelevant considering they've gotten it done with this group before. Or, maybe some things have changed since then. Saint George will continue to stick with their grit and grind style of play that they have made so popular within their organization for so long. Anthony Lupo will be a pest on the perimeter, and when Nick Wisinski isn't posting pictures of his girlfriend on Snapchat, he plans to make the paint a no fly zone. If John Lupo can step into the premier guard role and Matt Lupo shows flashes of his former basketball prowess, this team can compete with anyone in the state.

#3 Blessed Sacrament

After a season plagued by inconsistency, the Bulldogs seem to finally have all the pieces in place. Much of the pressure will fall on young head coach Tyler Smith. The talent is there for this year to be a big one, but it is contingent on how well the players mold around a new centerpiece and also how they react to playing within a disciplined offensive system.

Back court: Senior Alex Welz started at point guard his

freshman year before joining Prep's JV team the following season. Alex came back and is hungrier now more than ever to steer his team to success. He will look to be the steadying force and leader behind the Bulldogs this year.

Joining him in the back court will be former McWho JV starter Tyler Ackman. Ackman is one of the league's best shooters who, when hot, can throw 30 points on the board. He will get his work exclusively from the off-ball guard spot. Look for coach Smith to draw plays up for him when he gets going. Alex Baldi is an athletic combo guard who will provide immediate depth and competitiveness off the bench for BS. He is a welcome addition to what's been a depleted bench the last couple of seasons. We can just hope that everyone keeps their girls far away from this kid.

Front court: The most notable newcomer is Adam Malesiewski. Malesiewski played JV basketball at Prep as a freshman and then suited up for varsity as a Sophomore. He is the best isolation scorer in CYO basketball and is a game changer for BS. This adds a much needed scoring punch to the Bulldog's repertoire and gives them a true monster on the front end who can also initiate the offense.

Although the starting front court may not be the largest in pure size, it more than makes up for it with brute strength, muscle, and heart. Seniors Hunter Orlando and Ryan Sargent make up arguably the best rebounding tandem in the league. Orlando may very well be the best rebounder in the league but is still raw in other parts of his game. Abba will give Orlando all the strength he will need every game. With Sargent at the 5, he is athletic enough to take advantage of mismatches with true, traditional bigs. If he can be more consistent, the Bulldogs have another matchup nightmare on their hands.

Senior John MacKenzie will shore up the bigs and bring exceptional size at 6'5". If he builds off of his rapidly

improving post game that was so impressive down the stretch last year, look out. John's political outtakes may be too much for opposing defenses to handle, and they could lead to easy buckets for the big fella.

Analysis: With so much returning talent coming back, along with one of the two best newcomers joining them, BS is in good shape to turn some heads this year. If Welz or Sargent can step up as a consistent, reliable number two option behind Malesiewski, they could be lethal. The Bulldogs also need to ensure they play smart, disciplined basketball and remain unselfish. If they do all those things, and coach Smith gets the most out of his players, we're talking about a championship caliber team...if they're legal.

#2 St. Jude's

Fresh off a ticket to the big dance in Allentown last season, St. Jude's may be even better this year. Returning all but one starter, the "Jude's Dudes" envision an even more impressive finish this year. They also brought in a big time transfer. However, they won't be sneaking up on anyone this time around. Losing leading scorer Collin Williams to graduation shouldn't leave any fans panicking, as Jude's Dudes have plenty left over to threaten for a state title once again.

Back court: James Proper returns as the assumed leader in the back court. Although he is one of the taller players in the league, Proper can play positions 1-5 and has our vote for most versatile player. Proper has the potential to be a dominant player in the league again after an impressive season last year. Let's just hope he spends half as much time on the court as he does on his hair. He is freakishly long and will be disrupting many smaller guards out on the perimeter this year. Coming off a PCL tear, it was believed that senior Henry Fessler would still be up to the task of playing for the Dudes. Unfortunately, it just didn't work out, as Fessler's knee couldn't hold up. Hopefully he recovers well from injury

and continues to be the Dudes' biggest supporter.

Sophomore Collin Johnson is another huge pickup for this team, as he plans to live in his brother's footsteps and become a major part of the Saint Jude's basketball program. Juniors Dave Clark and Matt Zimmerman will team up with seniors Matt Leggiero and John Hagerty to provide depth behind Proper. Dave Clark is known for missing out on big opportunities. All are very capable shooters (even Dave). Of them, Clark seems to have the early edge for minutes right away.

Front court: This is the strength of the St. Jude. Good luck grinding down low with the likes of Nick Carneval, Tommy Agresti, Jared Heidt, and Sean McEnery.

Carneval, another new arrival, will be the largest player in the league and was a top player on the Prep freshmen team three years ago. When Nick Carneval isn't breaking a leg on stage, he plans to be breaking ankles on the court. He will be teamed up with Tommy Agresti. Agresti just finds ways to beat his opponents in ways that make the refs look at each other and shrug their shoulders, but he simultaneously makes opposing coaches break their clipboards in half. He does everything on the court.

Heidt is the ultimate glue guy. He rebounds at a high rate, defends well, and hustles. Lastly, McEnery shows up in the big moments but also contributes in more ways than what the box score may indicate. Perhaps the most interesting depth piece will be Nick Maloney. Maloney is a tough scrapper who will look to get reserve minutes along with Albert Caldwell, who brings size. Maloney is a rock defensively, but offense may be an issue as he has trouble catching the ball.

Analysis: This team has all the looks of repeating as CYO regional champions. But they shouldn't feel overconfident just yet as the rest of the league is significantly improved as well. And, they didn't exactly cruise to the tournament

either. They had some hard fought games, and a lot of breaks went their way last season. However, they bring back their core and also hauled in two big time transfers. Everyone knows their role on this squad and plays within themselves. Time will tell how they hold up in the vastly improved league, but the door is open for another trip to the state tournament.

#1 OLP

Initially, expectations were set relatively low for the OLP Crusaders, a perennial powerhouse, coming into this season. Then, former Prep basketball players started pouring into the gym, and we may be looking at a very dangerous team now. Along with a couple holdovers from years past, OLP will need the newcomers to jell and figure out how to play together quickly. We should be in for a fun ride this year, so get ready for some exciting basketball.

Back court: This unit looks to bring the swagger back to OLP basketball. The Crusaders boast arguably the best back court in CYO this year. Newcomers Ethan Rys and Marcus Lewkowicz both opted to join OLP rather than play for Prep this season. They are poised to become the class of CYO guard play and hope it leads to a successful season. They will be joined by sharpshooter Drew Bleggi and former McWho JV starter Quinn Baird. Baird is a solid all-around player who looks to log big minutes off the bench. Senior Joe Coppola adds depth to a loaded back court.

Front court: As stacked as the guards are, OLP has the personnel to have a perfect compliment to them down low. Senior Alex Douds will be the best player in CYO this season. He is a dynamic scorer who boasts quickness, length, shooting prowess, finishing touch around the rim, and high volume scoring ability. He will be nearly impossible to stop from the moment he takes the floor.

Hogging up the paint will be a committee of three capable big

men. The first opportunity will most likely go to Chris Smith. More known for his play on the football field, Smith is a large body who is able to provide energy and toughness. Nolan Tupek provides additional interior beef while Senior Rob Harris plays with more finesse. He has a nice shooting touch and is very mobile for his size.

Analysis: If what they say is true, that guards really do win games, then this squad should be in for one heck of a season. Filter in our Player of the Year, Alex Douds, and this is easily the most explosive team in the league. If the newcomers all blend well together and play team basketball, look out. The big guys are tough, each bringing their own unique skill set to the table to. It all comes down to chemistry. If this group can put it all together, there really isn't an identifiable weakness here. This OLP squad looks incredible on paper, but many believe they will not mesh well on the court. Locker room problems are bound to arise, and no one seems to have stepped up as a leader for this club. Sorry OLP, but Joe Mischler can't save you this time.

Preseason Accolades

Player of the Year: Alex Douds

Douds is a new player to CYO with an all around skill set that will fit perfectly in the modern game. With his size, length, and skill, along with his silky three ball, he has all the makings to be the best player in the league.

Honorable Mentions: Adam Malesiewski, Tommy Agresti

Rookie of the Year: Adam Malesiewski

Malesiewski is maybe the most dynamic scoring weapon in the game. He can do it from all three levels but prefers to stay in the box. Although not our vote for Player of the Year, he will certainly be in the conversation.

Honorable mentions: Marcus Lewkowicz, Chris Smith

Best Shooter: Drew Bleggi

Bleggi has a deadly three point shot that has progressed every season. After coming off of a strong performance behind the line last season, Bleggi has the ability to make a statement this season.

Honorable Mentions: John Lupo, Alex Douds

Best Rebounder: Hunter Orlando

Through the power of Abba and Ceen, Orlando is a monster on the glass. With his unorthodox rebounding methods and brute strength, Orlando will be the physical presence Blessed Sacrament has been boasting for years now.

Honorable Mentions: Tommy Agresti, Nick Wisinski

Best Defender: Nick Wisinski

This seemed like the obvious choice here. Wisinski has been cooped up behind Mischler for too long as the backup quarterback, and he plans to take his frustrations out on the basketball court. With his unpredictable temperament and knack for pestering opposing players, Wisinski will rule the league on defense for Saint George.

Honorable Mentions: Anthony Lupo, Tommy Agresti

Most Versatile: James Proper

Proper has everything you want in a modern day point-forward. His court vision is one of the best we have ever seen, and he can score from anywhere on the court. With his height and long wingspan, Proper can play all five positions on the floor.

Honorable Mentions: Alex Douds, Joe Campbell

Top NBA Prospect: Nick Maloney

Anyone who has ever seen an NBA game should know this one. Maloney has everything it takes to play at the next level. He is an athletic rim protector who can draw fouls like no other with his impressive flopping ability. Expect to see Maloney in the top five come next draft.

Honorable Mentions: John MacKenzie, Anthony Gulick

Most Entertaining: Tommy Agresti

Agresti is a wizard on the court. Blink and he's at the rim. He has blazing speed, and with his peculiar shot selection and unusual play style, he never fails to amaze. Agresti will constantly excite crowds.

Honorable Mentions: Joe Campbell, Anthony Lupo

Coach of the Year: Matt Squeglia

After an incredible underdog story last year, Squiggs is poised for another run as the top coach. He is a player favorite and inspires his team to have fun. Squiggs is a coach every team wishes they had.

Honorable Mentions: Ms. Lion, Tyler Smith, Not Daryl

Superlatives

Preseason All-CY0 1st Team

Alex Douds can score at all 3 levels with the best of them. His length causes problems on defensive end.

Joe Campbell is the most important player to his team. He does all the little things right both on and off the court and is the ultimate hustler.

Adam Malesiewski is an elite iso scorer and may be BS's missing piece.

Tommy Agresti's play is defined by three words: somehow, some

way.

James Proper is a long, lanky senior who may be the most versatile player in CY0.

All-CY0 2nd Team

Hunter Orlando may very well be best rebounder in the league.

John Lupo will most likely be best player on an always competitive Lancer squad.

Nick Wisinski potentially makes the most all-around, individual defensive impact. Think Draymond Green.

Marcus Lewkowicz may be heavy contributor in the best offense in the league.

Alex Welz looks to bring consistency back to the Dog Pound and set talented teammates up.

All-CY0 3rd Team

Ryan Sargent had a few huge games last year. His shot consistency is key.

Sean McEnery is a clutch stretch 4 who played a crucial role down stretch en route to last year's state tournament appearance.

Anthony Lupo is a pesky guard who will get in opponents' heads and play hard.

Ethan Rys is a gifted guard who will look to be more of a team player with so many weapons surrounding him.

Matt Lupo looks to follow up a stellar Prep football career with a strong showing on the court.

Groundbreaking Junior League announced by Lavar Ball

It has been debated for years about whether or not players should have the ability to skip college and go to the NBA. Legends like LeBron James, Kobe Bryant, and Kevin Garnett skipped the collegiate level to play professionally, proving that college is not always needed for development. In 2005, however, the NBA incorporated a new rule into the draft. A player had to be of 19 years of age at least to qualify for the draft. The commissioner of the league at the time, David Stern, stated that the reason for this change was to discourage urban Americans from looking past college and relying on making the NBA for a stable source of income. Most top players now go to college for just one year and then go to the draft, arguably making the age requirement redundant. An alternative for players that don't want to play in college is going overseas to earn money while playing ball. But never has there been the idea of adding another league to transition players into the NBA, until this week by none other than Lavar Ball.

We all know about the controversy surrounding the Ball family. Whether it's Lavar saying that his son can defeat Stephen Curry in a one-on-one or LiAngelo shoplifting in China, people are aware of the Ball family shenanigans. But the newest installment to the drama surrounding the Ball family is Lavar's announcement of establishing the Junior Basketball Association. This new league directly combats the NCAA's ability to acquire top-ranked high school ballers by offering contracts to its players. Contracts for lower ranked players are estimated to be worth around \$3,000 whereas top ranked players can earn up to \$10,000. Lavar hopes to form ten teams

in this association, with each having eight players on a roster.

In a statement made by JBA, it said, "The JBA league is for basketball players who intend to pursue the sport professionally. With the introduction of the JBA, allowing the NCAA to regulate and control the eligibility status of top basketball prospects will no longer be an issue. There is no need to partake in an institution that claims its purpose is not to help you prepare for your professional career."

While this move is very risky, it is undeniable that it has serious potential. Players have protested for years about the age requirement, and while this new league may not eliminate the rule, it will allow the best NBA prospects to earn money and play with the best of the best in their age group. But the real question is whether or not the JBA will be able to survive and compete with the NCAA.

"It ultimately depends on whether or not Lavar is able to provide these contracts and follow through on his promises to these athletes," Prep junior and basketball fan Andrew Olds says, "If these players are paid appropriately, big name players will definitely join because of the guaranteed money and good coverage because of the concentrated talent in this league."

The JBA has said that their league will be up and running in the summer of 2018. This incredibly quick startup is a prime example of a high risk, high reward scenario. If the league is ready to start by this time and contains little to no flaws, the JBA will skyrocket. But if it fails in a significant matter, the very existence of this junior league could cease in an instant. Hopefully this new organization is able to take off this summer, because if one thing is for certain, nothing is going to be more entertaining than seeing these alpha NBA prospects bringing the best out of each other in high action and fast-paced games.

Meet Trae Young, a.k.a Stephen Curry 2.0

Yes, calling a player “Steph Curry 2.0” may be going a bit overboard, especially when he hasn’t graduated college. But collegiate superstar Trae Young is already a top-5 projected draft pick and is on track to becoming the NCAA player of the year. The 19-year-old Oklahoma Sooner point guard has been balling out this season, averaging 28.5 points (leads NCAA), and 10.5 assists (also 1st in the NCAA) per game. He accomplishes these averages by shooting 48 percent from the field as well as 38 percent from three. While these stats are impressive, you cannot say that he is the next Curry just based off of averages. Luckily, he backs up the comparisons to the two-time MVP with his fearless mentality.

Young is a phenomenal shooter from beyond the arc, with a strong emphasis on “beyond.” Just like Stephen Curry, Trae Young is able to shoot from 30 feet out and consistently make shots. Not only is he able to make threes and space the floor, he is also able to drive to the basket with elite ball handling and agility to secure his team two points. One particular aspect of Young’s game is absorbing contact and drawing the foul while driving into the lane. And because he shoots around 86 percent from the line, it makes it virtually impossible to stop him when he decides to B-line it for the hoop.

At this point in Trae Young’s college career, he is statistically playing better than Curry did in his first year of college at Davidson. On Tuesday, Young tied the NCAA men’s basketball assist record with 22. Curry’s highest for his freshman season at Davidson was a meager (in comparison to

Young's) 6 assists. With only ten games in the season, Trae has already scored 43 points in a game against Oregon. Curry had his highest scoring game as a freshman in a game against Michigan, when he scored 32 points. The competition Trae has faced this season so far has not been easy either. He was able to conquer the former number 3 team in the country (Wichita State), along with Oregon, who pretty much has a great basketball team every single season and is a perennial PAC-12 program. Curry, on the other hand, played in a much weaker conference than Young, which would arguably make it easier for him to score more and be more efficient on the court.

While it does seem the Sooner superstar guard does have the upper hand on Stephen Curry at this point in his career, it is truly impossible to predict what he will be like in the future. Last year, this type of treatment was given to Lonzo Ball. He is currently performing at a sub par level in the NBA, which does not live up to the hype that surrounded him in college. Similarly to Lonzo, Curry also had a rough rookie season, so for people to make these extremely early predictions is not necessarily naive, but premeditated. Who knows, maybe Young will come into the NBA as an immediate threat at the point guard position. But until then, basketball fans will just have to wait and see if Trae Young is the real deal.

2017-18 Cathedral Prep Basketball Preview

Returning to another season on the sidelines for the Ramblers, coach Mark Majewski will have his hands full this year. With a much younger group than usual, the emergence of Erie High, and

some key additions for McDowell, the competition will give Prep all they can handle. However, confidence is not lacking on West 9th Street. Although talent may be high, experience is low. Can the Ramblers overcome the odds, or will they crumble under the pressure?

Backcourt: The keys to the offense will be handed to senior Aaron McBride. The hope is that McBride is next in the long line of great Prep point guards. Last year, he was forced to play second fiddle to Jaryn Simpson, who now plays for Edinboro University. McBride has basketball in his blood as his sister, Kayla, is a WNBA All-Star. If there is any experience shortage in the backcourt, it is more than made up for with McBride. "As a leader, I motivate my teammates to be the best version of themselves in basketball, but more importantly to be great young men."

The off guard spot will be manned by a committee of sophomore Alfonso Pickens, freshman Michael Lucarotti, junior Isiah Crosby, versatile sophomore Quentin Santillan, and hard-working junior Caden Elwell. Both Pickens and Crosby have the ability to slide over to point guard to spell McBride. The presumptive sixth man, Tommy Russo, will bring defensive tenacity and experience off the bench.

Senior Adam Upperman may very well be Prep's best overall player. He uses his length, quickness, and athleticism to get to the rim and be a disruptive presence on defense. He's worked extremely hard to improve his jump shot and if the four 3s to open the season against North Allegheny is any indication, it's paid off.

Frontcourt: The biggest offseason get for the Ramblers was 6'6" 285-pound center, Josh Charlery. Charlery formerly played for the U.S. Virgin Islands national team and is a big, physical presence Prep needs. If he can stay on the floor for longer periods of time, he will be invaluable to the success of the team this year. Joining him down low as soon as next

week will be Joe Mischler. Fresh off back-to-back football state championships as the starting quarterback, Mischler needs some time to get back into basketball form and looks to add a level of intensity to the team.

Also looking to get some time in the rotation are athletic junior Sam Knox, sophomore Vincent Pisano, impressive freshman Liam Galla, and hustler Joe Corsale.

Final Analysis: This is the youngest Prep team in recent memory, but don't directly link youth with disappointment. This team also boasts more depth than it typically has in years past. There are many able bodies ready to battle for playing time right away, and they won't go down without a fight. If the senior core of Upperman, McBride, and Charlery set the tone for the team early and a couple of the young guys step up to play important roles, this could be as balanced and unpredictable a team as they come. Regardless of the results this year, the program is definitely heading in the right direction and looks to be a force for years to come. But, don't ever rule the Ramblers out—they've proven their doubters wrong once or twice before.

Cavaliers in a slump while the Celtics keep rolling

The NBA off-season has thrown every fan for a whirlwind by the various and almost outlandish trades made by many teams. Specifically in the east, Cavaliers fans were shocked when star point guard Kyrie Irving requested to be traded. Many people thought Kyrie was crazy, leaving a team that made it to the NBA Finals for the past three years. However, the

organization accepted his request, trading him to the Boston Celtics for their star point guard Isaiah Thomas, forward Jae Crowder, and a first round pick. For a fantastic player like Irving, fans from both sides argued about who “won” the trade. After the trade was finalized, Irving stated in his Boston Celtics press debut that he wanted to get away from the shadow created by arguably the best NBA player in the world, LeBron James.

As soon as the trade happened, each team made respective moves to attempt to be the best team in the East. Almost like something out of a movie, James’ Cavaliers and Irving’s Celtics faced off against each other in their home opener. However, this game was no longer about the duel about these two great players, instead focusing on the tragedy of another. Six minutes into the game, another key Celtic’s acquisition, Gordan Hayward, went down with a terrifying leg injury. This injury was a complete shock to anyone watching the game, whether at home or in the arena. Many basketball fans around the world thought the Celtics season ended six minutes into their beginning. Despite the injury, the Celtics continued to fight. The game ended with the Cavaliers winning 117-104.

The current NBA season is now 14 games in; and there is a surprising discrepancy between the Cavaliers’ record and Celtics’ record. According to NBA standings, the Celtics are number one in the east with a 12-2 record. The Cavaliers have had a slow start to the season, and currently sit at number 9 in the east with a 7-7 record. What surprises most fans is the Cavaliers’ disastrous slow start and the Celtics’ fantastic winning streak. The break down of these two teams play is important to understand their difference in record.

First is defense, the Cavaliers defense has been terrible whereas the Celtics have really stepped it up. According to ESPN, the Celtics have improved their defensive rating by 9.6 points from last season, the best improvement in the NBA. In contrast, the Cavaliers are dead last in the league for points

allowed per possession. CBS specifically outlined how the worst defense has been with the perimeter players, that independently collapses defenses on the outside and interior. Various news sites have remarked on Irving's newfound defensive ability; his length makes him a tough match up against other point guards.

Second is simply team play, the Celtics have dispersed their talent throughout the entire team, even with the loss of Gordon Hayward. Specifically, the Celtics' young players, Jaylen Brown and Jayson Tatum, have stepped up to a more dominant role on the team. Jaylen Brown, an already great perimeter defender, has stepped up his offensive capabilities. Jayson Tatum has also stepped up wherever his team needs every single game. Brad Stevens commented on team's ability, "We're in a situation right now where we're going to expect a lot out of those guys and we need them to be great, we need them to be able to respond to adversity, and we need to be able to respond to pats on the back just the same." The Cavaliers new additions have not been as exciting. While they acquired LeBron's best friend and former heat teammate Dwayne Wade, they are not able to re-spark the chemistry they had back in Miami. The Celtics spread their offense really well, each player may take over depending on the game. Whereas, the Cavaliers continue to become increasingly reliant on solely LeBron.

The NBA season is still a long way from ending. If the Celtics continue to keep the streak alive, they will have a very successful season. However, when playoff time comes, the Cavaliers might change their ways and be back to the successful team that everybody knows. This rivalry for best team in the east will be very fun to watch.

Top Three Winners of the 2017 NBA Offseason

If one word was used to describe the 2017 offseason, it would be "historic." The fluctuation of talent that occurred on each team this season is nothing short of remarkable. While some teams may have missed out on great opportunities, other franchises took full advantage of the occurrences this offseason. The following teams are the top performers of this year's offseason.

1. Cleveland Cavaliers

When it was reported that general manager David Griffin was being let go by the Cavaliers organization, the media was quick to criticize owner Dan Gilbert. These criticisms were intensified when Cavaliers star point guard Kyrie Irving stated that he wanted to be traded. But the new general manager, Koby Altman, stepped up and completely reloaded the Cavs' roster. To start the offseason, Altman was able to pick up a former MVP, Derrick Rose, who most recently played point guard for the New York Knicks. Rose averaged 18 points last season, while finishing first in the league last season for step back jump shot field goal percentage. Following this move, Altman was also able to sign a versatile defender in Jeff Green, along with Jose Calderon, a solid player to come off the bench.

Eventually, Altman was able to find a very beneficial trade offer for Kyrie Irving. In exchange for Irving, the Boston Celtics would send Isaiah Thomas, Jae Crowder, Ante Žižić, and the Brooklyn Nets' first round pick to Cleveland. This trade was a complete steal for the Cavs. Not only did Cleveland gain Isaiah Thomas, who averaged 28.9 points per game and finished fifth in last year's MVP voting), but they also gained a great shooter

and defender in Jae Crowder. While Žižić isn't much of a pickup, he is only 20 and has potential to be a solid player. And because Brooklyn is projected to only win about 30 games this season, the Cavaliers can potentially get a great player in next season's draft.

If you thought the Cavalier's offseason couldn't get any better, you are wrong. To cap off this amazing turnaround, Cleveland was able to sign Dwyane Wade. Although Wade is aging and is no longer a superstar, he is still able to average 18 points and shoot the ball. Not only that, but he is best friends with LeBron James. This combination may not be the same as it was in Miami, but it is undeniable that this chemistry will be deadly for any team facing the Cavaliers.

2. Oklahoma City Thunder

If there was any team in the NBA that knew how to rebound from losing it's best player, it would be OKC. When future Hall of Famer and former MVP Kevin Durant announced his decision to go to the Golden State Warriors, Thunder fans were devastated. But OKC point guard Russell Westbrook proved to be unfazed by this decision, responding by averaging a triple double and winning MVP the following season. Although the Thunder lost in the first round of the playoffs, it did not stop them from rebuilding. To start, they drafted a sleeper pick in Terrance Ferguson. Ferguson played in Australia last season, and although he had a poor season there, he still shows glimpses of becoming a great player in the NBA. After the draft, the Thunder desperately looked for a way to surround Westbrook with stars. Out of nowhere, Oklahoma City made a blockbuster trade with the Indiana Pacers. In exchange for Victor Oladipo and Damontas Sabonis, the Thunder would receive superstar forward Paul George. George averaged 24 points last season while shooting 46% from the field, and he is considered a top

ten player in the NBA.

To add to this rapidly growing roster, the Thunder replaced Taj Gibson with Patrick Patterson, who came with a cheaper contract and performed better on the court. And by also replacing a disappointing player in Cameron Payne, the Thunder added Raymond Felton, a veteran player to come off the bench for Russell Westbrook. To conclude the off season, OKC acquired none other than Carmelo Anthony. In exchange for just Enes Kanter, Doug McDermott, and a second round pick, the Thunder were able to get a top-five forward in Anthony. While Carmelo may have had a lack luster performance in New York, this was due to him being placed in a horrible system. Imagine being Carmelo, wasting your prime in a broken offense setting and not even making the playoffs. We will definitely see him play with a chip on his shoulder this year, proving that he still has what it takes to be an all-star.

3. Houston Rockets

With the potential to be the second seed in the West, Houston continues to show significant improvement. Although the Rockets lost Patrick Beverley, Sam Dekker, Montrezl Harrell, and Lou Williams, they were able to add all-star point guard Chris Paul along with P.J. Tucker and Luc Mbah a Moute. If you were to look up the textbook definition of a point guard, you would find Chris Paul's picture right over the word. Paul averaged about 20 points last season, but more importantly he averaged 10 assists per game. His ability to involve other players on the court offensively is deadly, especially on a team whose success is literally predicated on its offensive performance. Also, the Rockets picked up P.J. Tucker, who is a good rebounder, something the Rockets have been needing for quite some time. Luc Mbah a Moute may not be a major pickup for the

Rockets, but he may be able to provide a larger defensive presence on the Rockets, who are lacking obviously in that department.

Warriors, Cavs set to meet in third straight NBA Finals

History will be made this Thursday as the Cleveland Cavaliers will take the court against the Golden State Warriors for the third consecutive year in the NBA Finals. This is arguably the most anticipated championship series that the league has ever witnessed. It features the reigning world champions, led by the best player of this generation (and perhaps of all-time) in LeBron James. Golden State on the other hand has four All-Stars (including two-time MVP, Stephen Curry), the best regular season record (which was accomplished last season), the greatest 3-point arsenal ever, and the addition of another former MVP, Kevin Durant. The Warriors are the heavy favorites heading into Game 1.

Amid all the criticism of LeBron James throughout his career (not loyal, complains too much to officials, lack of production in clutch moments, etc.), he has proven to be a consistent threat to the legacy of Michael Jordan. This will be his 7th straight NBA Finals appearance, and he looks to add a fourth ring to his collection. After his decision to return home to Northeast Ohio, James promised to take the city of Cleveland back to the promise land. After losing to the Warriors in the Finals in 2015, LeBron came through and delivered the Cavaliers their first title, defeating the Warriors last year in 7 games. LeBron put on a dazzling show in the Finals last year averaging 29.7 points, 11.3 rebounds,

8.9 assists, 2.6 steals, and 2.3 blocks per game while shooting 49.4 percent from the floor, 37.1 percent from 3-point range, and 72.1 percent from the free throw line. He has the ability to completely take over games on both ends of the floor and overfill every stat column possible. As long as LeBron is on the floor, it is hard to imagine anyone else being considered a favorite.

Despite LeBron James's sheer greatness, he needs some help, right? Thankfully for him, Kyrie Irving is still right by his side along with Kevin Love, who happens to be having the best year of his career. Kyrie has shown time and time again that he is the best ball handler that this league may have ever seen. He can get to the rim at will due to his sublime quickness while also shooting .401 from 3-point range. He is a handful to say the least. Love will be asked to be a physical presence along with bringing his valuable floor-spreading ability. Complementary players such as J.R. Smith, Kyle Korver, and Channing Frye will be depended on to stroke the 3, and veterans Deron Williams and Richard Jefferson also bring experience off the bench. Lastly, Tristan Thompson is the classic glue guy on this roster. He brings tenacious rebounding and defensive versatility to a frontcourt that is in dire need of both those skills. Iman Shumpert will be asked to contribute defensively.

The Warriors carry a potent attack on both ends of the floor. Many overlook Golden State on defense, but that is in fact where they do the most damage. They finished second overall on defense this season and were first last year. They have the personnel to match up with literally anybody...on any team...on any court...under any conditions. The defense is anchored by Draymond Green. Standing only 6'7" tall, Green has the toughness and grit to bang with NBA bigs. He can shoot the ball, put it on the ground and attack the rim, and pass. He is virtually another guard out on the floor for Golden State that allows them to employ virtually any lineup they feel gives

them the greatest edge. Klay Thompson is a fellow All-Star that is an assassin from behind the arc. He is another player in this series that is capable of catching fire and can flip the game in his team's direction. Being the high volume shooter that he is, he still is a terrific defender who also stands at 6'7" and causes matchup problems for his opposition.

The NBA is a league of stars. If a team lacks star power, chances are, they probably won't get to far, especially when it comes to the playoffs. The Warriors won't have to worry about that anytime soon as they show up to each game knowing they have two MVPs at their disposal. Stephen Curry was the league's first unanimous MVP last season. He is one of the most deadly shooters that has ever played in the league. He brings swagger, confidence, and lots of points to every contest. His partner in crime is Kevin Durant. Durant left Oklahoma City surrounded by many questions and criticisms, but he has nonetheless made a new home in the bay area. He unquestionably fits with what the Warriors want to do and that is score...a lot. Andre Iguodala comes off the bench as a great role player, and although he may have lost a step and is often injured, he is still an elite perimeter defender. The Warriors are incredibly deep as Zaza Pachulia, Javale McGee, David West, and James Michael McAdoo all can rotate in on the block. Additionally, Shaun Livingston brings extreme height and experience to the point guard position countered by Ian Clark's 3-point shooting. Lastly, Matt Barnes brings plenty of playoff experience along with great perimeter defense and versatility to the small forward position.

Look for this year's NBA Finals to be crazy and more unique than in the past. Not only have both teams had their eyes on each other from the word go, but there is some bad blood and unfinished business to be dealt with more than ever before this season as these teams face each other for the third straight season to determine the champion.

LaVar Ball stirs controversy while son Lonzo prepares for NBA future

The Big Baller is back at it again. As many basketball fans know, LaVar Ball, father of NBA prospect Lonzo Ball, has become a popular topic in 2017 in the world of sports. He has provided many opinions that people either agree or disagree with. Most of the time, people are disagreeing with his statements. LaVar Ball has 3 sons, Lonzo, LiAngelo, and LaMelo (oldest to youngest).

The oldest son, Lonzo, just finished his first year at UCLA and is now preparing to enter the 2017 NBA Draft. LaVar has big hopes, which he has expressed frequently, for his son. LaVar predicts Lonzo to be the number one draft pick out of college. He has made many remarks toward Markelle Fultz, a top prospect from the University of Washington, because Markelle and Lonzo have been predicted to be the top 2 in the draft. These remarks include saying his son is way better and more versatile while also giving credit to his accomplishments of course.

Out of all of LaVar's comments, the one that struck the nation as most absurd, was his claim to have beaten Michael Jordan in a one-on-one game. Michael Jordan is arguably the best basketball to ever play on this planet. Although, Lavar thinks it is not a challenge.

Kobe Bryant has also reached out to the Ball Family by providing intelligent advice with his son entering the draft. LaVar denied his advice. Kobe Bryant is also up there with the

great basketball players of all-time. LaVar only sees one thing, which is pride and success. He has tons of confidence and pride in all of his sons abilities and is not affected by anyone who tells him differently.

Along with the success thus far in Lonzo, he has made a signature shoe, which costs \$495. It has his new logo on it and everything. It only has the Ball family's Big Baller Brand logo because Nike, Adidas, and Under Armour denied the request of a signature shoe.

Cleveland Cavaliers point guard Kyrie Irving had some words on the matter. Irving had a similar situation where he had to deal with his father, Dred, wanting to be involved in all key decisions he made growing up. That issue slowly died down as Kyrie grew up, but with that in mind, Irving hopes Lonzo's father, LaVar, will do the same. "I'm sorry, LaVar, you're not going to be in every hotel room that Lonzo is going to be in," Irving said during a recent appearance on Uninterrupted's "Road Trippin" podcast, which is hosted by his Cavaliers teammates Richard Jefferson and Channing Frye.

"You're not going to be everywhere and part of his life as he continues to grow up. You got to let go. He's 19 years old. Don't get me wrong, I don't want it to bypass him being a father, but he's got to let Lonzo be Lonzo for the long haul." Irving did give LaVar some credit, though, showing respect to "the foundation he's laid" for his kids, and how he pushed them to get into basketball in the first place. He did not bash LaVar completely but rather he just offered some advice for the young man entering the real league and test.

CYO All-Stars vs. Prep Varsity Basketball Game Review: The “Game of the Century” turns into a blowout

With all the excitement and anticipation for the annual CYO game, a new format was put in place that was one of a kind. Instead of having the faculty team play against the all stars of this year’s CYO league, the Cathedral Prep varsity team would play against the all stars. It seemed like a great idea at first, but it turned into a rough time for the CYO team, their coaches, and fans.

The first quarter might’ve been the most exciting part of the game. After a quick 7-0 lead for the varsity team the CYO All-Stars made a quick 7-0 run to tie it up. Adam Upperman added a 3 to take the lead again. But at the end of the 1st quarter, the varsity held a tight 10-9 lead. In the second quarter, however, the wheels fell off for the All-Stars when senior Jaryn Simpson for the varsity “went off.” He was high scorer for the game and truly the MVP for the game. The varsity took a strong lead going into the third quarter by 15 points.

The third quarter ended up being a fiasco and turned out to be the final quarter played because it turned into such a blowout. Half court shots were being thrown up by both teams and it seemed like both teams just stopped trying. Hockey substitutions started. A CYO player, Trey Dietrick, had to leave for play practice and even a fan, Joe Campbell, ran onto the court and played a few minutes. In the end, however, the varsity pulled it out through three quarters by a final score of 50-29. While there weren’t many high points for the CYO team, one was player Dave Nies who had over 20 points and dominated for the CYO All-Stars. Even though it was a blowout,

it was a fun experience for both teams and for the fans who experienced some great and some not-so-great basketball.