

# Under Armour Association Notebook (April 23)

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By Eugene Rapay

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NEW YORK, N.Y. — The first live recruiting weekend of 2017 came to a close with the three-day session of the Under Armour Association wrapping up at Manhattan's Basketball City on Sunday.

AAU teams from all over the country competed in a full day of basketball. Here is a notebook from the event's final day:

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## St. Anthony's Xander Rice in search of new high school

Anyone familiar with northeast high school basketball has most likely heard of New Jersey powerhouse St. Anthony's, which boasts the most state championships of any school across the country.

Since 1968, St. Anthony's has won an unprecedented 28 state titles. When news spread—earlier this month—that the school was closing at the end of the academic year, it came as a surprise to many basketball fans.

However, the shocking twist hit **Xander Rice** (2019/WeR1) and his Friar teammates the hardest.

"We were in the gym working out, and we knew the decision was going to be made that day," Rice said. "We were in the middle of the workout, and they just called us over and said, 'that's it guys, we love you' and told us it was over. There was a lot of crying. We were all hugging Coach Hurley, the assistants—all hugging each other, because we're brothers."

Now displaced, Rice is looking for a new school to call home for the rest of his high school days.

He's unsure of his path and is keeping his options open. The list of schools that he has been in contact with include other New Jersey basketball hotbeds—Ranney, Mater Dei, Middletown, Patrick School, Hudson Catholic, Lawrenceville Prep—and a few other ones in Philadelphia.

"I'm probably going to visit a couple of schools," Rice said. "Just to see which ones I like the most, and then I'm going to make a decision on that around May or June."

In the meantime, he's competing as a member of WeR1's 16U team. He dazzled in his most recent showing, leading the way with a game-high 30 points against Team Rio National (N.J.).

Rice heated up shortly after the opening tip, scoring basket after basket from seemingly anywhere on the court. He pulled up from long range with confidence, attacked the basket, and hit pull up mid-range jumpers—finishing with a 6-of-9 performance from deep and going 10-of-15 overall.

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Rice's father, **King**—who is also the head coach at Monmouth—was enjoying every minute of his son's dominating display.

"He just really helps me out, because he was a point guard too," said Rice, of his relationship with his father. "He gives me a lot of little tips, little things to do to help me run the floor better. He likes to be a regular dad too, not just my coach."

His father also assisted him by granting a scholarship offer to play at Monmouth, but aside from that, he says offers from Manhattan and UNC-Greenboro also came his way.

He admits there's a certain pressure following in his father's footsteps—as King played at North Carolina under **Dean Smith** from 1988-91 and was named captain his senior year—but it's a great expectation that he enjoys.

"I want to live up to what he did, and he pushes me to succeed too."

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#### **Class of 2020 guard Suggs impresses at 17U level**

There has been plenty of discussion and debate surrounding talented high school athletes that excel in more than one sport.

Should they play multiple sports and put themselves at risk for injury during another season, or are they better off just selecting and specializing in one sport full-time?

Grassroots Sizzle's **Jalen Suggs** thinks that's hogwash and wouldn't even dare consider choosing between football and basketball—both of which, he is a star at Minnehaha Academy (Minn.).

"I've been playing both my whole life, and I'm going to keep playing them both," Suggs said. "We'll see what happens in the end."

As a freshman this past season, he emerged as a standout varsity player on the gridiron, as the Redhawks' starting quarterback, and on the hardwood. Suggs believes the skills learned in either sport easily translates and can be just as valuable for the other.

"From the football field to basketball, toughness," he said. "You get hit, you have to get right back up—the next play starts in about three seconds. From basketball to football, just the IQ—reading what the defenses are in, pick up tendencies, and just play."

Suggs has already captured the eye of schools at the next level. He says that he has Division I offers from UNLV, Minnesota, Iowa, Georgia Tech, Baylor, Iowa State—which is also his one and only football offer—and a couple of other colleges.

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"I've visited a couple, those have been great experiences, but right now I'm really focused on playing basketball and getting better everyday," Suggs said. "I've visited Iowa, and obviously I've been to the Minnesota campus. I really like Iowa. I like the coaching staff, it's a great campus. Minnesota—it's hometown—great people, great campus."

The 6-foot-4 athlete also shared that Notre Dame and Texas have also shown interest.

With many college scouts in attendance for the UAA, it's only a matter of time before more start catching on.

Against the Houston Defenders (Texas), he was a bright spot for Grassroots Sizzle (Minn.), who lost 73-58. Suggs contributed 13 points before fouling out, scoring on a couple of different shots—one a deep 3-pointer and another, an acrobatic finish through traffic.

Over the weekend, he garnered some buzz for being one of four Class of 2020 recruits to play at the 17U level in the UAA. However, of the exclusive quartet, he is the only one to start for his team.

It's a challenge he's embracing with open arms.

"It's really fun," Suggs said. "It's been a great learning experience. It gets me used to playing with stronger competition, and makes me an all-around better player."

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### **High-major recruit Weaver discusses offers, Villanova**

With the way Team Breakdown's (Fla.) bench and its fans were clapping and cheering, you would have thought there was a much-needed 3-pointer or a posterizing dunk sparking celebrations.

Instead, they were excited for **Elijah Weaver** (2018/Oldsmar Christian, Fla.), whose eyes were locked on the Earl Watson Elite's (Calif.) **Cassius Stanley** (2018/Damien, Calif.) who had the ball in that moment.

Weaver moved like a shadow, mimicking Stanley's movement each step of the way with a determined fury to not let him pass by. The intense pressure caused a mental lapse for Stanley, who lost track of the out-of-bounds line, stepping just in front of the Team Breakdown bench—sending them into a fury.

"We put a big emphasis on defense to win games, you know, 'defense wins championships,'" Weaver said. "That's what I buy into and try to show today. I can play defense the whole court, 94 feet."

Capitalizing on the opportunities presented by defense was integral for Team Breakdown, who shot below 30 percent as a team but still managed to win 58-52 behind a 14-4 edge on points off

turnovers.

It was also crucial for Weaver to be a staunch defender, as he wasn't able to match the same productivity on offense. The 6-foot-4 guard wasn't his usual self. Although he scored a game-high 19 points, Weaver was inefficient, going 5-of-17 on the floor.

Regardless, the one game isn't detracting from the attention Weaver has received, nor will it take away from his list of offers that includes over 20 schools.

"I just try to stay humble, take it one day at a time and see what the day presents," said Weaver, in regards to staying focused while receiving so many offers. "Stay humble, and try to be a good person through it all."

He recently narrowed his list down to 12 schools, however, with Butler, UConn, Oklahoma State, Maryland, Missouri, N.C. State, USC, UCLA, Florida, Georgia Tech, Villanova, and Virginia all making the list.

As for the one Philadelphia-area school, Villanova, he says he enjoys his connection with the Wildcats' staff.

"I have a great relationship with coach **Jay Wright**," Weaver said. "Their staff is always talking to me. We text a lot. Before the game, he was texting me good luck. It's a great relationship, and I love that school."

However, when the time comes to select a school, he is adamant for what he wants and what he will be looking for—just don't expect a decision to come soon.

"Just a great relationship off the court, somebody that will make me better," Weaver said. "Not just on the court but off the court, make me a better person. Someone to build me up as a person, and it's like family."

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### **Class of 2017 Texas guard Jabari Rice testing out live period**

Houston Defenders' **Jabari Rice** (2017/Thurgood Marshall, Texas) wants to leave a lasting impression.

The 6-foot-5 senior didn't start against Grassroots Sizzle (Minn.) in the Defenders' final game of the weekend, but when he was on the floor, he surely made the most of his minutes.

Rice entered as the team's sixth man and played with the bravado and ability that surpassed the starters, draining almost every attempt he took from long range. Even with a defender on him or finding himself double teamed, he somehow found a way to get his shots to plop right through the hoop.

"If one shot falls, my confidence goes to a hundred," Rice said. "Even if it's a layup, or if someone sends me a wide-open pass in a fast break—once the shot falls—my confidence just shoots up."

After an up-and-down start over the first couple of games of the UAA, Rice was clicking on both ends of the court. Defensively, he helped keep his ever-changing assignment to below double figures scoring-wise. On offense, he saved his best game of the weekend for last, scoring 23 points off a blistering 7-of-9 from deep. He also added four rebounds and four assists to the winning effort.

Rice says he mainly has offers from Division II and junior colleges. He's hoping his play can attract a few more Division I schools, and so far it has.

According to the Houston Defenders wing, Lamar, Pepperdine, UNC-Greensboro, UTSA, and Boston College have contacted him. He also says a few more Division I schools are "waiting to see more action."

"I hope they see how I use my lift to my advantage, and that I can shoot the ball really well," Rice said. "I'm a great leader—I talk on defense, I talk on offense. I try to keep my teammates up when we're down. Whether I'm hitting shots or not hitting shots, I'm never going to put my head down. Even if I'm sitting for a whole game, I'm cheering my teammates on, I just try to be a leader when I'm off the floor."

Rice has held off from making a college decision in hopes for a lucrative offer, but he also hasn't ruled out prep school.

"I'd go prep for my size—get my weight up, get my agility better, but if I can go to college for a scholarship and it's a college I want, I'll go and see if I can play my freshman year—get stronger and bigger there," he explained. "It's really up in the air what I want to do, but I'm not really worried about it right now."

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### Quick Hits

—After a spotty performance from the three-point line earlier in the weekend, **D.J. Peavy** (2018/Texas Hard Work/Dekaney, Texas) adjusted his approach offensively and saw immediate results. The 6-foot-2 guard was adept at attacking the basket and slashing his way through the 1 Nation (Mich.) defense, finishing with a team-high 19 points in the 79-45 victory. Peavy was 4-of-5 inside the arc. When he was fouled, he delivered at the free throw line, going a perfect 8-of-8.

—Team Charlotte (N.C.) seemed overwhelmed, when it was trying to deal with **Filip Petrusev** (2018/CBC/Avon Old Farms, Conn.). Petrusev, a bruising 6-foot-10 forward, imposed his will against a team that wasn't ready to deal with the length, mass, and shooting ability that came bundled in the form of 19 points, nine rebounds, four steals, and a pair of blocks. Petrusev wasn't afraid to be physical on box outs or when defending the post. Offensively, he boasted a smooth 3-

point shot for a big man, knocking down 4-of-7 shots from beyond the arc in the 77-70 victory over Team Charlotte.

—It's hard to miss **Moses Brown** (2018/New Heights/Archbishop Molloy, N.Y.), a 7-foot-1 center that impacts the game in the post and on the glass. Against WeR1 (Pa.), he was the only one able to get going offensively for New Heights, which lost 66-46. WeR1's frontcourt struggled to handle Brown's size and his ability to use his footwork in the post to free himself for a powerful dunk or a finesse finish. He tallied 16 points, 14 rebounds, and a pair of blocks in the loss.

—This weekend, Philly Pride flaunted a balanced scoring attack that featured various players scoring in double figures for each game. Over the last couple of games, **Jack Clark** (2018/Cheltenham, Pa.) was a consistent scoring threat, and was able to do so efficiently. Clark scored a game-high 16 points, shooting 7-for-11 on the floor, against G3 Grind (Ind.) in Philly Pride's final game of the weekend. His three-point shot wasn't there, but his ability to finish through contact and make a few difficult acrobatic layups was impressive. Inside the arc, he only missed once.


—One word comes to mind when describing **Jahvon Quinerly's** (2018/Hudson Catholic, N.J.) play: smooth. The Sports U point guard has a sense of where his teammates are on the court at all time, a seemingly telepathic one. He flashed a number of no-look passes and a couple of other nice dimes to the open man on the weak side perimeter. As a scorer, his floaters are so graceful, and he can knock down his shots from deep. In the 58-32 dismantling of Atlanta Xpress (Ga.), he did a bit of everything—contributing 15 points on 5-of-7 shooting, five rebounds, and six assists.

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