

This is long overdue and I appreciate everyone's patience. I'm here in the Dallas airport for just under 3 hours before my flight back home to Bloomington and as I start to reflect back on the past few months – fatigue is starting to set in (then again it may have been the 4 am wake up call to make my 6 am flight out of Denver :-/).

I wanted to share with you what I have been doing since the end of the high school season as it has been a busy but fun ride – especially throwing a softball season on top of it all :-). We had our banquet at the end of February and spring break in late March. Upon returning from a short bit of R&R the craziness began...

I am writing this for two reasons:

1) For my players & parents to get an idea of what I have been doing the past couple of months, which delayed getting to do individual meetings & solidifying our summer plans.

2) For Blue Star as Mike is always on me to blog more and give people an idea of what my life has turned into... So here it goes – bear in mind I was a Business Management major in college – so don't kill me on my sentence structuring ;-)

March 29 - Mighty Macs Movie Pre Screening - Philadelphia, PA

This was a last minute schedule change but one I knew I had to do. As some of you are aware, there is a major motion picture that was made over the past few years about Theresa Grentz's college basketball program/team. Erika and I packed our 'black tie gear' and flew out the morning of the red carpet event.

We landed and had lunch with two old/close friends of mine, Chris and Linda Genter of the PA Comets basketball organization. I had my first chance to experience Chickie's and Pete's & now I see what the big deal is all about. :-)

The night's festivities were held in the Franklin Institute in downtown Philly & they spared no expense (THREE national championship trophies pictured). It was great to see Theresa and her family as everyone was glowing and smiling from ear to ear. Nearly all of the actual players from the team were there – one noticeable absence was former Penn State head coach Renee Portland unfortunately. I had a chance to catch up with St. Joseph University's staff: Cindy Griffin & Susan Moran who were in attendance. Susan had small role in the film & is still quite proud of her 'game' on the court – like she didn't score enough points against everyone when she played at St. Joseph's :-)



We snuck an early breakfast with Theresa & Karl; reminiscing of our time together, our present paths, and what the future may bring before catching our late morning flight back to Chicago. I always love our talks of how life takes you down paths you never see coming – you just need to be smart enough to keep your eyes open for when a new turn is available. I always feel like I learn something beyond basketball when I am around Coach & know I will forever be indebted. As I often give her credit for my present life I say – “I was just smart enough to listen to the Olympic Coach” :-). Miss you T and thank you for allowing us to be a part of your 'Camelot'.

March 30 - McDonald's All American Game – Chicago, IL

Landed back in Chicago that late afternoon & literally went straight to pick up Mike, Dan Bowmaker (referenced later) and Winston Kelley (BS Evaluator/McD committee member) and take everyone to the game in my Jeep (that turned in to a clown car).

I try to be 'low maintenance' when it comes to most things in life – but I asked the committee for a favor as I was taking Erika with me to get me some 'good seats' this year. As Coach Grentz used to always say to me 'careful what you wish for' – there is such a thing as being TOO CLOSE :-)



The girls' game was entertaining for a while but it was disappointing to see one of the sidelines with three great high school coaches in the country coming together, and then on the other sideline was just one coach and her staff.

I think the purpose of this event is to touch as many people as we can across the country – and from my understanding this was mandated by Coach Gators (Hall of Fame coach in Illinois). Just hope this doesn't become a trend and people start thinking they are bigger and more valuable than the game itself.

One thing that is so obvious when watching the girls & then the boys' game – defense is not found in the latter game as the scoreboard typically comes close to saying, "TILT" on it. The girls on the other hand are out to lock down anyone in front of them. The limitations to the girls' game offensively are already a step below the men, but to throw in everyone trying to stop every shot from going up – it takes away from the 'exhibition' feel that you get when watching the boys' game/dunk-o-rama. How do you tell the best girls in the country to 'dial it down' on D so it may be a little more enjoyable for the average fan to want to watch? Probably never see it in my time – no perfect answer as our game is built so much on chemistry/cutting/communication and those things are tough to build in a 2-3 day span. Ultimately the purpose is to recognize some of the top young ladies in the country and once again: mission accomplished.

Hopefully another 120 wins and a couple of deep playoff runs and I can be the water boy for the sidelines at this event someday ;-)

Mike Flynn & Dan Bowmaker (referenced later) joined us for the drive back down to Champaign to stay at Chateau Christopher or as Mike likes to call it 'the fortress of solitude.' We don't get enough face time in a year so it is always good to come together and discuss the future; NCAA issues, and anything more we can do to help enhance the game.

April 1-4 - WBCA (Women's Basketball Coaches Association) Convention / NCAA Final Four – Indianapolis, IN

As a college coach this is a must – to build/strengthen/expand your network within this community, this handful of days can be as much or as little as you want to get out of them. Whether it is watching on court lectures/drills or just having a couple of drinks with some new found friends that may someday be a colleague or boss – if you want to get in to the women's college basketball coaching world you have to find a way to invest/attend. I use 'invest' as I find it funny to hear some coaches that choose not to attend because colleges have cut it out of their budget. What happened to paying for some of this stuff out of your own pocket for your OWN professional development? I won't get on my soap

box – but I can remember the days where you pay for some things out of your own pocket to help benefit you professionally (conventions, clinics, and scouting services) – everyone is looking for the free handout.

During the course of the convention, Blue Star/USJN had a booth for college's to come by and interact with us. Kevin Lynch came out for a day, and Dan Bowmaker was there from England to launch his Blue Star Europe Report.

Mike & I got away for one afternoon to visit with Tom Jenkins and watch the Sports City U travel program practice. I told a couple funny stories to the team, but what impressed me the most was the venue they were using. He has a program with some of the top players in the country and for all intents and purposes, a team full of Division I athletes. This was their first practice of the year and Tom put them in an old run down facility that has 'old school' flavor oozing out of the floorboards. Heck there was a huge USA flag painted on one of the baselines & he shared that when Martin Luther King came through Indy he gave a speech at this facility. I often use the phrase 'stay humble & hungry' and just felt that the tone was set for their worker mentality as an organization. Great stuff Tom & thank you for the hospitality later that night.



One of the nights, Mike hosted a 'Blue Star Family' dinner with 20+ people that had ties to either the Philly Belles, Blue Star, our travel teams, and up & coming college coaches. With the age range going from 50's to 20's, it just shows how many generations he has & continues to touch within the game. It's moments like that that remind me how fortunate I am to be a part of it all.

I had a chance to cross paths and spend time with so many different people. From Skylar Digger's family who always makes me feel welcome (great to see her 'coming out party'), to Jim Crowley (my former boss at St. Bonaventure which continues to be a well kept secret in upstate NY), and Kyle Rechlicz (formerly of Dayton, now the new asst. at her alma mater – Wisconsin). It will be interesting to see how long Kyle stays in the asst. chair as she had interviews for head jobs this off-season. She has the personality, head for the game and work ethic to take over a program in the near future.

USJN's Windy City Classic & California Classic (April 15-17) – Chicago, IL

I headed back to Champaign and watched the finals from my couch at home while finalizing USJN's Windy City Classic schedule. 220+ teams and over 300 college coaches – this event in its 6th year has locked in and become one of the top 2-3 Spring Exposure events in the country.

If you curious to see the college coaches that attended this year you can go to - http://www.usjn.com/xtm_post_event_schools.php?which=112



A few more softball wins and getting California Classic put together for Russ Davis / Steve Kavaloski out west – as I like to say 'blue star in a box' is shipped out to them. Another solid event for them out there to give the west coast an option to not have to travel too far for some solid exposure -

http://www.usjn.com/xtm_post_event_schools.php?which=113

Windy City saw some great games/matchups – as Sports City U, Ohio Glory, and Illinois Elite won the national division pools. I had the chance to evaluate a little bit on Sunday – Luckily I had three Blue Star evaluators there covering the event to get a lot of eyes on



the teams. I really enjoyed a younger division game between Lady's First & Dayton Lady Hoopstars. I always hate to see two teams from the same state end up coming out of their pools in a fashion that puts them against each other but from an evaluation stand point – selfishly it was great to see some of the young talent on the way from OH. Remember the name Alexa Hart as she has the makings to be a special one in the years to come.

I came back to town Sunday night and decompressed for a couple of days and saw the softball girls get one of their biggest W's of the year vs. a local rival school, and the timing couldn't be better. The next day we had a huge BBQ at my home for the players/parents. It was just nice to be 'normal' for a day...but by the weekend I had to have the schedule for the next two events posted (Great Plains Qualifier / Gateway Challenge).

April 30 – May 1 – USJN's Gateway Challenge & Great Plains Qualifier – St. Louis, MO & Chicago, IL

Last fall, Bill Larson from the Nike sponsored Minnesota North Tartan team approached me about putting an event together on Northwestern Univ. campus so we could bring some of the top teams together from our region. Gateway Challenge in St. Louis has been going for 4 years and from my stand point is "low maintenance" so I'm a glutton for punishment and decided to run another event in the same weekend. For a first year event to get 96 teams is unprecedented for USJN. So I got my flights booked and spent one day in Chicago and Sunday in STL to see some great basketball.



St. Louis is always great because I personally feel like I can come in for a day and evaluate more than 75% of the field because of the single facility set up. It is tough to watch with all of the shaking hands & conversations – but it is fun to be a fan on playoff day.

I had a chance while in Evanston to spend time with Coach Joe McKeown. Joe and I go back to the days of when I was at St. Bonaventure & he was kicking our tail at George Washington :-). When Joe was first hired at Northwestern, we talked of getting an event on his campus and now three years later, here we are.

What was more flattering was ESPN/Hoopgurlz came out to cover both events on a weekend when Nike Skills Academies were going on (will talk more on this later). Dan Olson came up from Collegiate Girls Basketball Report to Chicago. I had three Blue Star Evaluators at Great Plains & one down at St. Louis (not counting myself). Both events were a success again & it will be interesting to see the growth of both of them as it looks like they will be a viable option for players/teams to continue to compete in front of lower level colleges and national evaluators. At the end of the weekend I told Bill & Joe a line my father used to always say "Love it when a plan comes together" :-)



Great Plains Qualifier – ESPN Stories -

<http://sports.espn.go.com/ncaa/recruiting/basketball/womens/news/story?id=6466038>

<http://sports.espn.go.com/ncaa/recruiting/basketball/womens/news/story?id=6472895>

Gateway Challenge – ESPN Story –

<http://sports.espn.go.com/ncaa/recruiting/basketball/womens/news/story?id=6485303>

While juggling these two events I actually was able to send multiple Blue Star Evaluators out to the Nike Skills Academies in New Jersey, Atlanta, Indianapolis, and Los Angeles. Pam Bass, Jody Benner, Patrick Klein, and Lisa Stone each covered them from our former college consultant side. Kevin Lynch, Winston Kelly and Mike were at various ones that weekend as well. The notes and feedback will be found on our new Blue Star Media webpage that will be launched this June. This will be a new platform for our company to do short 'shapshots' of the various events our evaluators cover and all USJN events. We hope you enjoy this new feature.

May 8 – WNBA's Chicago Sky – Free Agent Tryout – Chicago, IL

A couple of softball W's during the week again and I get a phone call to work the court at the WNBA's Chicago Sky free-agent camp for the coming weekend. Newly appointed head coach Pokey Chatman (former LSU head coach), and asst. coach Jeff House (former Blue Star Evaluator) asked me to come up and join Ali Jacques (assoc. head coach Northwestern) & Lisa Ryckbosch (former UIC head coach – present Blue Star Evaluator) on the court to help put around 100 young women through various drills/games for them to evaluate. This was the Chicago Sky's first open free agent camp as they were in need of ONE player for their roster.



It was surprising to me to see how many were still trying to 'live the dream'. I mean there were girls that played NAIA basketball showing up to this camp. I am all for chasing your dreams, but I felt like over 25% of the participants there should have just bought the gear and watched from the sidelines. I jokingly said to Coach House afterward – next year, before they get a jersey/shorts, he should have each girl take a layup from both sides of the floor, take a FT, and a 3pt shot – to determine if you even let them in the door o:-). Don't care if they make it – but general athleticism and form on those skills can determine if they should even be in the gym – heck even just being in shape is a start. Again, I love their passion and love for the sport, but even when I went for a tryout for a MLB team in my early 20's I spent a good 5-6 months getting myself in as good shape as possible before walking through the doors after having been away from the game.

All in all it was a fun/flattering day. To be back on the floor working with top level athletes reminded me of the joys of coaching at the college level. Thanks for the opportunity Pokey/Jeff. You can see more about this tryout at: http://www.wnba.com/sky/sky_host_first_ever_open_tryou_2011_05_09.html

The next week was a big week for me as I met with my high school's principal and officially stepped down from my full time substitute position at St. Thomas More. With the pace of our event schedule and the expansion of our blue star operations – Mike & I agreed that it was time. I will still continue to coach the schools girls' basketball program (heading into my 7th year) www.stmsabers.com. To see the growth of USJN / Blue Star these past 5-6 years and basically doing it 'part time' – I am excited about taking this next step and see what other angles we can expand/enhance our product for both the club coaches & the college coaches. Wish me luck o:-)

May 14-15 – Nike Skills Academy – Dallas, TX & Portland, OR

I think one of the hardest parts of my role with USJN/Blue Star is that I don't get to just evaluate as much as I would like. Anyone that knew me as a college coach knew that was one of my favorite things to do & felt I was fairly decent at projecting a player's level of play. As an event operator there are so many 'small fires' to put out at times that can take me away from getting to do what I still love doing.

So this particular weekend I got to be a 'fan' again. A few years back, Nike started their Nike Skills Academies. They have tweaked the product and this past year chose to expand to eight different locations over two separate weekends. The first weekend was discussed earlier and this weekend was Hampton, Minneapolis, Dallas, & Portland.

I flew out to Dallas on Friday and met Mike down there that night to continue to discuss the future of the game & the direction we will continue to take to keep us as one of the leaders in the sport. I nearly ran out of ink w/ all the notes :-). Saturday's session in Dallas was exceptional. The staff they used brought some great faces within the game. To walk in to a gym half a country away and get a big hug from the likes of Tamika Williams shows how the women's game truly has a special fraternity/sorority feel to it as you continue to spend time in the sport. Getting to watch the likes of Brianna Turner, Jessica Jackson, & Moriah Jefferson – more stars for our game are on the horizon – it will just be a matter of how big they want to be in the years to come. One of my favorites to watch was Jessica Washington from OK as she had smoothness about her on the court offensively that is hard to put into words – just know she is someone I would love to have as a teammate.



The girls received a treat as WNBA star Becky Hammon came and showed them a detailed breakdown of the art of reading the on-ball screen (pick-n-roll). She even showed them a little 'flavor' as they became more comfortable with the ball in their hands. The overall pace / reps / breakdowns / buildup toward full court game play at the end of the day was well put together & kept a lot of the girls constantly moving/learning.

Toward the end I had the chance to have some time getting to know Tony Dorado from Nike – as he is the National Manager for High School Basketball at Nike. He basically oversees all aspects of grassroots basketball on the boys & girls side. As a former high school coach from California, it was fun to trade stories of coaching at that level & discuss the 'trends' we are seeing within the club/event level on the women's side. It was nice to finally put a personality with the name after a few short handshake exchanges in the past. I walked away seeing why Nike's grassroots programs have been at the forefront of the industry for so many years.

I had a chance to catch up with Roger Redding (former Texas Tech asst) while down there as he made the trip from Lubbock to help us evaluate for the weekend. Great to see that life's new road has put him in a place that allows him to have a 'normal' life as well. Later, I was able to sit down and really discuss some of the dynamics in Texas with club coaches George Washington & Ben Perkins. Selfishly as a basketball fan I have always wanted to be more involved with the sport in the state of Texas as there is typically always a nice balance of athletes, intensity, and skill sets that consistently produces some of our nation's top players. Unfortunately I was never at a university that truly recruited the state, and the times we have tried to 'break in' with Blue Star or USJN events they have never really caught any traction down there. Hopefully that can change in the future.

I caught my late night flight to Portland (along with Tony), getting to my hotel at 2am, and was in the gym by 8am the next morning at a newly renovated YMCA facility in Beaverton. I was welcomed by Gaye Chapman (former Temple asst)

who I have known since my time at St. Bonaventure. Yet another former coach that left the college world and went in to the high school environment & has found balance/happiness in her life.

Despite the event being smaller in size than Texas – there was still some big time talent in the gym. As long time high school coaching legend Brad Smith said to me – “when’s the last time Oregon has had 2-3 Top 50 players in the country?” Kailee Johnson, Jaime Nared, & Mercedes Russell (not in attendance) - Jordan Reynolds will be on the cusp as well. Couple of other bright prospects Leslie Robinson & Brittany McPhee will find themselves in a major conference down the road if they continue on the path they are on.

Upon the conclusion of the camp I had the chance to stop by the Nike employee store – unfortunately for my credit card this is the one place that I start shopping like a woman... not to stereotype :-). Three shopping carts later – I was able to make my way out of the building at close. The only good part is I am disciplined enough to not open all of the stuff that I purchased right away as this supply will last me for at least two years. Just hard to pass up, and unfortunately I just don’t get out there enough. As I said to one friend on the phone “Portland’s my favorite city that I never get a chance to visit enough” :-/



May 21-22 – USJN’s Mid America Challenge – Champaign, IL

After getting home – softball season came to a close with a close playoff lose & then our end of season banquet. Our 9th annual Mid America Challenge was right around the corner with over 150 teams and over 40 college coaches in attendance. Traveling all over the country it is a treat to be able to run one of these where I can sleep in my own bed at the end of the day.

On the Friday leading up I had the chance to host over 20 staff members for a BBQ for us to all laugh & tell stories. The ‘traveling circus’ as I like to call us never gets a lot of down time to just hang out and goof off as we typically travel in, set up, get up early, stay late, do it again the next day, load up and drive back. One of my lead assistants Terry Elmore calls it “The Grind” :-)



Everything went smoothly on Saturday and after we treated the club/college coaching community that is in attendance to a huge happy hour Saturday night at Buffalo Wild Wings. Again one of the few times to see everyone in this type of setting – many younger assistants don’t remember the day when this was the norm. It was quite common back in days of ‘real recruiting’ to go out late night with club coaches at social settings/establishments – getting to know them as people and vice versa. THIS was a part of recruiting that allowed the lower schools a ‘chance’ at some decent prospects – because those club coaches had a chance to see/meet who they were sending their players to. Now when you go to an event all they get to see is a coach with a t-shirt/golf shirt on with a logo – the younger faces in the game are not recognized by the club coaches by more than the logo on their shirt. I have always said that I think this hurts our next generation of coaches especially at the lower levels. Why would a coach encourage a player go to a Low D1 school over a mid major if they don’t know the coaches? Because of the way the rules are set up now it actually puts more of a premium on the ‘veterans’ of the game that used to stand in line and talk to all of these club coaches for hours after games because at least the club coach community can truly put a face with the name/personality – not just a logo and a conference.

May 26-28– USA Basketball 16u Tryouts – Colorado Springs, CO / USJN’s Memorial Day Challenge – Toledo, OH

I will admit when Mike told me I needed to go back out to Colorado Springs this May I was not excited as I knew I was going to have a hectic month. I sounded like a kid that didn’t want to clean his room “do I really have to?” :-) But, I listened to the boss and booked the flights. Upon arriving out in Colorado Springs I had some down time and was able to get the rest of our USJN Memorial Day Challenge stuff emailed out to Duffy Burns / Amanda Rainsberger to oversee the event in Toledo.



I arrive at the Olympic Development Facility and was quickly joined by the ESPN/Hoopgurlz posse :-) We laughed and joked around about the new format more than half of the field was able to ‘buy’ their way in to this tryout. They had to go through an application process, but then could attend if they would pay their own way. USAB brought in 35 of their own candidates that did not have to pay anything to be there (the real candidates). This was the first year they incorporated this format. They broke the group in to TWO separate sessions of about 60 girls each.

A few more minutes in and I see Bolingbrook High School coach Tony Smith come rolling in and was looking for security to make sure they didn’t make a mistake :-) Great experience for him to work the skills/drills session & walk away with a little Nike/USA Basketball gear – as I said to him – “at least you know you didn’t have to buy that gear to wear it” ;-)

As the first session started Hall of Fame coach Ceal Berry (former Univ. Of Colorado head coach) led the session. I have to be honest I was surprised at the



amount of teaching that was involved as I guess I anticipated something a little more fast paced like the Nike Skills Academies. The skills being taught unfortunately are a lot of the ones that are not being discussed at the grass roots level and often times overlooked. So they really started with a gradual buildup of drills & skills – though it did have a Big Time College camp feel to it: lecture/sit for 10 min – up do 2-3 skills, lecture/sit for 5-10 min – up do 2-3 skills. Unfortunately the first session I was able to write little notes much more than the basic body types of the prospects.

That night I was able to stop by and visit my best friend (future best man) – Geoff Bennett and his wife & little girl. Geoff is the women’s soccer coach at Colorado College. We met when we both coached at St. Bonaventure and have stayed in touch ever since. A New Jersey native – we see eye to eye on so many topics both professionally and as growing young men in the world (I guess getting close to middle age now :-p). Any college he has touched has found success and having had a chance to spend time on his practice field & bench area during games during his career; it is no surprise why he gets his team to find a way to win. But to see him step in to the father role & find that balance is one of his greatest achievements he would tell you. I told him I’m hoping he is writing a book for me to follow the ‘blue print’ someday. :-)

As session two started up the next morning – I stuck around and watched the progression go from partner passing to on-ball screens in a 1:30 session, and decided that my time would be better served starting to get Kansas City’s pools put

together as the event sold out a week ago and I had teams asking to enter the event but didn't know if I could squeeze in anymore. I went over to Mike's hotel where he made the same decision and was doing last minute work on the Big Apple Challenge - we worked straight through lunch not even giving ourselves a chance to eat and then headed back over to the third and final skill session.

Full court transition and more live half court movement was emplace so my pen finally started to get a 'workout'. Mike and I snuck off to a NY Pizzeria (yeah I know in Colorado Springs :-p – but it was surprisingly fairly authentic) for early dinner and continued more of our discussions about our direction over the next few months.

We returned back to the gym and watched the first scrimmage sessions & I dang near ran out of ink. It was great to see the players in action and after 1:30 for each group of 60 I was able to walk away with my own personal evaluation of every girl there trying out. Mike always lectures to young players how rankings/evaluations/etc. is all about being at the right place at the right time. Some player may have had a bad day while I was writing notes & unfortunately that is the 'snapshot' that I saw. I think the challenge for young evaluators is to not get caught up on the actual FINISH – but the types of movements, skills, general body structures & potential growth. As I made the comment to Chris Hanson after a player made a nice move – “yeah but she did it against a 'cone' “ – meaning the girl covering her should not have even been in this camp setting. If she was matched up against a more superior athlete would she be able to get that same move off? Over time you pull from your “mental rolodex” of past players and the colleges/levels they attended and you start to match up the present prospects to them. I found myself writing – “Erin McCarthy like”, Pac-10 type fit, Poor Man's Lindsay Sherbert. The down side is someone reading the evaluation may not know who one of these players is – but it gives me a frame of reference to remember this present prospect in regards to a past one.



As I left for Denver (6am flight back next morning) I met up with Kevin Lynch as he was just flying in to watch the last few sessions of scrimmaging. It was fun to sit down and go through the list of who he had previously watched and liked and what my take on some of them were. Kevin and I always walk away wishing we had more time in our careers to just sit like that for 2-3 hours and talk the sport/players as we both know we walk away growing from our time together.

As the final roster was posted it was great to see Linnae Harper on that list. I made a comment to Mac Irvin at Champaign prior to her leaving for this tryout – “She is what I call a ‘light switch player’ – when she turns it on she is one of the best in the country, when she turns it off and disappears she is Top 150”. Needless to say the day I was there she ‘turned it on’ and must have the last couple of sessions as well.

With Diamond DeShields (2013) being named to the Under-18 roster the committee kept only THREE 2014 grads to help groom even further for our future (Recee Caldwell, Jordin Canada, Jatarie White) with the rest of the roster being 2013 grads. I think it is interesting as so many forget they are trying to put a TEAM together – not put the best 12 players/prospects in a uniform as chances are you won't find balance doing this. Rebecca Greenwell is a perfect example as she is a major level 'glue player' for sure within a team context. As much as everyone enjoyed Jessica Washington – I would anticipate the committee felt her body frame would be tossed around too much at the international level – or maybe she hasn't been put on the nation stage enough against tough competition on a regular basis. Others that probably feel a similar fate were – Kelsey Mitchell & Ashley Morrissette. Personally I was a fan of Mikayla Venson more than the Canada kid – but reality is “six to one – ½ dozen another.” But the big name missing from

this group was Brianna Turner – our Blue Star consensus #1 for 2014. I have to do some digging as to what happened there and her absence from the team.

Some other notables that looked sharp while I was there that must not have fit their landscape:

Sierra Calhoun – 2014 / Allisha Gray – 2013 / Jessica Jackson – 2013 (skills cont. to develop at perimeter could be very special) / Alex Lapeyrolerie – 2013 / Kendall Waters – 2013 / Kianna Holland – 2013 / Shilpa Tummala - 2012

My team after walking away after the first session was (bold correct 7/12):

Mikayla Venson, Allisha Gray, Shilpa Tummala, **Stephanie Mavunga, Taya Reimer, Linnae Harper**, Jaime Nared, Brianna Turner, **Erica McCall, Mercedes Russell, Jatarie White, Rebecca Greenwell** (again because of glue not Top 12)

June 4-5 – USJN’s Battle at the Border – Kansas City, MO

As I got on my flight back I was working on the schedule grid for Kansas City and putting an email to my staff. This looks to be yet another great event as it is in its 6th year and sold out with just over 80 teams again. ESPN/Hoopgurlz shared with me their plans to attend this for the first time, and I know Dan Olsen/Collegiate Girls Basketball Report will be in attendance as we will have a Blue Star Evaluator there again as well. Booked my flight to KC while during my three hour layover at DFW where I started this whole write up. I returned home – posted the Memorial Day Challenge results & finalized the KC schedule on Memorial Day & hope to enjoy a nice BBQ at the future in-laws :-)



If you have made it this long and read all of the ‘life and times of Coach Mennig’ well I appreciate your support – as you must be a fan of grassroots basketball. I apologize I don’t do this more often – but hopefully the above timeline can show you why finding any time to write this stuff up is a challenge. As I joked with Mike – you brought me on to run events/evaluate not be a journalist ;-)

The coming month has post event NCAA paperwork from the spring to finish up, my time w/ my high school team on the court, my summer camp I run in Champaign, and a couple of smaller Midwest events leading up to July push. Again keep an eye out as we unveil our <http://bluestarmedia.org/> site.

One last note – want to thank my fiancée Erika – without your help/support I might have lost my mind over the last few months. I owe you EKT – you can still make a run for it ;-)