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# Spotighting John Gage

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A few years ago, towards the end of the high school basketball season, there was a rising junior from the Sacramento (Calif.) area named [Ryan Anderson](#) that fans across the west coast began to hear about. He could shoot the three and had a developing back to the basket game. He'd also just pushed his team to the California Div. II state championship. Anderson went on to become one of the Pac-10's best underclassmen scorers ever. Now, a young rising junior named [John Gage](#), fresh off a state championship and more than familiar with Anderson's game, is on the brink of making a Pac-10 decision himself.

Talk about it in [Haas Pavilion](#)

For Gage, the decision doesn't come down to what conference. He knows he's headed for the "Conference of Champions".

"I feel I have three offers from three excellent schools, with those being Stanford, Washington and Cal," Gage said. "I've had some interest from other schools, like Virginia and such, but I'm staying with those three. All of them offer a lot of opportunity, as Washington is a school close to home with solid academics. Cal is a great program with a legendary coach, plus the No. 1 public school in the country. And Stanford is very prestigious academically with a younger coach that I like a lot. Washington has a great coach too.

"So it is a tough decision. But that's a good thing. There's that feeling that I can't go wrong no matter where I go, and I feel fortunate that I have the opportunity to select from them. I've been patient with the process, and even took the time to apply for Stanford. All the coaches knew I wanted to do that. But that doesn't mean I'm going there."

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Gage is arguably the top big man shooter in the West Coast's 2010 class.

Gage also spoke about getting to know [Johnny Dawkins](#), [Lorenzo Romar](#) and [Mike Montgomery](#).

"I like Coach Dawkins a lot," Gage stated. "He seems very trustworthy, and while I believe he'll also be a friend, I also get the feeling that he'll be a coach to me too."

"With Coach Montgomery, he's a legend. What really stands out about him is his confidence, and being a guy who has watched a lot of Pac-10 basketball, I know that's something his teams always have. I like that, and I want to play for a coach who has that confidence too. He's a winner."

"Coach Romar, he's another great coach. When you walk with him around the Washington campus, there's nobody who doesn't know him or appreciate his work. He has a lot of charisma and energy, and I've enjoyed my time around him."

The well-spoken Gage is truly one of the most underrated prospects nationally, with most coaches on the AAU scene, and those even in Pac-10 circles stating that he's arguably the top big man shooter on the West Coast in the 2010 class. He averaged a double-double on the season as a junior, led his team to a 26-1 record and the Washington Class 1-A state championship, and pulled down the Class 1-A Most Valuable Player award after his Pirates won it all. He averaged 20.5 points and 12 rebounds per game over the 4-game, state championship bracket, and also earned first-team All-State honors.

What most recruiting fans don't know is that Gage won't turn 17 until October, meaning that he'll enter the Pac-10 as one of the youngest—if not the youngest—incoming 2010 recruits. Gage is extremely adept at hitting the long range three, plus the turnaround jumper and jump-hook, and he also plays the game with a high basketball IQ. Like Anderson at the same stage, Gage gets better and better every time he steps on the court.

"John Gage continues to mature every night," Vashon head coach **Andy Sears** told *The News Tribune* said after watching his junior center score 30 points on 11-of-15 shooting and grab 14 rebounds in the Pirates 66-53 state semifinal win over Bellevue Christian.

"It was a great season, and as a team, we are really excited about next year too," Gage said. "We want to win it all again, and I think we can."

Anderson's total scoring repertoire really flourished the summer after his junior season on the AAU scene. He also became more nationally prominent, and that's similar to the rising Gage too.

"This past tournament (Nike Memorial Day Classic) in Atlanta, I didn't play real well the first game," Gage added, playing with the always solid *Friends of Hoop* squad. "Afterwards, I probably beat myself up a little too much, and then, during the second game, everything just kind of clicked for me. Playing AAU ball is so much different than high school ball, and I think I finally found my game and my confidence out there."

"It was a great feeling. Even though we didn't win the tournament, I just had this feeling where I finally felt comfortable at that level playing against those guys. It took some time, but I think it clicked. I had like 19 points and four three's in the game, and I played well the rest of the way too."

"The best way to describe my game is that I'm an inside-out scorer; I am versatile. I'm not built to be just a straight inside guy, but I can shoot it pretty well, and I can run the high-low, plus the pick and roll. I can defend the post too."

For a program like Cal, Gage could be an extremely great fit. The Bears were the No. 1 three-point shooting team in the country, and though they have a handful of 6-foot-7 to 6-foot-8 players who can play inside, few can stretch the defense like Gage. They are seeking a high post prospect. Off the court, Cal even has his preferred major, and ranks above nearly every school in the country in his Engineering field.

Washington would seem like a great fit for Gage too, with its location and coaching staff standing out. Stanford would simple love to add the Northwest big man due to his skills and academic profile. In fact, some folks have stated that the Cardinal staff cannot afford to miss on Gage due to his academic profile and skills, plus the lack of depth at the position in the 2010 class.

Of course, a recruiting battle between Stanford and Cal is not unusual in the slightest nowadays, with 2010 prospects like [Alex Rossi](#) and [James Johnson](#) facing the same decision as Gage in the next two months. Head-to-head rivals in all sports, the pot got stirred even more between the Bay Area powers over a year ago now when Montgomery, a former Cardinal coaching legend who left the Palo Alto-based school for the NBA, returned to the college game to coach the Bears, and his former assistant coach at Stanford, [Trent Johnson](#), quickly bolted for LSU.

Just as Cal struggled to lure some of the nation's elite to Berkeley when Montgomery coached at Stanford, former Duke assistant and second-year Stanford head coach Dawkins now has his hands full pulling recruits to Palo Alto.

Legends don't come around often, and Montgomery, a sure-fire Hall of Fame head coach and a 4-time Pac-10 Coach of the Year and 2-time National Coach of the Year, is one of the few.

"My decision will really come down to one key thing, and that's that I'm going to work as hard as I possibly can both on the court and off the court," Gage stated. "I'm dedicated to those fundamentals, and that's why I want to go to a school that has a prestigious athletic and academic background. So

that's the top factor.

"I'm prepared for the fact that basketball will not last forever. But while I do have the opportunity, I'm going to play as hard as I can, and work as hard as I can academically."

Look for more from the impressive Gage in the near future on *BearTerritory*, including some first-ever game highlights of the all-state Washington prospect.

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