

Youth hoop camp: Three Tucson girls play with the nation's best

Citizen Staff Report

Three Tucson girl basketball players attended the invitation-only adidas Junior Phenom camp in early August. Sydney Lewis, Jennifer Schlott and Chashala Thompson spent four days at the elite camp at Alliant International University in San Diego.

This was the first season for the camp, although a camp for boys has been held for the past four years.

The girls play for the Tucson Heat club team. Keithan Lyons coaches the club and was selected as an adidas camp coach this year.

"The camp is considered to have the best players in the country," Lyons said. "It is designed for exposure for middle school players. It stresses education and attitude. The players are seen by recruiting services that send reports to universities."

Lyons said Lewis, who is 5 feet 9, played center at the camp because of her height. She plays guard for the local club team. "She has great ball-handling skills and speed," he said. "It helps that she's taller than some of the varsity players."

Lewis, 13, will be a ninth-grader at Wilson Middle School.

She said it was an amazingly tough camp.

"There were the top girls from all over the country," she said. "Everyone was really good."

The camp emphasized "teamwork, conditioning and not being selfish. We played a lot of games," Lewis said.

"It was good to see the competition and to see where my ability stands as far as the rest of the players in the country," she said. Lewis was ranked 25th overall.

Schlott and Thompson each ranked 37th for their respective age groups. Schlott will be an eighth-grader at Booth-Fickett Magnet School, while Thompson will be in seventh grade at Booth-Fickett.

Lyons said Thompson has great basketball instincts.

"For her age, she has a great knowledge of the game," Lyons said of the 5-6 shooting guard. "She's also an excellent defender and shooter."

She may come by it naturally. Her father, Harvey Thompson, played for the University of Arizona basketball program in the early 1980s.

Schlott plays point guard. Lyons said the 5-5 Schlott "is an excellent shooter and ball-handler."

The Tucson Heat team is a nonprofit club that competes nationwide in AAU tournaments.