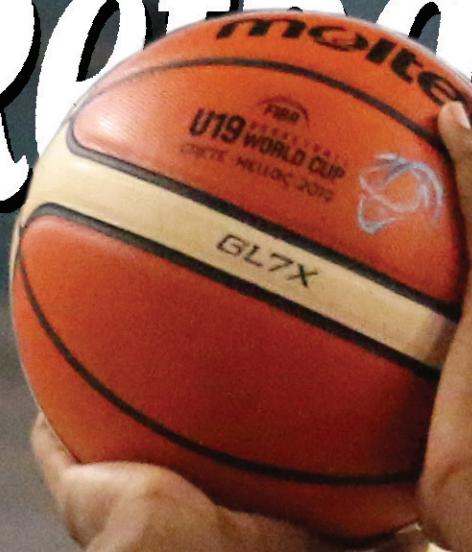


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Evan Mobley



Prep Profile

To be the man, Evan Mobley had to beat older brother Isaiah

Aaron Torres

In the modern landscape of grassroots basketball, where most of the top players in America are identified by the end of middle school, it would be easy to assume that Evan Mobley, the nation's No. 1 ranked player in the class of 2020, has been "can't miss" since he first picked up a basketball.

That couldn't be further from the truth. For most of his life, Mobley wasn't even the best player in his own home.

That honor went to his brother Isaiah, who is a year older and set to enroll as a freshman at USC next season after earning McDonald's All-American honors this past spring. Long before the younger Mobley even attempted to make a run at the top players in his high school class, he was simply trying to get the edge on the brother with whom he shared his childhood home in Temecula, Calif.

"He had a big influence," Evan Mobley told Basketball Times at the Pangos All-American Camp in Los Angeles. "He's always been bigger than me, because he's older. So we would play one-on-one and I'd have to try harder to make moves just because he was bigger and stronger."

That all began to change about two years ago, however. By Evan's sophomore year (Isaiah's junior season), Evan hit a growth spurt. All of a sudden, the younger Mobley brother was the taller one. And by his sophomore year, those backyard games were altered forever.

"I wasn't bigger," the younger Mobley said, "but I was taller, so I could shoot over him."

"He got mad. Like sometimes if I stand too close to him, he tells me to back up because I'm too tall."

In Isaiah's defense, he isn't the only one who has felt Evan's wrath in recent years. The younger Mobley shot up to the top of the 2020 high school rankings about a year ago and hasn't let go of the "top player in America" ranking since then. Now standing 7-foot tall with a 7-6 wingspan and elite athleticism, leaping ability and quick-twitch reaction on the court, Mobley is believed by many to be the best long-term NBA prospect in high school basketball. For a second straight summer he also won

a gold medal playing for Team USA in 2019, playing in the U-19 World Cup in Greece.

Ironically, Mobley's path to the No. 1 ranking can probably be traced back to the days when he wasn't ranked at all, before he hit that growth spurt early in his high school career. Mobley was "only" 6-4 entering the eighth grade, which meant he spent virtually all his time on the perimeter as a guard.

The late growth spurt served as a blessing in



Evan Mobley is the consensus No. 1 player in the Class of 2020.

disguise, since he has been able to keep all those perimeter skills while growing into a 7-foot body.

"He was a guard," said Mobley's AAU coach with the Compton Magic, Etop Udo-Ema. "People don't know. They're like 'Wow, he's skilled.' And it's like 'Yeah, he's skilled because he's a guard.' Now he's 7-feet. Now he's learning to play his game in a 7-foot body, when he used to have in a 6-4 body."

That also helps explain the versatility that can be found in Mobley's game as he gets set to enter his senior season. Highlight tapes of Mobley on YouTube leave the impression that he is strictly a low-post player, a guy who loves to throw down vicious dunks and block everything within a couple feet of the rim.

Which, make no mistake, he is willing to do.

Yet, that's not *all* he is willing to do.

Private workouts and game action provide remnants of that perimeter game are still there. Even at 7-0, Mobley isn't afraid to rip down a rebound and take it coast-to-coast for a dunk. He also isn't afraid to hit a 3-pointer in your face if left open from beyond the arc.

Therefore, it should come as no surprise that when Mobley is asked to describe his game, he calls himself a "point-center" and lists his favorite players as Kevin Durant and Giannis Antetokounmpo. In an era where the NBA is increasingly asking all its players – regardless of size – to be able to handle the ball and shoot, Udo-Ema believes Mobley is set to lead the next wave of position-less, 7-foot NBA stars.

"If he wants to maximize his value in the NBA, that's what he will become," Udo-Ema said.

Before the NBA, though, is college, and if you're wondering why you haven't heard more about the recruitment of the No. 1 player in the country, the answer is simple. Mobley's father is an assistant coach at USC, and with Isaiah already enrolled for the 2019-20 season, it seems to be all but a foregone conclusion that the youngest Mobley will ultimately end up there as well. Evan remains adamant that his recruitment is open and is willing to listen to other schools. Barring a shocking development, he'll end up a Trojan.

And if Mobley does end up staying in Los Angeles, USC will get a potentially generational talent, one who has come far and still has a lot further to go. There is plenty for Mobley to work on, most notably adding weight to his 200-pound frame (he says he has already put on 10 pounds since the end of his high school season). But in terms of basketball skill, Mobley has it all – and the scary part is, he should only get better as he gets more comfortable in his 7-foot frame.

"He's only scraping the surface of what he's going to be," Udo-Ema said. "When he gets to the NBA, and he starts to play basketball every day and work out every day and train with the best every day, we don't even know where his game is going to evolve to."