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# Tip-Off Classic: Day three at Salpointe

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ArizonaVarsity.com got out to Salpointe high school Wednesday for the third and final day of pool games for the Tip-Off Classic tournament. At two different city locations some of the state's top teams and players are competing in the event that kicks off the start of the high school basketball season.

Here is some player analysis of some of the prospects that played at the Tucson venue:



**Merle Branch of Buena**

## Merle Branch

Branch is a solid 6-foot-2, 180 pound physical guard with a powerful and explosive offensive game. Currently ranked No. 26 for his class, he does a lot of the banging down in the post for an undersized but very athletic Colts team. He is good at receiving the ball near the basket and using his quickness to get a step passed the defenders for a layup. He has the ball skills to play away from the basket as well. Branch is a player for the college level and has a lot of upside because he will be able to continuously get better.

## Devonte Malcolm

Malcolm, 6-foot, 170 pounds is a top shooting guard that is currently ranked No. 31 in the state for his class. He has a lot of athleticism that he utilizes throughout his game. Beginning with shooting, he gets elevation on his jump shot even from beyond the arch. Additionally, he has excellent shot mechanics. He is always ready to shoot with his knees bent and hands ready, and follows it up with a nice shot release. Defensively he can keep his man in front of him and take away the penetration with quick moving feet. Away from the action he also keeps his eye on the ball and can fly

out of nowhere to block shots near the basket.

## Kendrick Little

Little, a 5-foot-8 sophomore, provides good support off the bench. He is a shooter that hit some clutch threes against Palo Verde and was playing with growing confidence. He is currently ranked No. 29 in his class and could easily become a college caliber player.

### Lester Medford

Few in the state can match the speed of the hands and feet of this senior guard from Amphitheater when he has the ball. He can control the dribble with one hand (either hand) better than a standard high school player can with two. He is also strong and can jump out of the building at 5-foot-11. He also has a shot and can make the long three. Amphi is loaded with athleticism and talent but Medford tops the depthchart.

### Nico Hughes

Hughes, a sophomore guard from Canyon del Oro, came off the bench and showed that he will be a player to watch out for. He is ranked No. 41 currently by ArizonaVarsity.com for the class of 2013. He is a small guard that can attack with the dribble or the spot up shot. He also was playing smart and confidently. He was a big reason for Canyon's late run that took the game down to the final possession against Rincon.

### Dylan Hidalgo

This junior 5-foot-10 guard out of Rincon is ranked No. 79 in his class and could be moving up. Against Canyon del Oro he was great at attacking the basket and creating opportunities. First, he is patient out on the perimeter and does not force the ball into the key. He works to find a gap and then gets into the lane where he can pass or shoot.

### Hasan Tucker

At 6-foot, Tucker is a junior that provides an athletic spark to Rincon. He was making big plays against Canyon del Oro on the defensive end, chasing down cross court passes and clogging up the lane. He is currently ranked No. 29 for the junior class and should be able to show that he has a lot more to his game.

### Emilio Acedo

Salpointe's 6-foot-4 senior shooting guard is on the 2011 watch list and will likely move up into the top 100 rankings. He can hit the deep three and his height out on the perimeter makes his shots harder to block, and it also gives him upside for a low major college. He was poised with the ball when pressured by the athletic wing players of Amphitheater. His decision making helped lead the team in a very up-tempo game. Look for him to be one of the biggest threats from a solid Salpointe team.

### Nick Onate

Onate emerged on the scene during Salpointe's quality victory over Amphitheater. The 6-foot-1 guard made the difference by making all the hustle plays both on defense and offense. He was effective running the transition and he went after rebounds and was able to get very helpful second chance buckets. He was thriving off the energy of the game which was only fueled more by his key plays. He was out all last year with a knee injury but was looking agile and ready to make a name for himself this year.

### Colby Weaver

Weaver, 6-foot-4, is a well rounded guard from Salpointe that gets after it all game. He is physical and passionate and is particularly good at finishing near the basket. He is tough with ball whether it is dribbling outside or taking it in strong to the hole. He will play a leading role for his team and is currently ranked No. 59 in the senior class.



Lester Medford of Amphi.