

Stoneridge Prep School

California basketball-factory feeds UW basketball team

UW basketball coach Heath Schroyer, with the knowledge and acquiescence of athletic director Tom Burman and president Tom Buchanan, has created an Underground Railroad from a "school" in California to the dorms in Laramie.

The school is called Stoneridge Preparatory School and it is currently located in Simi Valley, California. Stoneridge has been in other locations, including Tarzana, where Drew Barrymore and Corey Feldman were among students who attended the tiny private school.

Its current campus consists of "two adobe buildings set back about 200 yards from the main road, obscured by a row of orange and grapefruit trees," according to a March 26, 2006 article at WashingtonPost.com.

Yes, Stoneridge Prep has received much national media attention. Not all good.

The private, for-profit school with 50-60 enrollment, once got attention for its celebrity students. Now, attention and notoriety comes for other reasons.

Let's go back a bit: A woman named Maria Arnold founded the school in 1956. It has moved around within the San Fernando Valley often. This type of school is exactly what basketball-factory investors seek. An accredited school with academic legitimacy where a top-flight basketball "program" can be run with players from all over the world. The new Stoneridge recruits from France, Senegal, Mali, New York, Massachusetts and California.

In 2004-2005, the group of players listed below left played basketball at a school in Florida - Florida Prep, an unaccredited school. In 2004-2005, Stoneridge had a basketball team with different players. Not a different player, all different players. Those players were not coming to class, being away from school weeks at a time.

The basketball coach at Stoneridge had a falling out with the school's owner and he took his entire team to another school - Calvary Christian School. It just so happened that Florida Prep had been banned from play in the high school league down there for academic reasons. Entire teams transfer together, not a single player.

An investment banker wanted to get into the basketball-factory business and instructed the coach at Florida Prep to take that team to the airport. He invested \$150,000 to create a new team at Stoneridge. Players had not been adequately fed or cared for in Florida - many were thousands of miles from home. They were not consulted before the move.

After one season, actually only one game, the team from Calvary Christian School was disbanded. Florida Prep plans a comeback as a basketball-factory but has had to go through bankruptcy on the way.

Stoneridge survives. And thrives.

Stoneridge has no gym. Other students have never seen their nationally-ranked team play. Players from Senegal (on the west coast of Africa) and France don't see family or go home for years at a time. Basketball mercenaries go to Stoneridge on their own schedule when in town and, when they do go, leave school one hour earlier than other students so they can practice in the rented gym at a nearby health center, Fitness One.

Stoneridge has had its accreditation withdrawn recently but earned it back. The school is itself legitimate - it is their new basketball-factory that causes concerns.

All basketball team members live in one house. It is large but so are the players. The 2005-2006 Stoneridge players roster below shows that four of the players were 6'10 or taller. Note that Mahamoud Diakite, who is on the UW roster this season, was shown to be a freshman in high school just three years ago. He then went to a community college** out there before coming to Laramie. From high school freshman to college junior in three years?

Four on the UW roster this season are from Stoneridge even though you can't tell from the UW roster. Three went elsewhere after leaving Stoneridge. Most SP players do play at the D-1 level. But is that the feeder program we want for UW? Is UW better for having a basketball program stocked with questionable Prep School "graduates?" Locals criticized Stoneridge for allowing players to remain past four years of high school. Why did Sylla, an absolutely outstanding high school player, leave Auburn? Why did Thiam leave Baylor? It is well-known why Ogirri left Wichita State - what about the guys from Stoneridge? Is Laramie now a safe haven for Stoneridge expatriates?

2005-2006 Stoneridge Prep School Roster	2008-2009 University of Wyoming Roster
1 Djibril Thiam 6'9" 185 Senior - Dakar, Senegal	➔➔➔ 2 Arthur Bouëdo G 6-2 164 Fr. (Stoneridge Prep)
2 Marvin Adams G 6'4" 200 Junior - Los Angeles, CA	51 A.J. Davis G 6-5 195 Fr. (Harmony Community)
3 Shane Mahoney G 6'1" 175 Senior - Redondo Beach, CA	5 Ryan Dermody F 6-8 205 Jr. (Univ. of Colorado)
5 Mahamoud Diakite 6'7" 225 Freshman - Paris, France	➔➔➔ 32 Mahamoud Diakite F 6-7 223 Jr. TR (Antelope Valley CC)
8 Boubacar Sylla 7'1" 190 Senior - Paris, France	23 Brandon Ewing G 6-2 190 Sr. (Julian, Chicago)
9 Peter Schroeder G 6'5" 185 Junior - New York, NY	21 Tyson Johnson F 6-6 248 Sr. (Blinn CC)
11 Ibrahima Thomas F 6'10" 185 Junior - Dakar, Senegal	13 Mikhail Linskens C 7-0 270 So. Belgium (K.A. Redingenhof Leuven)
14 Mamadou Diarra F 6'10" 216 Senior - Bamako, Mali	1 JayDee Luster * G 5-9 165 So. (New Mexico State Univ.)
15 Albert Brown G 6'3" 175 Senior - Mt. Vernon, NY	11 Afam Muojeke F 6-7 201 RS Fr. (Genesis One Prep)
21 Hamady N'Diaye C 6'11" 230 Senior - Dakar, Senegal	0 Sean Ogirri G 6-2 200 RS Sr. (Wichita State Univ.)
41 Herb Tanner G 6'4" 175 PG ?? - Boston, MA	➔➔➔ 33 Boubacar Sylla * C 7-2 275 So. TR Paris, France (Auburn Univ.)
	12 Galand Thaxton G 6-1 175 Fr. (Laramie)
	➔➔➔ 25 Djibril Thiam # F 6-9 205 Dakar, Senegal So. TR (Baylor Univ.)
	15 Adam Waddell C 6-9 228 RFr. RS (Cody, Wyoming)

Key to abbreviations in right column:
 * Must sit out all of 2008-2009 season
 # Must sit out fall semester 2008-2009 season
 RS Red Shirt, TR Transfer
 ➔➔➔ From Stoneridge Prep School

The below personal information appeared about Boubacar Sylla. Note in the write-up that he played at Stoneridge also in 2006-2007 and that he attended four years of high school in Paris, France. He will be 26 if he graduates from UW. Are 23 year-old sophomores what Burman seeks? His Stoneridge teammates have done well for themselves.

PREP SCHOOL, HIGH SCHOOL AND PERSONAL DATA: Averaged 2.9 points 2.5 rebounds at Stoneridge Prep in Simi Valley, Calif., in 2006-07 for coach Babacar Sy ... helped Stoneridge to a No. 14 prep school ranking by Hoopmasters ... prep school teammates included Oklahoma State's Ibrahima Thomas, Rutgers' Hamady N'diaye, Southern Cal's Mamadou Diarra, Baylor's Djibril Thiam, Fordham's Herb Tanner, Lamar's Shane Mahoney and Western Illinois' Mahamoud Diakite ... attended all four years of high school in Paris, France ... full name is Boubacar Sylla ... born July 18, 1986, in Paris, France ... son of Mamadou and Oumou Sylla ... the oldest of nine children, five brothers and three sisters ... played soccer as a child and first played basketball at the age of 12 ... is fluent in three languages — English, French and Bambara, his native African language ... signed national letter of intent on Apr. 11, 2007. (Note: The letter of intent was to Auburn University.)

The below personal information appeared about Mahamoud Diakite. The UW roster omits mention that Diakite played at Western Illinois in 2006-2007 before he played at Antelope Valley Community College. He's a bit of a nomad. His pattern of movement has avoided having to sit out a year at any time.

PERSONAL: Born on 1-23-86 in Paris, FRA...currently undecided on a major...pronounces name Mah-mood Jaw-key-tay. **STONERIDGE PREP:** Played one year for the prestigious prep school in tournaments all across the country, which was coached by Babacar Sy.

WESTERN ILLINOIS 06-07: Played three minutes against Florida International before suffering a laceration to his left hand that required 20 stitches to repair ... played 26 minutes, tallying career-highs of 11 points and six rebounds against Utah Valley State ... earned first career start against Morehead State, tabbing five points and three rebounds in 13 minutes... recorded five points, four rebounds and two assists in a season/career-high 28 minutes at Indiana ... collected a career-high nine rebounds and totalled seven points in 25 minutes at Oral Roberts. **AVC '07-08:** Scored 20 points in his second game against Saddleback. (Note: AVC is Antelope Valley Community College.)

Djibril Thiam came out of Stoneridge Prep ranked the 22nd small forward in the country and the 93rd rated player overall in 2006. One of the guys caught up in the musical rosters after 2005 (Taj Gibson) was ranked #32 overall and another, Hamady N'Diaye was #68 overall. They went to USC and Rutgers, respectively. These guys can flat-out play basketball. Mamadou Diarra was No. 70 overall in 2007. The question is simple: Is winning most important in the eyes of Burman and Buchanan? What about the reputation of UW as a nest for failed players at other schools instead of building with high school players? What is the direction of the UW men's basketball program? Or do they even know?