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Izzo serious about Schilling

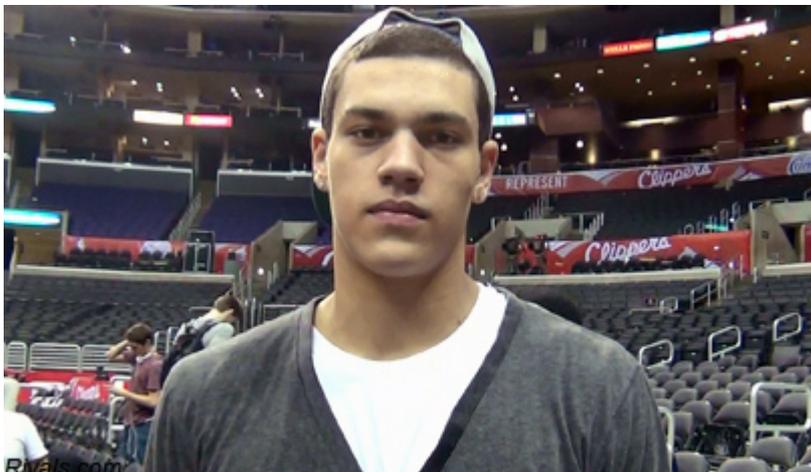
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Special to SpartanMag.com

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CHICAGO - [Gavin Schilling](#) won't be anybody's consolation prize.

That's the first thing that probably needs to be said about the 6-foot-9, 235-pound senior power forward from Findlay Prep in Las Vegas.



Schilling lists Michigan State among his top eight to 10 schools.

increased interest in the Rivals 3-star forward since the Parker announcement, with MSU assistant coach [Dane Fife](#) taking the lead role for him and the Spartans reportedly offering a scholarship during a Dec. 27 unofficial visit.

However, it's what Schilling's coaches are saying about him that should catch the interest of MSU basketball fans.

"Gavin's going to be good," said **Mike Irvin**, who coaches the AAU powerhouse Mac Irvin Fire program that Schilling played for last season with Parker and other standouts. "He's a steal. He's only supposed to be a junior right now."

Instead, Schilling is a senior at Findlay Prep despite turning just 17 in December. His father works and lives in Germany, while his mother lives in Chicago.

Schilling went to prestigious Loyola Academy in the Chicago suburb of Wilmette as a freshman, then moved to Germany and attended an elite school there before coming back to attend Chicago De La Salle.

Upon his return to the U.S., the decision was made to bump him up a grade. He is blossoming at Findlay Prep, which is 17-0 and ranked the No. 1 high school team in the country by USA Today.

"If he were in (the junior) class, he'd probably be a Top 15 player," said Irvin, who watched Schilling get off to a great start to his AAU season last spring before an ankle injury slowed his progress. "He can be big-time. The sky is the limit because he can shoot a 15-footer, he's an exceptional rebounder and he's very athletic."

Schilling is also a tireless worker and is able to defend both the power forward and center positions because of strength and bulk that he added in the weight room. Schilling's Rivals profile has him listed at 6-9, 205 pounds but recent photos suggest he's much bulkier and muscular.

Many are viewing Schilling that way, simply because it's been reported that both Michigan State and Duke had plans to recruit him hard if either lost out in the chase for coveted small forward [Jabari Parker](#) - the No. 2 overall player in the 2013 Rivals 150.

Parker chose Duke in December, so the assumption was that Schilling - another recruit with Chicago ties - would likely become MSU coach [Tom Izzo's](#) "Plan B" option. Technically speaking, that could be the case.

Michigan State has shown

Findlay Prep's web site also has him listed a full 30 pounds heavier than the Rivals profile and its head coach, **Todd Simon**, said Schilling's strong work ethic is among his best attributes. Simon, who's in his seventh year at the school and first as the bench boss, even compared Schilling's development curve to that of current Cleveland Cavaliers 6-9 small forward **Tristan Thompson** and dynamite 6-8, 240-pound UNLV freshman forward [Anthony Bennett](#) - both standout Findlay Prep alums.

"He's probably developed as fast as anyone who's come through here in a short amount of time," Simon said of Schilling. "He brings it every day and he's very receptive to learning. He absorbs everything piece by piece and he's really developed his game."

The improvement isn't limited to just one or two facets.

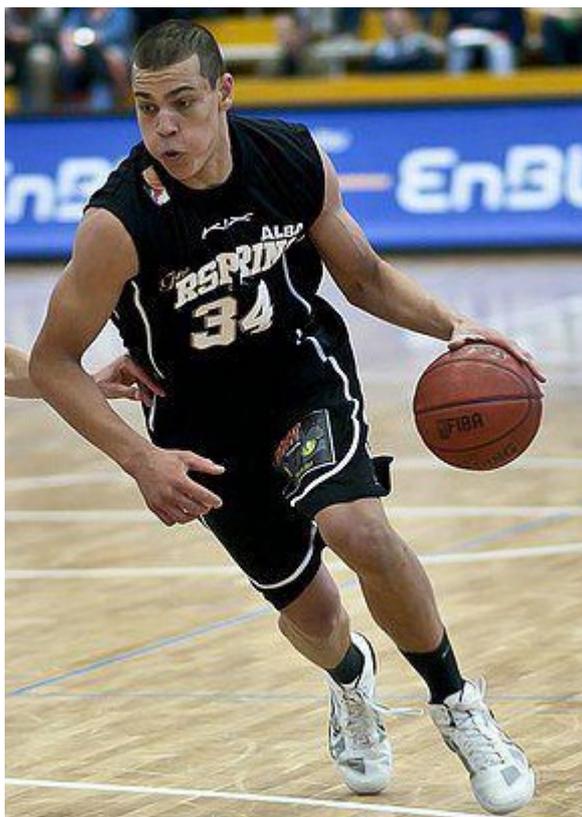
"He can handle the ball, put the ball on the floor and run the floor," Simon said. "He can finish from two feet instead of one. He's adjusting to contact and is now initiating and going through contact."

"You can go right on down the line and see that he's becoming one of the premier post players in the country."

Some "Plan B" option, huh?

At Findlay - which already has players committed to Indiana, UCLA, UNLV and Washington - Schilling is more of a "Plan A" guy at both ends of the floor.

"He just needs to continue to get more mileage," Simon said. "It's different when you're playing a lot of basketball and you're just one of the guys. Now he's becoming more of the Alpha Male a little bit. We're going to him in the post more, so this is all new to him. He's improving, but it's one of those things where the more reps you get, the better you become. He's going to get better and better."



Schilling has strength to finish with power inside and skills to negotiate the perimeter.

Simon also said that some college coach just might find himself thanking his luck in a couple of years.

"We've had four NBA guys and four more who will be on the NBA Draft board next year ... and there are times when we look at Gavin and say, 'This guy has a real chance,'" Simon said. "He's pretty likely to have that college adjustment and probably won't be gone after one year in college. I'm not sure that three years down the line a program doesn't sit back and say, 'Boy, this kid gave me more over a longer period of time than what we would've gotten from the Jabari Parker situation.'

"Gavin being so young, he hasn't even scratched the surface of what he's going to be two years from now."

That's why interest in Schilling is picking up steam. SpartanMag.com is working on getting an interview with Schilling in the near future, but according to Simon, he currently has a "loose" list of eight to 10 schools in which there is mutual interest, including Michigan State.

Schilling recently listed Ohio State, Michigan State, Minnesota, Villanova, OSU, Kansas St, Oregon St, UCLA, Georgetown and Missouri as his lead group.

Illinois and DePaul are on the radar and have offered scholarships.

It's no done deal that Michigan State would get Schilling's commitment if the Spartans pressed hard, but both coaches who were reached for this report agreed that he does fit the description of an "Izzo player."

"Izzo has one of the most physical teams in the Big Ten year-in and year-out, and Gavin fits that mold," Irvin said. "He's not afraid at all and he's got the body to do it. Izzo would be great for him. He'd make him use that body. That's what he is right now - an exceptional rebounder with great offensive upside."

Simon agreed. Originally from Fowler, Mich., located just north of Lansing, Simon has followed Izzo's

program from the beginning. He knows what kind of players Izzo likes to coach and sees a fit with Schilling.

"Gavin is a Coach Izzo type of guy," Simon said. "He's a warrior. He's a phenomenal rebounder. He's got a very high motor and hits people.

"He's also shooting almost 70 percent from the floor for the year, which is absurd. His improvement is a little like **Anthony Bennett**, who also grew when he got here. You said to yourself, 'This kid is just getting better and better and better.' Gavin is that same way."

Schilling also did something else that should attract the interest level of Spartan basketball fans. He identified that his free-throw shooting needed work and asked for help.

"That was one of his concerns when he came in here," Simon said. "So, we tweaked a few things and calmed him down a little. He actually has a nice stroke at the line and he's shooting in the high 60 percent range. He hit 11 of 12 a couple games ago, so he's not a guy you can just foul anymore."

Schilling is, however, a guy whose recruiting stock is on the rise. And no matter where he lands, there's a chance this "Plan B guy" might just step in and make a "Plan A" contribution right away.

"If he gets to the right program, I've got no doubt that he's going to be on the floor (in college) next year," Simon said. "I don't know of any basketball coach anywhere who doesn't like a big guy who can defend, rebound, put the ball on the floor and get to the line."