

Mustang Press is a monthly newsletter covering the experiences, progress, and events of the Putnam Science Academy Basketball program

Johnson commits to Arkansas St.



The road to Justin Johnson's college commitment, littered with potholes and detours, didn't always feel like it had an end. But Johnson, the Florida native who led Putnam Science in scoring and helped the Mustangs to the national championship game in March, was finally able to announce his commitment recently to Arkansas State.

The Red Wolves, who play in the Sun Belt Conference, went 20-17 this past season.

"Justin really grew up a lot here," PSA coach Tom Espinosa said. "And it was great to see because there was so much negative stuff about him. But Arkansas State was on him in the fall, they're the team that's been recruiting him the longest, and I really believe they're going to be rewarded for that."

"Justin wasn't perfect, but he came a long way. Things he was doing in the first semester, he really got out of his game in the second semester. He had a great year for us, and I'm really excited for his future."

Johnson averaged 15.6 points per game (the highest number since Hassan Diarra averaged 16.0 in 2019-20) and will be one of the first names off Espinosa's tongue when it comes to PSA's legacy of great players.

"He is no doubt one of the most talented players we've ever had here," he said. "He was a gifted 6-foot-8 guard who could get his shot off any time he wanted to. I've never really had that here."

"He was really, really good for us. He got a lot out of Putnam Science and Putnam Science got a lot out of him."

McElveen headed to Florida JUCO

Cris McElveen remembers PSA assistant coach Nick Schmidt recruiting him around this time last year and asking how he felt about going prep.

"I told him that everyone has their own path and journey," said McElveen whose path will take him to Chipola College in Florida. "I'm not going to stop so there's no sense in looking at any of it as a bad thing. It's all part of my path and my journey. Especially with the way today's game is, JUCO more of a helpful thing than a hurtful thing."

McElveen, a 6-5 slashing guard with a strong midrange game, averaged 7.0 points and 3.3 rebounds while providing tough defense for PSA this past year. He was a key piece of the team's second-half turnaround after being buried deep in coach Tom Espinosa's doghouse late in the first semester.



Former Mustangs find new homes

Name	New school	Former school
Momo Cisse	LaSalle	Trinity Valley CC
Desmond Claude	Southern California	Xavier
Arturo Dean	Oklahoma State	Florida International
Barry Evans	Bryant	St. Bonaventure
Josh Gray	Missouri	South Carolina
Mekhi Gray	UMass-Lowell	NJIT
Vlad Goldin	Michigan	Florida Atlantic
Elijah Hutchins-Everett	James Madison	Seton Hall
Will Lovings-Watts	James Madison	Northern Illinois
Ugonna Onyenso	<i>Undeclared</i>	Kentucky
D'Maurian Williams	High Point	Texas Tech



Congratulations!

Putnam Science Academy's men's basketball program would like to extend a hearty congratulations to the Class of 2024, which includes **Prep players:** Ramsay Checo, Que Duncan, Oswin Erhunmwunse, Noah Mendy, and Tony Williams; **Elite players:** Tyler Hansen (Class valedictorian), Erick Aponte, Javelle Epps, Jude Gonzalez, and Octavius Wheeler; and **Varsity players:** Nichita Badrajan, Ilan Da Silva-Alp, Vlad Vetrov, and Julien Ville.

