

Girls AAU Basketball in the Adirondack District

What are the opportunities to play girls basketball what as known as the Adirondack District of the AAU and how does one get involved to participate?

The answer to this question involves a little history, a bit of geography, and a few unbiased observations.

First...the history.

The AAU was founded in 1888 to establish standards and uniformity in amateur sport. Over the years, the AAU has focused its efforts into providing sports programs for all participants of all ages beginning at the grass roots level. The AAU is divided into 57 distinct Districts. The Districts are managed by a population of volunteers, and among other activities, sanction more than 34 sports programs, 250 national championships and over 30,000 age division events.

Generally speaking, the mission of the (girls basketball) clubs that make up the Adirondack District (as articulated by one long standing club) is to assist female student athletes aged 10 through 17 in improving their individual basketball skills by providing knowledgeable, dedicated coaching along with the opportunity to play with and against high levels of competition. Equally important is the clubs' focus on developing character, teamwork, and sportsmanship in an enjoyable basketball environment. Participants also develop new friendships established through travel and the competitive experience.

For those girls that aspire to continue their play in college, participation in AAU also provides an opportunity to demonstrate their basketball abilities at regional and national tournaments attended by college coaches and recruiters...opportunities that just don't present themselves by virtue of participation in high school sports, alone.

Geography

The Adirondack District covers a large part of upstate New York. To the south, the District extends to Dutchess County. To the north the District boundary extends to the Canadian border. To the west, the District extends to include Utica. A map of the District can be found on the internet, by viewing the following web site: www.empireallstars.com

About AAUTryouts, Practice, Competition, Coaching, Costs

In 2007, there were some 60+ clubs registered within the District. Some clubs consisted of one team, at a specific age level, while other clubs had as many as three teams at 5 or 6 different age "levels", for a total of 12 to 18 teams. When one does the math...this means that there were approximately 300 teams playing AAU ball throughout the District. That's a lot of basketball!

Most teams hold tryouts, although not all. If a team does hold tryouts...they generally advertise in local papers. In addition, a list of tryouts for the teams (that provide such information) can be viewed "on line" by visiting the above referenced web site address. Tryouts start as early as

January for younger players, and generally are held in late February or early March (following the high school basketball season), for the older (high school age) participants.

Once tryouts are finished, practice begins. Each club has its own philosophy regarding practices...and will generally practice one or two times per week, depending on the availability (and cost) of gym space. The practices are generally held in the evenings...(as gym space) is available. Practices are generally “mandatory”...in that attendance at practice...(as it prepares you for competition) typically affects playing time in tournaments.

Competition

Competition in AAU Girls Basketball generally comes in two forms...competition during practices (and with scrimmages that may be scheduled along the way) and participation in tournaments. Teams typically participate in some 3 to 6 tournaments, with each tournament (held on the weekend) providing for 3 to 5 games, on any given weekend. Tournaments can be “local” in that they are played near the home base of the club, or they may be those that require substantial travel (along with the attendant costs for same). *Be sure to check with the club you are interested in, as to what locations their teams typically travel to.*

Coaching

Coaching expertise at the various clubs can vary greatly. Some clubs utilize parents as coaches, others are able to attract (experienced) high school coaches to participate. Some coaches are compensated for their time via a monetary stipend, while others serve on a volunteer basis. Some clubs do not allow parents to serve as head coach. Be sure to check with the club you’re interested in, regarding their policy on this important matter.

Costs

The costs to participate in Girls AAU Basketball is NOT insignificant. Registration, insurance, equipment, uniforms, tournament entrance fees, travel and lodging costs are all components of what it costs to participate in girls AAU hoops. Typical costs for registration for a player, run in the range of \$250 to \$400 for the season (which typically does NOT include uniform costs). This would be based on a team participating in 4 to 6 tournaments, a couple of which would be “local”. Tack on hotel, food and out of pocket costs for away events...and the total cost for the season...can easily exceed \$1000. Be sure to get a full disclosure of all anticipated costs, before you commit to any one individual program.

So...AAU Hoops can be a great experience. Do your homework, ask questions, volunteer to assist, encourage your daughter to work hard, and enjoy the ride...it only lasts for a short time, but can bring a lifetime of memories and friendships.