



JUNIOR LADY KNIGHTS GUIDE TO AAU BASKETBALL

As you consider having your daughter play AAU or other spring basketball, below are some things to contemplate as you consider your options.

While this guide may seem somewhat pessimistic, many of our players have participated in AAU/Spring basketball over many years to great success. Our players are generally well prepared to participate as they have been well coached and exposed to appropriate levels of competition.

We encourage our players to consider playing or otherwise keep working on their skills through the spring and summer months. Girls who make the commitment and put in the extra work are normally clearly evident during subsequent JLK and High School seasons.

So here are some good guidelines when making this decision -

BE REALISTIC

- Accurately evaluating your own children's abilities in respect to their peers is an impossible task. However, be as realistic as possible in evaluating their aptitude and interest in playing AAU basketball.
- Evaluate if she should play. AAU is not for everyone.
 - Players with nagging injuries are often better using the time to heal than to put more wear and tear on their bodies.
 - Players who are complaining about having to go to practice or another game may be better off not playing than attending practices and games for 3 or more additional months.
 - AAU tryouts are true tryouts. Not every player makes a team. The teams are always split by player's ability. The best players are offered spots on the "top" team. The next best players are offered spots on the next level and so on. Be sure your daughter is emotionally ready to not make a team, not make the top team, or not make the same team that her friend makes. Be sure she understands that not making a particular team doesn't necessarily mean she is not a good basketball player. There are numerous factors that may have caused that coach to go in another direction, only a few relate to her basketball ability.

- Be sure she is on the most appropriate team for her ability. For example, suppose she is offered a spot on a club's "A" team that is planning on going to play in the Division 1 National AAU Tournament that invited 12 total players to play. It appears to you that 8 or more of the players are likely to play in the games more than she will, particularly when it comes to the important games and situations. It would be a good idea to discuss with the coaches if it would not be better for her to play on the "B" team that still has players of similar ability but she would likely play more and play more during the important games and situations. Most coaches will be honest and open about that conversation. In short, play on the best team you will actually play on.

DON'T BE AN OUTLIER

- If your daughter's basketball ability is clearly well outside the range of abilities of the other players likely to be on her team, either better or worse, that team is not likely to be a good experience for her. A team of players of similar ability will give her a chance for good competition at practice and games and a good possibility of experiencing success.
- Until the 7th grade, teams can have an unlimited number of players from the same school or winter team. If your daughter is considering joining a team such as this, be cautious if they don't already have a relationship with coaches or players on the team, particularly if they tend to be introverted.

BE CAUTIOUS

- All AAU certified coaches complete an annual background check. However, not all coaches, clubs, and teams register with the AAU. Most of the clubs do a fair amount of due diligence when allowing volunteers to coach. However, don't assume that to be the case. Outside of the AAU clubs and coaches, there are NO laws or regulations that require any kind of Child Protection Policies similar to the Archdiocese or AAU.
- Be sure your daughter is physically, emotionally, and mentally ready to play. Games and practices are typically much faster and physically intense than what winter basketball is. Three to five games in 2 ½ days on a tournament weekend are the norm.

DISPELL THE MYTHS

- Your daughter can play select spring soccer, softball, volleyball, or track, and AAU basketball at the same time! Be sure to communicate with potential coaches that your daughter does play, when her practices, training, games, and tournaments are. Have this information ready as soon as it is available and with you at open gyms and tryouts. Many AAU coaches are willing to work with other sports as long as they know in advance what the conflicts are and how they will be managed. The key is always good open communication.
- Not all spring basketball is AAU basketball. Some teams and clubs will only play in non-sanctioned tournaments and leagues. Clubs and teams playing solely in the leagues at Kingdom and Southwest Ohio Basketball, GBA, OYB, and other events are not likely to be registered as AAU teams and clubs. These events and organizations are certainly acceptable and give many teams the ability to find suitable competition. Level of competition and quality of coaching and programs can vary pretty widely. Find out as much as you can before making any commitments.

KNOW THE FACTS

- Before committing to any team know ;
 - How many tournaments will the team play in?
 - Will they play in any leagues? If so, which one?
 - Where will the tournaments be?
 - When are the tournaments?
 - When and where will practices be?
 - What will be the fee? What does it include? What does it not include? Are there any other fundraising requirements?
 - When will the season end?
- Know the coaches. Observe the tryouts to watch how the coaches interact with the girls. Is their style something that your daughter will cringe from or respond to? If you don't know the coach, ask around, find out as much as you can.
- Know the other players and parents. Be sure that other potential parents and players are people you want to be associated with and are willing spend time with. You will spend a lot of time in addition to practices and games with these people, be sure it is something you can live with. If the parent who drove you crazy screaming the whole game during the winter or the girl who bit your daughter during a winter game is likely to be on the team, consider other teams.

SHOW SOME RESPECT

- Respect your daughter, respect other players, respect the coaches, respect the opponents, respect the officials....
- Poor behavior on the part of parents and/or players during spring basketball normally has a multitude of negative consequences. Due to the competitive nature of spring basketball the consequences are normally more swift, severe, and permanent.
- Consequences can include -
 - Embarrassment and ostracizing of the player
 - Ejection from games and tournaments
 - Dismissal from the team without refund
 - Not being offered a spot on a team in future seasons
 - A reputation that will follow the player and parent to all local clubs

NOTE: AAU/Spring Tryouts are difficult for players and coaches. Most tryouts will be two 90 minute to 2 hour sessions. There are normally 30 – 40 girls trying out for as few as 8 - 20 spots. It is incredibly difficult and imprecise to evaluate that many players in that short of a period. One girl could play the best basketball of her life in that 3 hours, while another is getting the flu and playing her worst ever. That can and does occur. It is also common that the 10 “best” players are all guards or posts. In those cases, the 10 best players aren't normally going to make the best team as a good team needs a balance. It is often difficult or impossible to understand why a coach selected any particular individual player over another, reassure your daughter that this process is inexact, inaccurate, and often seemingly unfair. A selection for a team should not be interpreted strictly as them having superior basketball ability, nor should a failure to be selected be interpreted as them not being good enough. It is most often significantly more complicated than that.