

September 2019

Why Young Athletes Should Avoid AAU Basketball

Adam Standley

Cedarville University, adamdstandley@cedarville.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/idea_of_an_essay



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Standley, Adam (2019) "Why Young Athletes Should Avoid AAU Basketball," *The Idea of an Essay*. Vol. 6 , Article 28.

Available at: https://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/idea_of_an_essay/vol6/iss1/28

This Essay is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of English, Literature, and Modern Languages at DigitalCommons@Cedarville. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Idea of an Essay by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Cedarville. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@cedarville.edu.

Adam Standley

My name is Adam Standley, and I am entering my junior year at Cedarville as a Finance major, with a goal of being a Financial Advisor after graduation. I am from Columbus, OH, so I bleed Scarlet and Gray, as well as rooting for Blue Jackets Hockey and Reds Baseball. My life verse is Mark 10:45, which says, "For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many." I am a member of Cedarville's Men's Basketball team, as we hope to have a great upcoming season and build off of our recent National Championship! We would love to see you at as much games as possible. And, as a member of the Towel Gang, we need your help to cheer on the guys on the court! Thanks for taking the time to read my work, I hope you enjoy it!

Why Young Athletes Should Avoid AAU Basketball

I was about to click the "REGISTER NOW" button. I talked about it with my parents, coaches, and friends. It was a Sunday afternoon, and all seemed right in the world as I was about to sign up to participate in the 16-year-old AAU, or, Amateur Athletic Union, basketball league, and play for the heralded "Ohio Elite Kings." This was about to be a large step in my high school basketball career, as I started to attract the attention of different local colleges throughout my sophomore season. However, there was just something about AAU basketball that had turned me away from it after wanting to get involved in the league a few years prior.

On my high school basketball team, the “AAU” players stood out: although the skills were outstanding, each attitude displayed a cocky spirit, and the team aspects of building each other up, passing the ball, and playing with the team were not in mind. The goal was to win and win only. I am glad I never fell into the trap that is AAU Basketball. Through hard work, a team-focused mind, and great skills, any high school basketball player can play in college. Although it is well-known across the country, AAU should not be participated in because of the coaches, the cost of money, and the amount of stress it puts on the athlete.

Coaches have both positive and negative effects on players, and the parent of the young athlete must recognize the unique attributes of AAU coaches who have different goals than a high school coach. The parent’s view an AAU coach as the one catalyst that can get the child into college athletics. This is a very appealing to a child who is looking to play in college. However, the negative motives of an AAU coach are focused on getting athletes into college. Steven Davis, a student and Teresa Dail, a professor at North Carolina A&T University jointly say in the article, “What effect do AAU/Travel Ball Teams Have on Sport Participation at the High School and Middle School Level?” that an AAU coach is not focused on player development since each player in AAU already possesses the talent and is there to glean college attention for his players. As a result, the AAU coach is only focused on winning tournaments and making sure that the right amount of basketball tournaments is scheduled in order to gain attention and face-to-face conversation with college coaches (46). This is a polar

opposite from a high school coach, which bases the coaching style on player development and team-building (46). From personal experience in only high school athletics, I argue that high school coaches are more engaged in one's life out of sport, more intentional with the goal of both becoming a mature man and a strong basketball player, and more respectful with the entire team, and not favoring one player over another.

The counterargument which parents of AAU athletes argue for the AAU coach is found in Matt Dalton's "Shoe Money, AAU Basketball, and the Effects on College Basketball Recruiting." He writes that the primary focus of AAU coaches is to fundraise for tournaments, and then focusing on the aspects that high-school coaches specialize in (110). This may be the coaching strategy for some coaches, but AAU teams do not have the close relationship between coach and player since the motivations are focused on the future, not the present. Team-minded coaching in high school builds the player into a mature athlete, while incorporating respect to teammates, coaches and authority to be used when not playing the game. This aspect of coaching can be used in all areas of life after one's playing career is over, while the importance of winning tournaments only goes so far. Not only should a parent of an athlete look at the coaches in AAU but should pay attention as to the significant amount of money is required to play in a league, as the return on investment has a strong possibility to not yield the desired result.

Parents see his or her child as a prodigy in many areas of life, especially in AAU basketball. In the parent's humble opinion,

the child shoots the prettiest jump shot and can dribble better than an NBA point guard. With this view, parents will spend as much money necessary to put the young athlete into the best position for college attention. Parents of a young athlete have the right to boast about the “prodigy.” However, the young athlete might not possess the aforementioned skills which would eventually place the child on a college basketball team. As a result, parents can spend too much money in trying to put a child who does not have necessary attributes of speed, height, or dribbling in college. However, this is a popular area where parents raise the following counterargument: “The funds to play AAU basketball will save tens of thousands of college tuition dollars in the future.” This is a great way of looking at playing AAU basketball for many athletes, and AAU has saved many families a lot of money in the future. Doug Green estimates in his web article, “Bottom Line: AAU a Money Machine” that the cost to play on an AAU team can range from \$400 to \$4000 (11). This investment may not bring about the full-ride scholarship many parents dream about, and the parents will be seeing the child as a “prodigy” in another aspect of life. I have seen this happen first hand to one of my high-school teammates, and the experience of putting the thousands of dollars into AAU could have been avoided.

One of my best friends in high school, Roger, was a great basketball player. We played together in elementary school, junior high, and high school, and we each knew how to play the game. During freshman year of high school, Roger started to play AAU, and his playing style changed for the worse. After a successful

season freshman year in high school, he returned to sophomore year a different player: he did not pass the ball to anyone and did not have any respect for the coaches or teammates. His sights were set on playing college basketball, thus playing for himself and not his teammates. However, college was so far away during sophomore year of high school that he failed to recognize that he did not have the necessary talents to play in college. After recognizing the risk did not turn out as he and his family expected, Roger ended up finding something he was more talented in and is enlisted in the army.

Parents need to recognize the investment in AAU athletics. Also, each parent must be smart on whether or not to spend the thousands of dollars to have a child play in AAU basketball. Not only is AAU a large monetary risk, but also places an unnecessary amount of stress on the young athlete.

Playing AAU Basketball can put bad stress on the life of a young athlete. For AAU basketball players, a hectic schedule is a way of life, as an AAU season begins in the spring and runs through the fall. Thus, the young athlete has no time to relax outside of the sport, since the high school season runs through the winter months. The constant effect of playing this sport year-round is not the best way to get better at a sport. Steffen J. Hoover, et. al. explains in the journal article, "Mood and Performance Anxiety in High School Basketball Players: A Pilot Study" that playing in a sport can cause an athlete to be subject to change of mood, and as a result not enjoy the sport he or she is playing (605). Although I never played AAU basketball, I did not enjoy the long and grueling

practices in the fall before my high school season began, as the practices were focused on getting in shape and learning to overcome the pain and aches of the body. I always cherished taking time off at the end of each season, to both relax after pushing my body to the limit for the previous six months, and to spend time with friends and family. As a result, the parent of the young athlete becomes the advocate for not overplaying the sport, and to make sure that the child takes the necessary time to take a break from playing the sport. Lyle J. Micheli and Mark D. Jenkins further describe in the book “Sportswise: An Essential Guide for Young Athletes, Parents, and Coaches” that parents of an athlete who are blessed with the ability to play the sport well need to watch the amount of games played and practices at a given time to decrease both stress and the case of injury (13). With this in mind, a counterargument becomes important to think about in this situation, as it arises from the athlete’s perspective.

The opinion of an AAU basketball player is centered on playing the sport year-round in order to gain college attention and get better at the sport. Even if the body aches, the talent gained from constantly playing the sport at a high level can be used in a great way. Harrist and Witt in the journal article “Seeing the Court: A Qualitative Inquiry into Youth Basketball as a Positive Developmental Context” talk about how sports are a unique way for a child to learn the necessary skills, and to showcase them in front of an audience against another team (126). For an AAU basketball player, this is the main reason on why to pursue playing the game year-round: to showcase one’s talents to an audience of

college coaches. The countless hours of playing basketball and trying to prove oneself better than the rest creates anxiety, and can harm the self-confidence of the athlete, which overflows into areas of life outside of the sport. Playing AAU basketball is not worth the side effects of bad stress that can harm the psychological health of a young athlete.

The reasons to avoid AAU basketball need to influence the decision-making of many families on how to develop talent. Playing high school basketball will develop a young athlete the necessary traits to play in college. Parents must protect his or her child from clicking the “REGISTER NOW” button, to keep the child from playing in the gimmick that is AAU basketball.

Works Cited

- Dalton, Matt. "Shoe Money, AAU Basketball, and the Effects on College Basketball Recruiting." *Mississippi Sports Law Review*. Vol. 6, no. 1, 108-115, 2016. <http://0-search.ebscohost.com.library.cedarville.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=s3h&AN=125918692&site=eds-live>.
- Green, Doug. "Bottom Line: AAU a Money Machine." *The Quad-City Times*, QC Varsity, 2 July 2013.
- Harris, Christopher J. and Peter A. Witt. "Seeing the Court: A Qualitative Inquiry into Youth Basketball as a Positive Developmental Context." *Journal of Sport Behavior*. Vol. 35, no. 2, 125-154, 2012. <http://0-search.ebscohost.com.library.cedarville.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=s3h&AN=75044387&site=eds-live>.
- Hoover, Steffen J. et. al. "Mood and Performance Anxiety in High School Basketball Players: A Pilot Study." *International Journal of Exercise Science*, Vol. 10, no. 4, 604-619, 2017. <http://0-search.ebscohost.com.library.cedarville.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=s3h&AN=123001737&site=eds-live>.
- Lyle J. Micheli, and Mark D. Jenkins. *Sportswise: An Essential Guide for Young Athletes, Parents, and Coaches*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 1980.

“What Effect do AAU/Travel Ball Teams Have on Sport Participation at the High School and Middle School Level?”
JOPERD: *The Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*. Vol. 85, no. 7, 46-47, 2014. <http://0-search.ebscohost.com.library.cedarville.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=s3h&AN=97627006&site=eds-live>.