



CT Panthers  
11 Downing Circle  
Bloomfield, CT 06002  
[www.ctpanthers.net](http://www.ctpanthers.net)

AAU Club Code: ctba37ybo

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Dear Sponsor

My Name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am \_\_\_\_\_ years old. I attend \_\_\_\_\_ School. I would like to participate in the CT Panthers AAU Boys/Girls league this season. This basketball league is a community-based organization which addresses the growing needs of boys/girls basketball in Northeastern Connecticut. We will be traveling across Connecticut and going to various states to play in state tournaments with other students my age. This is done to get college exposure in the pursuit of an invitation to attend college thru athletic/academic scholarships. It requires a lot of dedication for my family and me. I would love to be a part of this growing organization. However, I need your help.

I am currently asking my family and friends for financial support to help me with my player's fee of \$450.00 and my uniform fee which is \$150.00. I hope I can count on your support.

Below is some information regarding the AAU program and the President of CT Panthers. Sponsors will be helping to support me to impart quality characteristics, like teamwork, sportsmanship, and fair play throughout the community. As well as teen mentoring and close academic follow-up thru the high school years.

The President of CT Panthers, Mike Holmes, "The Shot Doctor," was born in Georgia and has lived in the Hartford area for over 45 years. He has been working with children for over 30 years. He was a Hartford Midgets Football Waverly Giants Head Coach, and Coached for over ten years for Parks and Recs. He has refereed and coached for the town of East Hartford for many years, and was a Drill Team & Youth Counselor for Project Right Choice in Manchester. He has also served as a Basketball Peewee Coach & Referee at Torrington YMCA. Coach Mike also organizes and runs training clinics for organizations to train their coaches and players. He has trained over 1000 students who just want to improve their game, hoping to get recruited to a reputable college or university. .

Thank you for your consideration in sponsoring me for this great summer basketball experience.

## AAU BACKGROUND

For many parents, AAU basketball is a mystery. And each year, suburban league coaches, directors, and board members are asked to give their advice and opinions.

The following is a brief AAU basketball primer. It is not an endorsement of any particular AAU program—or of even having your child participate. Rather, it is an attempt to provide basic information so you can come to your own conclusions.

Beyond the material here, you'll find links in the Resources section to some local AAU programs and other relevant websites.

## OVERVIEW

AAU basketball groups are independent clubs and organizations that form teams and participate in various tournaments throughout the year under the AAU umbrella organization. Important differences exist between AAU teams and school or travel team leagues:

- **Season:** The AAU season is largely dormant during the typical basketball season of November through February as most of the AAU players are playing on school, recreation, or travel programs. Most AAU teams are very active between March through June, with some programs also playing through the summer and fall.
- **Tryouts:** AAU tryouts are typically in January and February. Parents have to do their homework and be organized or risk missing tryouts for their teams. AAU teams and tournaments are organized by age and gender. For example, a 12U girls' team is defined as follows: "Born in 1996 or after or in the 7th grade & born in 1995 or after." For AAU's latest age grouping, see the following Resources section. Most programs run teams at a variety of age levels, starting around the ages of 9-10 and continuing through high school.
- **Variety:** AAU teams are independent organizations with a lot of latitude as to type of team, practice and play schedule, costs, playing time, travel limits, coaching philosophy, etc. It's important to match the right program with the needs of your child and you.
- **Games:** Most games are played in tournaments (some AAU sanctioned, some not) that take place on weekends (two games on Saturday and two games on Sunday is a common format). There are websites devoted to various tournaments (see Resources), and there are tournaments somewhere almost every weekend of the year. Some teams play only locally, while others travel around New England (there are significantly more tournaments in MA and CT than in NH). Some teams stay overnight in hotels for tournaments when the commute is long, and elite teams at older levels might even fly to a tournament or two.
- **Cost and time:** There's a significant money and time commitment to participating in AAU. Costs vary but can range from \$500 to \$1000 or more per year—not counting travel, meals, and hotels. As for time involvement, this is also variable, but many AAU teams practice one to two nights per week and play 2-3 weekend tournaments per month.

## ADVANTAGES OF AAU

- ***Your child will likely improve.*** Youth sports have changed and become more competitive. Growing up, many of us played a new sport each season. While some parents still prefer this approach, many of the best basketball players now play year-round and participate in AAU. As a child grows older and competition increases, the ability to make teams becomes tougher. Children who practice and play a sport in the off-season generally improve more than kids who don't. This specialization is occurring in all sports, and there are significantly fewer high-school multi-sport varsity athletes than even a decade ago.
- ***Your child will experience a more focused program.*** While AAU can seem intense, there are important life lessons in focus and commitment. We live in a competitive world, and we want our children to be dedicated and to strive for excellence. Because of the required commitment, a well-run AAU team will give your child a deeper, richer sports experience than most recreation or travel league teams. You can find outstanding coaches and resources that match the best that top high schools offer.
- ***You have more flexibility in picking a program.*** With travel and school teams, there are fewer options and more rigid rules as far as practices, playing time, etc. The AAU system is a free market, where programs come in a variety of shapes and sizes to fit various needs. Most programs are quite competitive, use experienced coaches, and cater to serious basketball players.
- ***AAU teams are important recruiting grounds for colleges.*** Due to scheduling conflicts (college coaches are busy with their own teams during the winter) and the chance to see kids play against top competition, AAU tournaments have become important in college recruiting. But this should be taken in context:
  - Most college recruiting does not take place until high school, and with a few exceptions, not until a player is a junior or senior. College coaches do not attend 12U games unless their own kids are playing or the next LeBron James is on the floor. The NCAA has strict rules on recruiting, and you should refer to the NCCA website for more information.
  - If your kid is good enough, the colleges will find him or her regardless of the setting.
  - The vast majority of kids, including those on AAU teams, do not play in college. Making a certain AAU team guarantees nothing. No AAU program will be able to guarantee your child will be exposed to any college program.
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## LIMITATIONS OF AAU

- ***Specialization comes at a cost.*** There are also advantages to breadth over depth. Playing different sports not only provides exposure to different kids, coaches, and experiences, it also exercises and trains a body in different ways. For example, basketball players who play soccer have excellent footwork and a good grasp of spacing. Burnout, injuries related to over-training, and stress can also be issues arising from specialization. In addition, you should consider the cost and time commitment, especially if you have multiple kids participating in other activities.
- ***Money doesn't guarantee a quality experience.*** Most AAU tournaments are moneymakers for athletic clubs, sports centers, or just people wanting to make a

living doing what they love. If you've got a check, usually any AAU tournament will take your team regardless of whether they can provide good matchups. That can translate into a lot of blowouts in AAU tournaments. It's also hard to keep tournaments on schedule (literally hundreds of games to get in), and so most games tend to be under-officiated and physical, if not downright rough. In addition, being picked for a team doesn't guarantee you playing time; most AAU teams will not make any guarantees for minimum playing time. As we've noted, every program is different, and it's important for you and your child to research and understand playing time philosophy.

- ***The team you want might not want you.*** While you're seeking the right team for your child, the team you want may not want you or be convenient. Your child might not be selected at tryouts, or the team you want might already be filled with players from the previous year. It's a good idea to have backup choices when it comes to AAU. And just because your child was on a team last year doesn't mean that her or she will make the team this year. Moreover, a spot on an AAU team doesn't guarantee that a player will make the school or travel team. Your child may wish to try out for several AAU teams in order to "test drive" the program and to have a backup.
- ***AAU eats up time kids could use to work on their skills.*** Given the amount of time devoted to their AAU teams, there is little time left for players to work on individual skills. Again, lost are the days where a kid wandered down to the park to work on his or her jump shot for a couple of hours. You have to watch that you child isn't just playing, but also practicing and improving skills.

Please feel free to contact Coach Holmes at 860-620-2078 at if you have any further questions. Have a Fantastic Day!

Sincerely,

Michael Holmes