

How To Select An AAU /or Select Basketball Team



Selecting An AAU / Select Basketball Team

Key Elements To Examine:

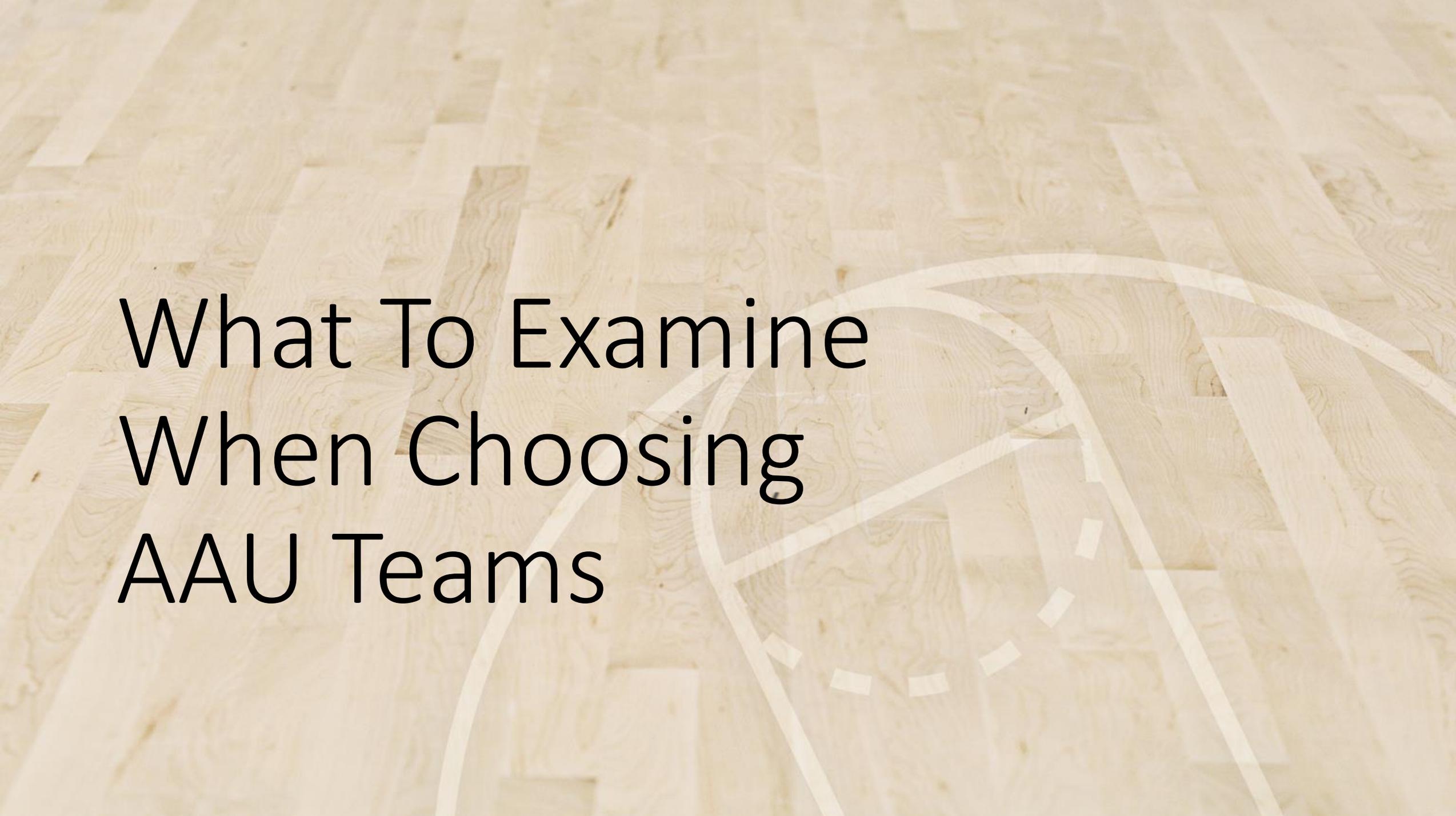
1. Self Examination: Reasons To Play AAU / Select
1. Overall Philosophy & Purpose
2. Coach's Experience – Background, Attitude, And Focus
3. Practice Agenda
4. The Fit – Culture, Position Availability
5. Logistics
6. Commitment – Financial & Time
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Reasons To Play

- College Exposure
 - This is probably the number 1 reason why one should play AAU Basketball from 14 on. What you need to ask yourself honestly is whether you are getting exposure or are you getting exposed?
- Fun
 - NBA Scout, former AAU player, and Dad of a select player Mike Vandegarde says kids should play if they want to play against better competition and continue their love of the game after their regular season.
- Travel To Better Cities
 - I would say this is a valid reason if your team is consistently winning all the tournaments in your town. If you are not winning in your town, then perhaps once a season travel is warranted. More than that and you are tragically wasting your time and money.
- Better Competition
 - The truth is since everyone is now playing select and AAU basketball, the competition has become greatly diluted. There are some powerhouses but there also many teams with 1 “star” per team now.
 - You should look at this topic in your specific region. I recommend seeing a local AAU tournament the year before you pursue this reason.





What To Examine When Choosing AAU Teams

Overall Philosophy of The Team

- Do they have a published mission statement?
- How do their actions align with that mission statement?
 - If the organization has the words fundamentals plastered all over their website and you go to a practice without seeing on the spot corrections of kids shooting layups off the wrong foot, then you have a failure on your hands.
 - If an organization claims to be a developmental basketball program / team... ask to see a written copy of their curriculum for the team's age group. If they don't have one, run.
 - If the organization claims to be an exposure focused team... ask who they had on their team who has gone on to play college ball. Ask them what they did to help market that player. Ask if it would be okay to contact that player and ask them the same question. Ask the coach for straight talk on how he / she views your potential as a fit with his team.





Coach's Experience

- Get a Criminal Background Check. An FBI approved fingerprint background check. If they don't have one of these done already, you may have a red flag. We know one AAU / Select coach who has 3 arrests under just one of his 5 aliases. Keep your kids safe and assume nothing.
- How much coaching experience do they have? College, high school and AAU experience (in that order) would be very helpful to your player.
- Ask around, find out why players left last year's team. Try and contact them and see if you see a theme in why player's leave. Ask parents of kids on other teams what they think of the coach. Ask referees and tournament directors.
- Does this coach have a communication style that can make you stronger? Can he motivate you? Can he offer expert feedback in a candid fashion? Does he care about individual players and making them stronger athletes?
- Administrative commitment. Do you want to get emailed the night before about a tournament? Will the coach return emails and phone calls in a professional timely fashion? What are there career goals and how does this "job" fit? If they don't return calls in a timely fashion from you in the initial contact, it will only get worse.



Practice Agenda

- How many practices per week and how long are they? What type of facility are they in?
- How many players per court?
- What is the ratio of coaches to players?
- What is the focus of practice?
 - Ask what the percentages of practice time is devoted to:
 - Plays, traps, and offensive schemes.
 - Skill Development – Ask what that includes
 - Shooting practice – how many shots will players get up per week in practice?
 - Scrimmaging & Conditioning
 - Our theory is that this should be 25% to each of the above 4 areas of the game

The Fit



- Have you defined what position is your ideal fit moving forward in the big picture? If you want to play college basketball and your parents are 5'11 you need to be playing a guard position on your AAU team. Summer ball should be focused on playing the position you want to develop at.
- Does the team need a player at your desired position, or are you going to be the third point guard on the team?
- Does the team have an offensive philosophy that fits your strengths? Don't join a read and react offense if you are a high screen and roll player. If your AAU coach is a control freak and you are an aggressive fast break player, find a better fit.
- Look at the other parents. How will they behave at practices and games?
- How do existing players welcome you? Are you going to be an outsider looking in? Is it going to be clique ball where you keep cutting but no one sees you?



Logistics

- Where are the practice facilities? Drive time should be a consideration.
- Do the practice times fit with your schedule? Will they change?
- Ask what tournaments they are attending, how many and where?

Understand the sacrifices siblings and you need to make to successfully commit to the logistical issues of the team.

- Find out if there is a teammate that would make carpooling an option.
- Does the team have rock solid gym deals in place? If they don't, you have a red flag on your hands.



Commitments – Financial & Time

- Ask for a very specific itemized expense schedule. Make it clear you want to know all expenses in advance, no surprises or add ons later.
- Look and see where the travel schedule takes you and look to see what hotels, etc. will cost.
- Most quality programs have paid coaches. You want paid coaches in my opinion. You want to hold coaches accountable to their promises. That can be difficult with volunteers.
- I would also recommend breaking down how much the program costs per hour. Meaning two hours of practice per week and one three game tournament would be 6 hours per week they are providing expertise. Use that as a measuring stick as you compare teams.

Dangers of AAU / Select Basketball

- Unsavory characters in leadership roles. If you would not hire the coach as a babysitter and let him house sit your home, don't hire him to be your AAU coach.
- AAU rarely enhances skill development, better alternatives exist. Basketball Trainers should be your first stop for skill development.
- AAU rarely produces college scholarships. Be aware of the odds. They are not in your favor.
- AAU is an often necessary component in pursuing a college basketball dream. So if you want to play college basketball, you typically need a trainer, high school program, and AAU in your portfolio of development. Do all of this because you love the game, but know that it will most likely not pay off in a college basketball scholarship.
- AAU is very taxing on the family. Siblings sitting in gyms for 12 hours eating concession food is not an ideal scenario.
- AAU kids are somewhat pampered. In order to collect checks, they are fed dessert - what they want to hear rather than the truth and vegetables they need. This lack of candid feedback will hold them back.
- AAU should not replace HS in importance. It is complimentary.
- Injury from overuse, burnout from too many games are factors.





Exposure

- If your mission is exposure then you need the following from your team:
 - Make sure exposure is a promise in their mission.
 - Make sure they play in the right tournaments. They are different for boys and girls. You need that info and make sure they commit to those tournaments without fail.
 - You need to look in the mirror. Seeking exposure is not a smart goal if you are not nailing 70% from the line, making all left hand layups. Dribbling with your head up, have 2 go to moves and 2 counters, have great shooting form, and have mad skills. If you are a guard and can't make 50 out of 100 threes with your heart rate up at 140 plus, then you should reconsider exposure. If you are not in top condition, then why show that prematurely to college coaches. You will just be exposed. Take the summer off and work on your game. Taking 10 jump shots in a weekend tournament won't help. Taking 1000 shots with a basketball trainer would.
 - When should pursuit of exposure start? Typically no sooner than the 9th grade if the player is developed from a skills perspective.



Alternatives To AAU Basketball

- We recommend finding out the financial cost and time commitment that AAU basketball will take.
- Take those numbers and see how what that might buy in basketball training for skills and strength.
- Figure in the fun factor, because fun matters too!
- Make a decision about what will be the most fun and the most productive way to spend your summer.
- Involve your family and trusted advisors in this process.



Resources

- <http://www.richstoner.com/new-jersey-aau-basketball-kobe-bryants-take>
- <http://bobfoleybasketball.net/tips/selecting-an-aau-team/>
- <http://hoopgroup.com/recruiting-advice/how-to-choose-the-right-aau-basketball-team/>
- <http://basketballtrainer.com/>
- <http://basketballhq.com/>
- www.AustinYouthBasketball.com

Bonus: An Informed Parents Top Ten Tips On Selecting An AAU Team

1. Try to choose a team with the type of coach you know your child will respond to; you want your child in an environment he feels comfortable in and will fuel their development.
2. Be leary of Daddyball (Dad coached teams, Dad run teams, Dads with too much influence, etc.) - its not always a bad thing, but many times leads to the team being overly focused around a few kids to the detriment of other kids development.
3. Most kids develop better under the 3 or 4 positive comments to 1 critical comment ratio; if a team's coach is constantly criticizing a player, the player will tend to tune out after awhile. If a team's coach can frame their critical comments in a more positive light, all the better. If they talk the player into thinking it was their idea, perfect!
4. Is the organization focused on developing better basketball players or just doing anything they can to win games. Winning is very short-sighted in youth basketball. Most kids will do best, learn more, and develop better in a situations where they have a mix of both and especially given periodic opportunities where they have to push themselves to compete.
5. I look for teams/coaches that genuinely care about the kids, have a love for the game, and it becomes contagious to the kids. And the kids enjoy hanging out with each other which breeds good teamwork. My daughter played for a big club team in town and she was pretty much a number there and on a second team there - and it was obvious the teams below the first team were funding the top teams ... hardly any of the coaches knew her name or us. He coach frequently showed up late, led sloppy practices, and basically it was obvious it was just some extra money for him. After a couple years there, we moved to another fairly large club in town - the difference was night and day ... the first time I walked in to a session there, all the coaches knew her name and said hi to her and introduced themselves to me. It was obvious they genuinely care about ALL the kids, no matter top team or 5th team ... she absolutely blossomed there and is now going on to play D1 volleyball in the SEC ... too bad she wasn't good enough for the other club!





Informed Parent Tips Cont.

6. If possible, watch other kids in the program (esp. ones that have been in the program for awhile) - do they conduct themselves like you want your child to conduct themselves?
7. Make sure your child's goals and the team's goals are in alignment - if the team wants to practice three times a week and play out of town tournaments every other weekend, but your child doesn't find that fun even though he loves playing, it's probably not a good fit ... allow your kid time to be a kid.
8. Does the team/coach run plays for just a few kids or is it more team oriented; do they put the kids in positions they can develop and succeed in? For example, if the coach sees my son standing on the wing not doing v-cuts, he will move him to the high post and then rub him off a pick to the corner sometimes or have him run the baseline other times ... my son doesn't really realize it, but his coach is helping him get his motor up and play better.
9. Are there any fundamentals being taught or is all game situation coaching? Some coaches expect kids to get their skills training outside of the practice sessions while others will spend time on both ... just make sure it's in alignment with your child's goals and your goals for them ... if you're expecting them to become better players there needs to be a component of developmental training either as part of the team program or outside of it. Just learning plays and defenses will help their basketball IQ some, but they do as well on improving their fundamentals.
10. It's gotta be FUN!!! Once it stops being a game, the air goes out of the balloon.

Special thanks to Jim Gamble for sharing his experience and thoughts here. Jim is a former basketball player, father of two including an incoming Auburn University volleyball player and a high school freshman basketball player in Austin. He also sits on the board of an Austin youth basketball and select basketball program.

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More Questions on Austin Youth Basketball?

- Personalized Basketball Training Only With Experts Who Played Collegiately or Higher. Year Round.
- Academies Available For Your Youth Basketball Program.
- Basketball Camps Focused On Player Development
- Coaching Clinics – Aimed at the Rec, Select, Middle or High School Coach.
- Basketball Speed & Agility Training
- Team Training – Bring Us Your Rec or Select Team & Let's Get To Work

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