



# JUMP SHOT

## Newsletter

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### Notes from the Director

Welcome to AAU Boy's Basketball's Jump Shot Newsletter 2010. The newsletter is developed to keep you informed about new initiatives and processes as well as highlight participating players, coaches, volunteers and organizations. We are in the second year of publishing the Jump Shot and I am convinced that the Newsletter helps us put a face and a history to AAU boy's basketball. Our participants originate from urban centers to rural communities, from county suburbs to agricultural districts. They begin participating at the 8U level and quicker than we realize they culminate competitive participation at 19 years old. While some of our participants continue to provide us exciting moves on semi pro, European and NBA

courts, the majority are making exciting moves in board rooms, classrooms and community centers.

While we try to bring you interesting stories, we appeal to you to submit articles you think our readers might be interested in. To keep down cost, Jump Shot is strictly an online publication.

Thank you for permitting Maryland to serve you.



Benjamin DuBose  
Director, Boys Basketball

### The Changing Landscape

Teams come from across the State of Maryland to participate in the AAU District Championships. Along with Baltimore City, Harford, Anne Arundel, Frederick, Waldorf, Howard, and Westminster are just a few counties that are represented. An increase in the number of participants in Baltimore City and surrounding counties in 2010 led AAU officials to take a look at trends, albeit unscientific, in several areas in the last five years.

While some long standing venues in Baltimore City have become unavailable to host the championships, we have seen a tremendous surge in surrounding counties becoming AAU partners. Four years ago when Baltimore City Community College made its gymnasium unavailable to AAU, Baltimore County's

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## Where Are They Now

Essex Community College's Athletic Department stepped in to host the Division I and II Championships at their facility. The Liberty Road Recreation Council reached out to AAU to host a significant segment of the Division III Championships for the first time in 2010 at its brand new state of the art Randallstown Community Center as well as Deer Park Middle School, Windsor Mill Middle School and Randallstown High School. The Loch Raven Academy, the Carmello Anthony Center, Dunbar High School, Western School of Technology, St. Francis Academy, and Lake Clifton High School also hosted the 2010 Championships. In tough economic times, these AAU hosts raise significant funds to support their programs via concessions and spectator admission fees.

With the retirement of some recreation center directors, the aging or death of many coaches and team moms, some teams that have traditionally been fixtures are no longer entering the championships, teams like Bentlou and John Eager Howard from Baltimore City, Tri County Hoopsters from Waldorf, Maryland Elite of Harford County, Severn Seminoles from Anne Arundel County and the Eastern Shore Hoopsters.

New young coaches, however, like Robert Heckert of the Maryland 3D organization that entered 6 teams in the 2010 championships, Garrett Tucker of the Maryland Marauders organization that entered 2 teams, and Bernard Douglas of the Waldorf Wizards that entered 1 team are making their mark as good coaches and growing organizations. These and similar organizations are growing rapidly to provide local and national exposure to an increasing number of children and continuous support to Maryland AAU basketball.

Perennial coaches have year after year entered teams in the State Championships with great success, coaches like James "Mitch" Wise who retired as Director of Baltimore's Chick Webb Recreation Center, Anthony Lewis of the Cecil Kirk Recreation Center, Thomas "TC" Caviness of the Maryland Hoopmasters, and the Crusader Nation's Fred McCathorine. While each of these coaches has won national championships and could rest on their success, their teams continue to participate and perform at the highest levels in AAU competition.

In 2002 Maryland Sure Shots point guard Craig Carter led his team to a second place finish in the Maryland Amateur Athletic Union's (AAU) state championships. After taking his team to the final 16 at the nationals, Craig's team lost to the Louisiana Sports Foundation, which was led by Glen "Big Baby" Davis, now a standout center with the NBA's Boston Celtics.

As a junior at Owings Mills High School Craig participated in the Leadership Education and Development (LEAD) Program, a business program that is designed to increase the number of Black, Hispanic and Native American students who enroll in undergraduate college business programs and subsequently choose careers in business organizations. LEAD is a partnership of business and academia encouraging the best and brightest minority high school students to pursue business careers.

In 2002, Craig received a scholarship to participate in an intensive four week summer institute in Chicago that provided insight into a variety of business disciplines. Craig graduated Owings Mills High School as class president and with several college scholarship offers, but to the chagrin of his parents, Craig turned them all down to attend Northwestern University's engineering program.



*Craig stated that AAU was one of the most valuable experiences in his life. "I developed life long friendships and relationships."*

## A Bird's Eye View

The path to becoming a coach is always an interesting journey. There is often as much to tell about the journey as there is about wins and losses. Lester Vernon Byrd's daughters were involved in field hockey, ballet and track, but when his daughters took an interest in basketball, Lester saw an opportunity to teach the game. A former basketball, football, lacrosse and soccer player at Walbrook high school, Lester felt he had the requisite skills to coach.

In 2002 Lester began coaching for Fred Robinson, founder of Mr. Robinson's Neighborhood Basketball League. The attraction to this Pikesville, Maryland program was each kid had to have the same amount of playing time, teams couldn't have more than two skilled players, all teams were provided full uniforms, and children who started in the program stayed year after year.

Unfortunately, in 2005 Mr. Robinson told his coaches he couldn't run the organization any longer due to cost, competition with other sports, and a reduction in court time at the Pikesville facility. Coaching was now such a part of Lester's life that he wanted to continue so he began offering a basketball skills camp on Sundays only in the Youth and Transition School in Woodlawn. The camp drew 140 kids. The following year, in 2006, Lester offered the camp on Saturdays and Sundays and entered teams in competitive league play. Participation grew to 250 kids, but coaching, registrations and camps overwhelmed Lester. Parents came to the rescue, volunteering to assist in camp registrations and skills drills. "I couldn't believe the family atmosphere that grew out of the effort," related Lester.

In 2009 Lester's organization underwent another transition. The Youth and Transition School became unavailable. There were no immediate options for a location to continue his program, but in the summer of 2009 Lester was invited to hold his team practices at the new Randallstown Community Center. He is working on moving his entire program to Randallstown.

I met Lester at the 2010 Maryland AAU State Championships. A gregarious young man who

wears colorful polo shirts with his name on the left side and on the right Byrd's Eye\_View, I saw the possibility of an article for Jump Shot Newsletter. I asked Lester to tell me about Byrd's Eye View. I quickly found that his young man could talk the rapper off of a snicker. After telling his coaching journey, I asked him how he keeps the organization running, which turned out to be as unlikely a story as his coaching odyssey. I thought, either this guy is one of the luckiest coach's I have ever met or by doing right by kids, like the parents who came to his rescue, a benefactor saw the energy and unselfish commitment this young coach had to his kids and committed to helping him.

While conducting a camp Kevin Lyles, his wife and two kids came to assess the camp to determine its suitability for registering their kids. While talking to the parents, Lester immediately got the kids involved in basketball dribbling and lay-up drills. The kids enjoyed themselves and were invited to return the following week to register.

Kevin returned the following week and volunteered to financially help the program, Lester turned him down. When parents informed Lester that he had turned down Kevin Lyles of Def Jam Records, Lester felt it inappropriate now to rush to accept Kevin's offer. At the end of the camp, Kevin Lyles and Black Entertainment Television (BET) paid for 200 kids and parents to go to King's Dominion. Three tour buses with reclining seats and televisions were provided. Food and drinks were provided on the bus. A banquet hall was provided at King's Dominion for refreshments. Every kid and parent was given a camera to catalog their experience.

Asked about his vision for the future, Lester said "I see a better Baltimore. I see so many kids who want to play and learn sports, but don't because of the lack of skills and facilities. I can teach kids to have confidence in themselves through sports. We would then not only have better athletes, but better citizens."

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**Where Are They Now**

In 2006 Craig graduated Northwestern with a Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Engineering. Now 24 years of age, Craig works for Urban Prep Academies, as Vice President of Strategic Planning and Finance. The Urban Prep Academies is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization that operates a network of all boys' public schools in Illinois including the country's first charter school for boys. The Urban Prep Academies will graduate its first class in 2010 with 100% of its students having been accepted into a college or university. Only 20% of this class was reading at grade level when they entered Urban Prep in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Eighty percent was reading below ninth grade level.

Regarding his participation in AAU, Craig stated that AAU was one of the most valuable experiences in his life. "I developed life long friendships and relationships." Craig's words of advice to young men currently participating in AAU are "secure your future off the court. Use basketball as a tool to bigger and better things. Put yourself in a situation to succeed without the basketball."

**Welcome New Clubs To AAU**

Running Rebels – Rosedale  
Cecil County Slam – Cecil  
Maryland Marauders – Owings Mills  
South River Shooters – South River  
Together Everyone Achieves More – Brooklyn  
Loch Raven Ravens – Baltimore  
Basketball Coaches without Boundaries – Frederick  
BNB Franchise – Randallstown  
Howard County Crew – Ellicott City  
Next Level Elite – Baltimore  
Severn Seminoles – Anne Arundel  
Randallstown Running Rebels – Randallstown  
Maryland's Finest – Waldorf  
GGB Terps – Glen Burnie  
CC Jackson – Baltimore

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