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17:U Age Division Brooklyn Ballers' Conditioning Key to Title

LOUDONVILLE, N.Y. – The very mention of a conditioning drill called “17s” brings a collective groan from members of the Brooklyn Ballers AAU basketball team.

But as the Ballers literally ran off with a 62-52 GymRat CHALLENGE championship-game victory over the R.A.I.D.E.R.S of Philadelphia here at Siena College, they finally had reason to recall “17s” with a smile.

“That’s the term we use for our sprint drill,” said Ballers’ coach Gary Sheares. “We sprint the court 17 times. We do that five times every time we practice.”

“They’re no fun,” admitted point guard Jo Jo Swift, one of the event’s co-MVG’s, along with teammate Lamont Samuell. “When the whistle blows, that means we start running. We hate the sound of that whistle.”

But the conditioning paid off in Sunday’s championship game of the 11th annual GymRat CHALLENGE, one of the premier AAU tournaments nationally.

You could accurately say the Ballers’ championship here was a case of survival of the fittest.

The two-day event that drew 88 teams in the 17-under division requires teams that advance to the evening championship round to play five games on Sunday, often turning the title contest into a war of physical attrition.

It became clear early in the title game that it was a war the Ballers were going to win. The R.A.I.D.E.R.S only brought seven players to the tournament, and two of them were suffering leg cramps during their semifinal-round victory that ended 10 minutes before the start of the championship game.

Within the title game’s first minutes, two key players were battling leg cramps again, and the Philadelphia-based squad played most of the remaining time with just five available players.

Still, the R.A.I.D.E.R.S hung tough, pulling within 57-50 with 2:25 remaining, but the Ballers scored five of the next seven points to clinch the victory.

Samuel led the way with 16 points for the Brooklyn squad while White used his exceptional speed and court savvy to direct what was mostly a balanced attack.

“This was great for our organization,” said Sheares. “We’ve got a lot of very good players, but we’re well-balanced. In a typical game, we’ve got a lot of guys who score 10, 12 or 14 points.”

In Sunday’s championship game, the Ballers also had a lot of guys with fresh legs when it counted most.

“We might not like it when we hear that whistle that tells us we’ve got to run a ‘17,’ ” admitted Samuell. “But, we know we do it for a reason, and the payoff was right here.”

17:U GymRat CHALLENGE Co-MVG – Most Valuable GymRats

LaMont Samuell (6-3 SG) Brooklyn Ballers: A slashing shooting guard who is already getting early interest from some high powered programs, including Seton Hall, Ohio State, Rhode Island and Southern Mississippi, primarily for his ability to attack the basket. Extremely team-oriented player who will only get better with added strength and additional range on his outside shot. Played his best when it counted. Lightning quick guard who gets to the basket especially well in transition game. Quick first step with ability to get past defenders in half-court setting. Good on-the-ball defender.

“We really wanted to win, and we played an extremely team-oriented style,” said Samuell. “That’s the way I like to play. I like to be part of a whole-team effort. The thing I do best is attack the basket. By doing that, I can also create things for my teammates.

Jo Jo Swift (5-10 PG) Brooklyn Ballers: His last name is also an apt description. Lightning-quick point guard who goes into the lane without fear and can finish. Outstanding both in transition and in the half-court. His ability to get past defenders creates opportunities for teammates, and he knows how to get the ball to them. Also has an outstanding shot, both from midrange and beyond the stripe. Can create openings for himself to get his own shot.

“I think my shooting is the best part of my game,” said Swift, after being named the event’s co-MVG. He showed that with a 30-point effort in a semifinal-round contest. However, most observers were equally impressed with his ability to run a team. Has heard from Providence, San Francisco, UNC-Wilmington, Navy and UAlbany.

17:U All-Gym Rat Challenge Team

Al Ogulphar, (6-9 C/PF) CT Flame: Developing big man who doesn’t turn 15 until July, but played at the 17U level. College-ready build, uses strength to his advantage inside. Good hands, active defender. Hard worker at both ends of the court.

Josh Vital (6-5 PF/SF) N.J. ShoreShots Blue: Excellent shooting touch beyond 3-point line. Glides to the basket with ease by using speed and footwork. Long and lean. Plays hard on defense and hustles on both ends.

Gerardo Suero (6-4 SF/SG) New York Elite: One of the best players in the tournament, often grabbing a defensive rebound and beating everyone down the floor for a layup on the other end. Can shoot from perimeter, but also has a variety of post moves and plays relentless defense.

Jordan Stevens (6-4 SF/SG) Albany City Rocks: Smartest player on an extremely talented team. Smooth in everything he does. Consistent jumper from 18 and in, runs the floor exceptionally well and can defend bigger players effectively. Versatile enough to play multiple positions at the college level.

Jarrod Denard (6-2 SG/PG) Mt. Pleasant: Lightning-quick guard who is both a good shooter and creator. Has a good handle. Good pull-up and mid-range game. A prolific scorer.

Jamel Fields (6-2 PG/SG) Albany City Rocks: Disruptive defender who is dynamic offensively, particularly when attacking the basket for his own shot or creating opportunities for teammates. Tremendous handle and outstanding ability to break down defenders. Made clutch plays at both ends to help his team advance to quarterfinals.

Myron Reppress (6-8 C) M33M: Athletic big man with solid post moves, outstanding rebounding skills and ability to run the floor. Exceptional hands, and showed ability to catch tough passes in transition. He beats guards down the court. Possesses big upside.

Evan Smotrycz (6-9 PF/SF) Mass Rivals: Very good around basket. Can put the ball on the floor, and gets to basket. Athletic enough to play some on the perimeter, but strong enough to play inside, too. High basketball IQ. Drawing some interest from high-major level.

Carson DesRosiers (6-10 C) Mass Rivals: A legitimate shot-changing big man. Can step out to 15 feet and connect. Good hands, makes tough catches. Runs the floor well enough to be a factor in transition game.

Dion Waters (6-3 SG/SF) Brooklyn Ballers: A long-armed guard who is a standout in transition and finishes everything. A slasher who gets to the bucket and has the size to be effective once he gets there. Very athletic. Member of championship team.

Derrick Randall (6-8 C/PF) Brooklyn Ballers: Youngest member of the championship team, a rising junior. Has high-major tools, including athleticism and good hands. Runs floor, and uses long arms to be an effective shot blocker. Good inside offensively

Mike Rivera, (6-0 PG/SG) YABC: Outstanding shooter, both from the field and FT line. Great decision-maker with high hoops IQ. Can get to the basket on demand, and strong in transition, either getting to the hoop or creating for others.

Louis Montes (6-4 PG/SG) YABC: Super athletic who attacks the hoop at any time, but has strong perimeter skills, too. Size makes him a tough match-up. Versatile player who contributes on the boards and with defense.

Andrew Pope (5-11 PG) New York Pride: Quick, controls the game and tempo. Pass-first player who is always looking to find his teammates. Knows how to run a team, and can also connect from 3-land off the bounce.

Lance Brown (6-5 SF) NJ ShoreShots Select: An athletic wing player with a variety of skills, particularly on the offensive end. Good rebounder for his position, can get to the bucket and possesses an effective pull-up jumper.

Pat O'Keefe (6-0 SG) East Coast Fusion: His team didn't get out of pool play, but three games was more than enough show his skills. Moves well without the ball and is a dynamic scorer. Scored 89 points in three games. Long-range shooter who can also finish.

Carl Batiste (6-8 C/PF) NJ ShoreShots Select: Powerfully built, long-armed rebounder. Good hands, finishes well around basket. Decent shot-blocker. Runs the floor well. College-ready body, who can punish inside.

Odie Anosike (6-7 SF) NJ ShoreShots Select: Long, athletic slasher who is effective inside with a soft shooting touch. Nose for the ball. Outstanding rebounder who can handle the ball. Runs the floor exceptionally well and finishes everything.

Dalton Pepper (6-5 SG/SF) Jersey Shore Warriors: Great all-around talent. One of the best long-range shooters in the tournament. Great off screens. He can pull up or get to the rim and finish with either hand. Plays under control. Good decision maker.

Bobby Harris (6-2 SG) South Jersey Jazz: Active on defense, adept at doubling down in the post and playing passing lanes. Can make it from beyond the stripe, but more of just a pure scorer than a shooter.

Raheem Singleton (6-2 G) Greater Boston Lions: Explosive in transition as well as possessing a superb outside shoot. Took over a key meeting with the CT Flame, providing a late-game Boston Lions spurt to push his team over the top. Active defender.

Jonathan Williams (6-3 SG) New Heights: Terrific athlete who is a consistent scorer with consistent 3-point range. Runs floor well and showed ability to finish effectively in transition game.

Dayne Miller (6-5 SG/SF) NEBC: Excellent leaper, and contests every shot. Runs the floor well. Athletic player who provides offensive firepower. Not afraid to pull the trigger on shots.

Rakeem Brookins (5-10 PG) R.A.I.D.E.R.S: Big-time scorer who is both explosive to the hoop, but has 3-point shooting range. Runs court well, has good hands. Had an extremely strong tournament, and led his team to event's finals,

Oscar Griffin (6-5 PF) R.A.I.D.E.R.S: Powerful rebounder and strong around the hoop. His inside ability belies his height. Good hands, catches everything. Made key plays in games, including game-deciding free-throw in semifinal round of the event.

Akeem Williams(5-11 PG) Boston Warriors Elite: Very quick floor general who is an outstanding passer, and runs a team under control. Also exhibited an outstanding shooting touch.

Sean Armand (6-3 SG) NJ Trailblazers: Scorer who can connect from 3-land as well as get to the basket. Quick defender who turns steals into finishes in transition.

George Beamon (6-3 SG) LI Lightning-Silverstein: Long on defense, and an explosive scorer who accounted for 68 points in his team's final two games of the event. Decent jumper, but does most of his work closer to the hoop.

17:U Honorable Mention All-Gym Rat Challenge

Matt O'Brien (6-3 SF) N.J. ShoreShots Blue

Scott Nelson (5-11 PG) N.J. ShoreShots Blue

Khalid Oross (6-2 SG/PG) Albany City Rocks Black
Brice Kofane (6-8 C/PF) Albany City Rocks Black
James Torres (6-3 C/PF) Albany City Rocks Black
Hoddy Mahon (5-9 PG) House of Hoops Pride
Michael McLeod (6-4 SG) Newburgh Lions
Greg Robbins (6-5 SF/SG) Jersey Shore Warriors
Will Barrett (6-8 C/PF) Jersey Shore Warriors
Adam Fazzino (6-5 PF) Jersey Shore Warriors
Matt Donohue (6-0 PG) Jersey Shore Warriors
Colin Halprin (6-5 PF) Boston Warriors North
P.J. Walters (5-11 PG) LI Lightning-Kelly
Dan Divaltri (6-4 SG/SF) LI Lightning-Kelly
Matt Grossbard (6-1 SG) New Heights
Jamee Jackson (6-8 PF) New Heights
Rashard Bryant (6-8 PF) New Heights
Riley Maye (6-8 PF/SF) New Heights
Jim Connolly (6-3 SG) Montigo Magic
CJ Aiken (6-9 C) Montico Magic
Joe Rangland (6-1 PG/SG) Dunbar Community Center
Kyle Wehner (6-0 SG) NJ ShoreShots-Gray
Ronson Quick (6-5 PF/C) South Jersey Jazz
Nelson Torres (6-4 SF) South Jersey Jazz
Donald DeLeo (6-4 SF) South Jersey Jazz
Shimeek Scott (6-3 SF) South Jersey Jazz
Ivan Zhovnir (5-9 PG) Brooklyn Rage
Mike Medina (6-2 SG) BC Eagles-Dunn
Andrew McCarthy (6-10 C) Bay State Magic
Peter Lynch (6-6 PF) Boston Warriors Elite
Jeff Tagger Jr. (6-0 SG) Boston Warriors Elite
Devin Kirch (6-5 PF) LI Lightning-Fenton
Darrell Jefferson (6-2 SF) NJ ShoreShots Select
David Joseph (5-10 PG) NJ Shoreshots Select
Andre Armstrong (6-2 SG) NJ Shoreshots Select
Jamie Pares (5-9 PG) CT Overtime
Joey Sindelar (6-9 C) CT Overtime
Tim Null (6-5 PF) Chillies
CJ Caputo (6-0 PG/SG) LI Silver Bullets
Mervin Springer (6-0 SG) LI Silver Bullets
Ringl Aywul (7=4 C) Team Underrated
Ryan Creighton (6-3 SG) Team Underrated
Adam Meyer (6-2 SG) New York Pride
Ryan Romich (6-5 PF) CMBC-Pride
Tyler Strage (6-0 SG) CMBC-Pride
Matt Zera (5-11 PG) JB Hoops
Patrick Mineo (6-1 SG) JB Hoops
Russell Rosenbland (6-2 SG) CT Flame
Jonathan Herzog (6-0 PG) CT Flame
Shawn Dailey (6-5 PF) CT Flame
Russell Thompson III (5-9 PG) Jersey Knights
Darren Boca (6-4 PF) CKATT
Remington Glenn (6-3 SG) East Coast Fusion-Tisa
Josh Brown (6-9 C) East Coast Fusion-Tisa
Dominic Morris (6-8 C) R.A.I.D.E.R.S
Travis Robinson (6-5 SF) R.A.I.D.E.R.S
Paul Reynolds (6-4 PF) R.A.I.D.E.R.S
Josh Elbaum (6-3 PG) Rising Stars
Jim Gray (5-11 PG) Southern Tier Rage
Travis Farrell (6-3 SF) JJ Hoops
Kevin Ohen (6-4 SG) JJ Hoops
Sam Starks (6-0 SG) Mt. Pleasant
Shakeem Kirk (6-3 SF) NJ Trailblazer All-Stars
Arnell Letis (6-3 SF) NJ Trailblazer All-Stars

Jon Kahane (5-11 PG/SG) Boston Warriors-Sanders
Denzel Pescel (6-1 SG/SF) Capital District Raptors
Roger West (6-3 PF) Capital District Raptors
Jared Littlejohn (5-7 PG) Salt City Shakers
Deanzel Crouch (5-11 PG/SG) Salt City Shakers
Robert Wesley (6-4 SF/PF) Greater Boston Lions
Matt Melnick (6-5 PF) Jersey Renegades
Mark Bevacqua (6-7 PF) JB Hoops-Black
John Volpe (6-2 SG) JB Hoops Black
Tim LaVelle (5-10 PG) JB Hoops Black
Jonathan Marsh (6-0 PG) Northeast Basketball Club
Bobby Bell (6-1 SG) Northeast Basketball Club
Chris Coleman (6-10 C) Northeast Basketball Club
Devon Marshall (5-9 PG) M33M
K.T. Edwards (6-3 SG) M33M
Anthony Green (6-4 SG/SF) M33M
Cody Otto (6-2 SG) Glestonbury Hawks
Hunter Morris (6-8 PF/SF) Long Island Lightning
Ryan Sheridan (6-3 SF) Chase The Game
Mark Cisco (6-8 C) N.J. Panthers
Robert Berish (6-4 SF) N.J. Panthers
Michael Scott (6-1 SG) Coast2Coast
Tyler Young (6-7 PF) Brooklyn Ballers
Gavin Scott (6-5 SF), Brooklyn Ballers
Isaiah Wilkerson (6-3 SG) Brooklyn Ballers
Simeon Marselis (6-2 PG) Westchester Hawks
Ralph Watts (6-5 SF/PF) Westchester Hawks
Jon Calerco (6-1 SG/PG) Westchester Hawks
Rayner Moquette (6-2 SG) New York Elite
Chris Hampton (6-1 PG) New York Elite
P.J. Welters (6-1 SG/PG) NYC Jaguars
Mervin Jean (6-4 SF) Orange County Crusaders
Kyle Bradley (6-3 SF) Orange County Crusaders
Andrew Stire (6-8 PF/C) Capital Bauer Grizzlies
Mark Blair (6-6 PF) Schenectady Patriots
Umar Shannon (6-0 PG) South Jersey Select
Steven Hunt (6-5 PF/SF) City Rocks-Malone
Mike Goodman (6-6 PF) City Rocks-Black
Jefferson Lora (6-6 PF/C) CT Hoop Stars
Zach Russo (6-2 PG) CT Hoop Stars
Matt Devine (6-4 SF/PF) Central Jersey Hawks
Louis Montes (6-9 SF) YABC
George Beamon (6-3 SG) L.I. Lightning-Silverstein
Corby Weiss (6-7 PF) East Coast Fusion-Landseadel
Jon Goldberg (6-4 SF) Lone Wolf
Andrew Stine (6-8 PF) Capital Bauer Grizzlies
Jordan Macejka (6-3 SF) Capital Bauer Grizzlies
Mark Blair (6-6 PF) Schenectady Patriots
Tajric Boggs (5-10 PG) Schenectady Patriots
Hunter Morris (6-8 PF) Long Island Lightning
Marcus Hunter (6-5 SF) Coast 2 Coast
Vaughn Allen (6-7 PF) Westchester Hawks
Madut Bol (6-8 C) Westchester Hawks
Cory Quimby (6-6 SF) Orange County Crusaders

16:U Age Division

East Coast Fusion Tops Team MELO To Finish Job It Started Last Year

The East Coast Fusion team coached by Dan Brady returned most of its roster from the group that competed at the 15:U level here in 2007.

That team, though, lost in the quarterfinal round.

“We were a quick team last year that ran out of gas,” said Brady, of his Western New York-based group. “We had just about everyone back, and added a strong inside player (6-foot-4, 230-pound Brian Parker) who was the missing piece. He was a nice addition. We were able to play ‘big’ when we had to, and we couldn’t do that last year.”

The infusion of an inside game gave Fusion the multi-dimensional ability to handle any situation, and all of that was on display in the team’s 42-34 championship game victory over Team MELO of Baltimore.

While Parker worked inside, 16:U Age Division MVG Blair Roberts provided the prototypical work of a highly regarded, athletic swingman. He scored eight pints in a key six-minute span that helped the Fusion earn a 34-32 lead with 3:25 left, and the team never trailed again.

Fusion also got a big second-half lift by Brady’s son, 6-2 shooting guard Dan Brady, who played like a coach’s offspring. The younger Brady sank a three-pointer early in the second half that gave the winners their first lead after halftime.

Then, when Roberts had to leave the game with leg cramps for most of the final three minutes, Brady scored seven of the winners’ last eight points on another long three-pointer, and a perfect 4-for-4 effort from the foul line.

“This just feels great,” said coach Brady. “Honestly, I didn’t know if we could get this far. But, I kept telling the guys that we had unfinished business from last year, and we finished it this year.”

16:U GymRat CHALLENGE MVG – Most Valuable GymRat

Blair Roberts (6-4 SG) East Coast Fusion-Brady: When the championship game of the division hung in the balance the athletic guard took over. As his team was trying to cling to a small lead, Roberts caused disruption with his defense, and did damage with his offense. He score eight of his 10 championship-game points in a four-minute span, the last coming on a steal and a break-away lay-up to give his squad a 34-32 lead with 3:25 remaining. Roberts didn’t score again, but he didn’t need to as EC Fusion never trailed after that in earning a 42-34 title-game victory.

Roberts, who doesn’t turn 16 until later this year, has the perfect size for a high-level shooting guard. He is also very athletic, has excellent quickness and uses those attributes well on the defensive end. He has an effective mid-range jumper, goes hard to the basket and uses his size to be effective on the glass.

16:U All-Gym Rat CHALLENGE Team

Kevin Smith (6-1 SG) Team Melo: Very Good in transition and will finish on the break. Great leaper, and can get to the rim with ease. Tough defender and a great rebounder for his size. Unselfish and a standout passer. Offensively, a scorer who can shoot from anywhere.

Cedrick Johnson (5-9 PG) Team Melo: Very unselfish player who penetrates and can finish. Plays great defense, and rebounds well for his size. Scorer who is also a passer who improves his teammates. Quick and explosive with the ball.

Jonathan Moore (6-5 PF) Long Island Fury: Great jumping ability. He is smooth in the post and finishes well. He is long and a very good rebounder. A superb defender who is never out-hustled.

Jaymes Miller (6-8 PF/C) Bucks County Hawks: Developing big man who will only get better when his body fills out. Plays inside, finishes in the post with either hand. Can run the floor well for his size. Good court sense. Has only played for four years. Strong academically.

Austin Curry (6-0 PG/SG) Bucks County Hawks: Three-sport athlete (also plays soccer and runs track), who has great court sense. Can score at any time, but also makes teammates better. Quick first step, shoots well and penetrates. Can shoot beyond the stripe. Good handle with either hand.

Michael Pincus (6-0 PG/SG) Bucks County Hawks: Lefty who has quick first step and above-average passing skills. Not afraid to go inside and bang. Great penetrator, who finishes. Also a standout jump-shooter whose range goes beyond the arc.

Osamu Egharevda (6-5 C/PF) M33M Express: Long wing span. Solid build. Great rebounder who can dribble well for a player his size. Runs the floor hard. Also can step back and hit the three. Good post moves as well.

Will Regan (6-9 C) Albany City Rocks-Hart: A true 6-9 center who is attracting national interest. Multi-dimensional player who runs the floor, can pass and plays defense. He finishes extremely well around the bucket, and has a strong mid-range jumper. Intimidating defender who continues to improve. Likely to wear an ACC, Big Ten, or Big East uniform during his collegiate career.

Kameron Ritter (6-3 SG) Albany City Rocks-Hart: Good size for an off-guard, but can also slide over to the point. Great penetrator who also finds and dishes to open teammates. He hits the jumper when needed, and plays strong defense.

Jordan LaGuerre (6-0 SG/PG) NH Heat: Multi-dimensional player who is strong, can hit from beyond the arc, and can get past defenders to the hoop. A great defender himself, he disrupts passes with quick hands. Unselfish, but also showed he can take over a game when needed.

Daniel Thompson (5-10 PG) Student Athlete Broncos: Very unselfish floor general with a great handle. Can penetrate and finish, but also has 3-land range. Quick with the ball.

Jonathan Merceus (6-4 SF/SG) House of Hoops Pride: Clever lefty who plays anywhere on the perimeter, even some at the point. He can penetrate and either dish or finish.

Xavier Pollard (6-2 SG/SF) New Heights-White: Plays with great determination that translates into strong defense and an ability to get to the basket and score. Can play anywhere on the perimeter.

Nate Basalyga (6-7 C) JB Hoops: A developing big man who exhibited inside skills that indicate he'll continue to improve and be effective. Already a skilled inside player who can score and defend in the paint.

Ryan Chambers (6-0 PG/SG) Bay State Magic: Can play either position. Showed ability to score consistently here, but also dished the ball well. An intelligent player who works hard and played defensive conscientiously.

Paris Cleveland (6-2 SG/PG) Firm AC: Showed ability to play anywhere on the court. Tough to defend in the post, but can beat opponents off the dribble, too. Tough on the glass for his size, yet has long-range shooting skills and is a hard-nosed defender.

Ryan McKeane (6-8 C) Jersey Shore Warriors: Big and strong inside presence. Runs the floor well and finishes in the post. Great, active rebounder who gets his hands on a lot of missed shot. Will block shots, and also possesses a mid-range jumper.

Ryan Woumn (6-2 SG) Massachusetts Thundercats: A big-time scorer who hits shots from anywhere on the court. Defenders who guard his long-range shot get beat with a quick first step as he gets to the bucket. Great defender, hard worker who works the boards.

Chris Secky (6-2 SG) Shooting Stars: Good shooting off-guard with 3-point range who also handles the ball well. Great penetrator and finisher, who also dishes. Scores well in transition and plays hard on both ends.

Jahenns Manigot (6-3 SG) Ottawa Phoenix: Very unselfish leader on the court. Exhibited ability to score, particularly in transition. Standout defender and rebounder. Very scrappy player.

William Fiacchi (6-3 SG/SF) St. Paul's UBC: Has the ability to control the game with his multi-dimensional skills. Very good ball-handler who can penetrate and go strong to the hoop. But, also capable of connecting from long range. Plays hard.

Randy Joseph (6-3 SG/SF) Rhode Island Breakers: Left-handed shooter with scoring ability, particularly off penetration. Very tough on the glass, despite his slender build. Good defender who handles the ball well.

Andre King Jr. (5-11 SG) Dunbar Mavericks: Very good shooter who also handles the ball well. Can score at any time. Plays extremely hard, which often results in unexpected rebounds. Works at both ends.

Kyle Aiken (5-9 PG) New Jersey Bulls: Very quick and strong with the ball. Clear nucleus of his team. Penetrates well, shoots from anywhere. Good in transition with court vision, good handle. Very athletic and plays above his height.

J.J. Jann (6-4 SG/SF) Boston Warriors: Very fundamentally sound with good range on his shot. Natural scorer who is also an unselfish player with solid hoops IQ. Athletic and quick who gets the ball to teammates in good spots.

Justin Omogun (6-6 PF/C) Brooklyn Patriots: College-ready build who initiates contact when finishing, yet has soft touch on jumper and free throws. Uses his body well in post. Strong defender who protects the ball once he gets it.

Dan Ross (6-2 SG/SF) Syracuse Select: Physically strong player who attacks the game. Quick first step, good vision with a high basketball IQ that makes teammates better and stamps him as a natural leader. Fierce competitor.

Chris Ortiz (6-5 SG/PG) NYC Jaguars: Strong player who can legitimately play either guard spot. Often worked from the point effectively here, showing strong passing skills. High energy player who attacks the rim, but pulls up and hits jumper, too. Makes teammates better.

Ryan Delaire (6-5 PF/SF) Connecticut Basketball Club: Physically strong player who can play either forward spot, and plays it hard. Excellent handle, and takes care of the ball. Good defender, who contests everything. Can also score from mid-range.

Darius Watson (6-5 PF/SF) Connecticut Basketball Club: Excellent post defender who gets it done both with hard work and court IQ. Scores from inside, but can also step out to the arc. Strong slasher who controls his body on the way to the hoop.

Rodman Noel (6-4 SF/SG) Boston Warriors-North: Long, athletic build with excellent shooting touch. Smooth player who can handle the ball, and keeps turnovers to a minimum. High energy performer.

Chi Che (6-5 PF) Greater Boston Lions: Good build. Long arms, and strong. Plays with great energy. Active on the glass, and gets to more than his share of loose balls. Contests everything on defense. Runs the floor hard and is a finisher.

Kimman Murray (6-6 PF/SF) Team Underrated: Will get better as he fills out. Already can drain the three-pointer and has an excellent handle for a big player. Very athletic. Plays with relentless energy, and goes after the ball on the boards.

Raja Johnson (6-5, PG/SG/SF) Team Underrated: Good size, while also possessing skills to play the point. Excellent court vision with a soft shooting touch. Active on the floor and can get inside and bang effectively.

Marcus Henderson (5-5 PG) Newburgh Zion Lions-East: One of quickest players here. Excellent passer with great court vision. A real team leader. Capable of playing through contact. Good range on his shoot.

Austin Curry (6-0 PG/SG) Bucks County Hawks: A leader with a capital "L." He sets the tone of games with his effort and court IQ. Always under control. Good range on his shot, yet can penetrate and dish.

Osamu Egharevda (6-5, SF/PF) M33M Express: Excellent shooter with range beyond the arc. Makes good decisions with the ball, and plays under control. Active on the boards on both ends. Long arms and active play results in many deflections.

Devonte Cutler (6-1 PG/SG) Brooklyn Ballers: Quick on the court, and uses that skill to push the ball. Loves to pass, and is good at it. Also more than capable of finishing off an end-to-end sprint. Sees the floor well in half-court game.

Cameron Anderson (6-8 PF/SF) East Coast Fusion-Baudinet: Slender big man who will get better as his body matures. Already is a strong rebounder who outlets well. Contests everything on defense. Runs the floor, and has an above-average medium-range jumper.

16:U Honorable Mention All-Gym Rat CHALLENGE

Fran Decker (6-1 SG) Central Jersey Hawks
Derrick Millinghaus (5-9 PG) Albany City Rocks-Hart
Jacob Nelson (6-0 SG/PG) NH Knicks
Eric Watson (6-2 SG) NH Knicks
Remi Mignott (6-1 SG) Brooklyn Patriots
Travis Cheeks (5-9 PG) Lehigh Valley Thunder
Chris Astacio (6-1 SG) Lehigh Valley Thunder
Chris Gilkes (6-2 SG/SF) Syracuse Select
DuJuan Coleman (6-3 SF) Syracuse Select
Sean Cunningham (6-0 SG/PG) Dunbar Mavericks
Jordan Lantham (6-9 C) Team Melo
Rexton Gordon (6-2 SG/SF) LI Fury
Bilel Lovati (6-3 SF) Ottawa Phoenix

Clay Harris Jr. (6-1 SG) Franchise Ballers
Xavier Everson (6-3 SF) Franchise Ballers
Davon Usher (6-3 SF) Team Melo
Gavin McCarney (6-3 SF) NJ Bulls
Brian Parker (6-4 PF/SF) East Coast Fusion-Brady
Dan Brady (6-2 SG) East Coast Fusion-Brady
Na-Sean Banks (6-2 SG) M33M Express
Stephen Nwaukoni (6-6 PF) M33M Express
Aron Campbell (6-0 SG) Burlington Thunder
Xavier Holland (5-10 PG) East Coast Fusion-Baudinet
Kurt Davis (6-1 SG) NJ Bulls
Kayaki Battle (6-1 SG) Greater Boston Lions
Patrick Johnson (6-2 SG/SF) Newburgh Zion Lions East
Aaron Wilson (6-3 SF) Middletown CT Bulldogs
Jaspar Grassa (5-11 SG/PG) Mass Thundercats
Ryan Kenny (6-3 SF) LI Lightning Eichinger
Dominic Murry (6-2 SG/SF) NYC Jaguars
Luke Marino (5-10 PG) Albany City Rocks-Daniels
Ryan Mickiewicz (6-0 SG/PG) Basketball
Robert Duquette (6-4 SF/PF) Lake Champlain Lakers
Carlos Rivera (5-5 PG) Shooting Stars
Kamaal Mattavous (6-4 SF/PF) Mt. Vernon Creators
Jamal Melvin (5-7 PG) Keystone Blazers
Cody Koester (6-1 SG) NH Falcons
John Perez (6-2 SG/SF) Rockland Rockets
Jumah Sutton (6-3 SF) Rockland Rockets
George Paulino (6-0 SG) New City Swarm
Jeff Brewington (6-0 SG) Boston Warriors Elite
Nick Billow (6-3 SF) East Coast Fusion-Brady
Khalid Myles (6-0 SG) Newburgh Zion Lions-West
Skylar Ettin (6-3 SF) Team Cjeoto
Jordan Jones (6-0 SG) RI Breakers
Patrick Connaghan (6-3 SF) Jersey Shore Warriors
Tylon Smith Jr. (6-1 SG) CT Knights-Smith

15:U Age Divison

Hinds Comes Up Big Down the Stretch to lead Hawks

His high school, Mount Vernon of Westchester County (N.Y.) has had a long, distinguished history in the sport with a roster continually filled with players that have gone on to hoops glory in college and, even, the NBA.

Jabrie Hinds, a 6-foot point guard, might be the next in that line of court greatness. If he lives up to early expectations, spectators at the 2008 GymRat CHALLENGE can say they saw his coming out party.

In truth, Hinds is already well-known in the college ranks, drawing early interest from Atlantic Coast Conference teams. And the crowds that witnessed his performance here now know why.

With his team trailing in the closing seconds of the division's title contest on Sunday, Hinds took the game in his hands at both ends. He got into the lane and sank a floater from about 10 feet out to give the Westchester Hawks a two-point lead with 20 seconds remaining and, then, drew a charging foul that preserved his team's 55-53 victory over the Sports University All Stars of Fairfield, N.J.

Hinds, a rising sophomore, did plenty more in the tournament not only with his individual efforts, but in keeping his team's offensive running smoothly.

"He was the most complete point guard in the age group," said one talent evaluator. "He makes others around him better. He just runs the show."

Hinds also ensured the Hawks arrived in the championship round. His team needed all of the 20 points it scored in its first tournament game Saturday morning, including the last six of the game that rallied the Hawks from a four-point deficit to a 51-49 victory over the RI Breakers.

The team, involved in five games on Sunday, had to play its last four in a five-hour span.

“We knew we’d have a lot of games, so I took my starters out to rest them every chance I could,” said coach Garee Bryant. “This is a huge tournament ... one of the best in the country. We wanted to come up and compete and get into contention.”

Once in contention, the Hawks and Hinds took over. “He comes from a great high school program, and he’s going to be a great one for them, too,” said Bryant, about Hinds.

The Mount Vernon program has produced a number of NBA stars including current Chicago Bull Ben Gordon and former pro standouts Gus and Ray Williams, and Scooter and Rodney McRay.

Hinds, at least at the GymRat CHALLENGE, flashed the potential to be the next in that line.

15:U GymRat CHALLENGE MVG – Most Valuable GymRat

Jabrie Hinds (6-0 PG) Westchester Hawks: For most of the division’s championship game, the multi-talented Hinds was content to run his team, but when it came down to the closing minute, Hinds took matters in his own hands to score the game-winning basket that gave his team a 55-53 victory.

Hinds doesn’t mind having the game, or the ball, in his hands. Called the most-complete point guard in his age group by event talent evaluators, he is already drawing interest from high-major level programs. He is an extremely quick, talented guard who makes others around him better. His arsenal includes superior cross-over and spin dribbles. Mostly, though, the left-hander runs the show. He gets to the hoop off the dribble and is active defensively. He is also very good in the transition game, and teammates love to play with him because he dishes.

15U: All-Gym Rat CHALLENGE Team

Mike Mitchell (5-6 PG) New Hampshire Falcons: Without question the most creative passer at this event at any level. His game is “Pistol Pete” Maravich’s in a Spud Webb body. Despite his diminutive size, he goes fearlessly to the hoop and gets off shots. Range extends beyond the arc. Terrific in transition. True point guard who delivers passes that result in good shots. Size, though, results in some limitations. His future level depends on physical development.

Stephen Teague (5-8 PG) CMBC: Extremely quick guard who gets to the hoop and plays hard on either end. Slightly undersized for shooting guard, but he’s got the perimeter skills to play there, too.

Shala Cancer (6-2 SG) Albany City Rocks-Tucker: Talent guard who can do it all. Good size for a guard already. Competes around the basket, draws fouls and makes free throws. Plays under control. His future is bright.

Michael Ferrante (5-9 PG) RI Breakers-Anderson: Sneaky quick and heady player. Competed well. Can get to the hoop off the dribble, penetrates and finishes. Sees the court well. Clutch with the game on the line. Fiery competitor.

Trashan Burrell (6-4 SF) Albany City Rocks-Tucker: Long, athletic player who runs the court well, uses his length to get to rebounds, errant passes, cause opponents problems inside. Good basketball body already. Can do plenty.

Conroy Baltimore (6-5, C/PF) : Extremely talented big man with great jumping ability. Scores around the bucket. Athletic with long arms. Runs the floor well. Uses the reverse lay-up to advantage. Strong rebounding with shot-altering defensive ability.

Gregory Torchon (6-1 SG/SF) Rockland Rockets: A quick, athletic player who can really score, particularly when his feet are set. Showed a solid cross-over dribble that helps him get past defenders.

Jerel Scott (6-2 SG) Albany City Rocks-Black: Has good size for a guard. Displayed multi-dimensional skills. Good shooter on the move, and better-than-average passer.

Peter Alexis (6-9 C) Firm AC: Best big-man prospect in the age group. A big body with good hands. Already technically sound, keeping ball up on rebounds and in the post to prevent steals. He works hard, and seals defenders off on the blocks. Blocks and alters shots. Good offensive rebounds. Avoids unnecessary dribbling.

Jarred Jones (6-5 PF/C) Team Melo: One of the better big men in the 15:U division. Plays hard on both ends. Alters shots in the lane. Extremely talented around the basket. Almost impossible to stop without fouling. Good, unselfish passer.

Mike Taylor (6-2 SG) Metro Hawks: Extremely talented offensive player who already has good size. Outstanding range on jumper, consistently hitting beyond the hard. Played hard in every game.

Eddie Rodriguez (5-7 PG) Team Magic: Strong dribble moves. Uses change-of-pace dribble effectively. Room for improvement, particularly as his slender build fills out. Uses both hands well, and can finish against bigger players. Runs the show on offense.

Ryan Pina (6-4 PF) RI Breakers-Motta: A good-sized forward who gets to the hoop and draws fouls. Very talented at scoring from close range, but also exhibited perimeter range when he sets his feet.

Matt Tobin (5-8 PG) N.J. Panthers: A heady player with solid skills who hits perimeter jumpers when his feet are set. Can also drive and score. Quick defensively and does a nice job playing the passing lanes.

Lousious Jones (6-1 SG/SF) Sports Univ. All Stars: Can hit the bonus shot with his feet set. Quietly puts up good numbers. He can drive to the hoop and score off the dribble from close range. Rebounds well for hi size.

15:U Honorable Mention All-Gym Rat CHALLENGE Team:

Gerald McCleave (6-2 SF) CT Hoop Stars
Quinton Perkins (5-10 SG) CMBC
Mirian Kizzie (6-0 SG) MYCW
Cyrus James (6-3 SF) CT Knights-Morton
Tyler Sankes (6-5 C/PF) East Coast Fusion-Uthman
John Davis (6-3 PF) Newburgh Zion Lions
Shawn Midy (6-4 PF) LI Fury
Sean Bell (6-3 SF) N.J. Bulls
Dominic Hoffman (6-6 C) Hoop Haven Heat
Demetrius Mitchell (6-0 SG) Syracuse Select
Chris Whelan (6-4 C/PF) Syracuse Select
Kevin Shaw (6-0 SG) Syracuse Select
Darryl Blackstock (5-11 SG) MVBGC
Stefan Arezina (5-10 PG) Waterloo Wildhawks
Exzavier White (5-9 PG) Springfield Heat
Alex Conaway (6-4 PF) CT Hoop Stars
Jahrod Jackson (5-7 PG) Middletown CT Bulldogs
Charles Gunter (6-1 SG) MYCW
Patrick Lichtenstein (5-11 PG) Central Jersey Hawks-White
Dakwan Cauldwell (6-8 C) East Coast Fusion-Uthman
Kyree Pierce (6-5 C) New Jersey Bulls
Darin Butts (6-3 SF) Shooting Stars
Michael Jenkinson (6-2 SG) Rockland Rockets
Zachary Adams (6-4 PF) Potsdam Sandstoners
Donte Howell (5-7 PG) LI Lightning-Howell
Gene Garay (5-10 SG) LI Lightning-Howell
T'ziah Smith (6-4 PF) LI Lightning-Howell
Kevin Alter (5-6 PG) Jersey Shore Warriors
Andrew Goldstein (6-2 SG) Jersey Shore Wildcats
Aaron Greene (5-9 SG) LI Lightning-Golding
Angelo Mangiro (6-2 C/PF) Sports Univ. All Stars