

2008 GymRat CHALLENGE Titles Headed for New York & Philly

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Albany, NY—With a field that seems to get deeper with talent and wider in geographic reach each year, the GIRL'S GymRat CHALLENGE is now firmly entrenched as one of the top events on the girl's summer basketball calendar.

With 259 games in less than 36 hours, there was no lack of action at the 2008 GIRL'S GymRat CHALLENGE and also no place to hide. Reputations are EARNED at the GymRat CHALLENGE for those that rise to the occasion, and for others paper-praise can be exposed for those that don't come to compete.

With a 136 team field comprised of some of the best players, programs, and prospects from throughout the eastern seaboard, coaches and recruiting experts from across the country continue to point to the GIRL'S GymRat CHALLENGE as one of the showcase events on the summer basketball calendar. Among the cornerstones of that reputation is the unique and indisputable mix of urban and suburban talent that migrates each year to the Albany, NY event. In 2008, that story line held true to form, but it was the metro squads from NYC and Philly that took home the heavy hardware in the end.

16:U Age Division: Gauchos Earn Another Title

Death, taxes and the New York Gauchos dominating the 16:U division of the GymRat Challenge basketball tournament. Call them the certainties of life.

The Gauchos, defending champions of the division, seemed to be breezing through the event again this year, winning with ease in its first game of Sunday's championship round (43-20 over Connecticut De-Fam), its quarterfinal-round contest (45-34 over New Heights-NYC) and in the semifinals (50-31 over L.I. Extreme).

But the certainty was tested by surprising Mid-Penn Motion, a well-balanced squad that knocked off several talented teams along the way and, then kept the Gaucho's running game in check with strong defensive and smart offensive play in the championship contest.

The Motion stayed in it for most of the game. The Gauchos managed to take just one double-digit lead with about five minutes left, but Motion inched back to within six late in the proceedings. The winners, though, were able to hold on by not turning the ball over down the stretch, as division MVP (Most Valuable GymRat) China Crosby, a lightning-quick and unflustered point guard, kept things under control with her ball-handling and passing skills.

"One key for us is that we had depth," said Gauchos' coach Earl Elliotte. "This is a marathon (the championship game was each team's fourth in a six-hour span). Our depth got us through."

Indeed, the Gauchos' roster is one of the deepest to ever appear here. Every player on the team's nine-player roster exhibited the skill necessary to play on some level of the college game, with many likely to not only dot the rosters some of the traditional top women's teams, but likely to be major contributors.

Crosby, though, was the best of the best here over the two-day event.

"She controls the flow of the game," said Elliotte. "She can do it all on the court, and she did whatever we needed her to do here."

"When the game gets close, I want the ball in my hands," Crosby said. "I know I'm a good ball-handlers and I can get past defenders and create space for my teammates."

She did that at the required times to make certain that the expected Gauchos' championship in this division occurred again.

16:U GymRat Challenge MVG - Most Valuable GymRat

China Crosby (5-6 PG, NYC Gauchos): The key player on the championship team. Arguably the division's quickest player, her end-to-end speed makes her all but impossible to guard. A point guard with all the tools. She uses her athleticism to be disruptive on the defensive end. Offensively, she makes things happen by going past defenders and either scoring, or finding teammates. Can also shoot from the outside. Is being recruited by Virginia, Penn State, Miami and Louisville.

16:U All-GymRat CHALLENGE Team

Kristen Doherty (6-0 PF/SF LI Xtreme-Flynn): She was the best shooter here last year, and nothing has changed. A cold-blooded shooter with ice in her veins. A lefty, long-range sniper, who can also score inside. She is an aggressive, intense player who contributes tremendous court vision to compliment her scoring prowess. Averaged 24 points through her team's first four games. In one game, with a 29-point lead, she was still knocking over opponents to get to loose balls.

Alysa Fenyn (5-11 SF/SG Crystal City Stars): Excellent outside shooter who can create space off the dribble to get her shot off. Great body control when going to the hoop. Moves well up and down the court. Extremely aggressive player. Capable of playing all three perimeter spots and, even power forward for short periods. College choices are Seton Hall, Providence, Villanova, Boston College and Virginia Tech.

Rachel Coffey (5-6 PG Albany City Rocks Eagle): An exceptional leader who is already a special player, yet still looks to have upside. Can shake and bake her way past defenders and, then, explode to the hoop with quickness. Can score, but is better at setting up teammates with quickness, passing and knowledge of how to break down defenders.

Briana Keisel (5-6 PG Albany City Rocks Eagles): She makes everyone else on the court appear to be playing in slow motion. Always thinking and moving two steps ahead of opponents. Explosive to the rim and finishes there or dishes. Has exceptional court vision. A rising sophomore, so likely to get even better.

Sheila Dixon (5-8 SG/SF Albany City Rocks Eagles): Physically gifted standout already has the build and style of a college. A powerful inside force who runs the floor well and can finish on the break. Can also hit perimeter jumper. Goes past defenders and pulls up on a dime for mid-range jumpers. Siena, and Ivy League-level schools involved.

Keyanna Williams (6-1 C/PF Albany City Rocks Eagles): Very athletic inside player who uses skills to block shots and track down rebounds even outside her area. College-ready body. Runs the court well. Can play either center or power forward. Good shot from close range, but doesn't need to be a big scorer to be effective. Siena is involved.

Katelyn Vanderhoff (5-10 SG Mid Penn Motion): Great defensive player who shut down one of the tournament's best offensive players in the quarterfinal round on her team's way to the title game. Just as good on the offensive end. Standout shooter, smart passer. Fundamentally sound

in every aspect. Rebounds well enough to play small forward. Notre Dame has looked, also Boston University.

Bilois Abdul-Quadir (5-3 PG/SG Springfield Sparks): Small and slender, but has big-time game. The total package as a point guard, the consummate playmaker and coach on the floor. Quickness makes you forget about her size. Goes to the hoop without fear and almost always makes something happen. Can also hit perimeter jumper. A superb talent.

Porsche Postel (5-8 SG New Height NYC-Blue): The definition of a shooting guard. Quick to the basket, who can stop and pop from any range. Can create shot off the dribble, or get into the lane to finish or find teammates. Active defender, good free-throw shooter. Rutgers heavily involved.

Samantha Kopp (6-3 C Crystal City Stars): Played through an injury, yet still effective here. Very good basic skills around the basket. Good position defender. Slender, but gets the job done inside. Good hands, makes tough catches. Fundamentally sound. Recruited by Rhode Island, Niagara, Hofstra, among others.

Carmen Tyson Thomas (5-8 SG Philly Triple Threat): Good-sized shooting guard who handles the ball well enough to have brought the ball up court effectively against pressure. Long-range shooter who also drives hard to the hoop. An athletic player who passes well in transition, and hit's the boards hard.

Michaela Cosby (5-6 SG Boston Heat): A threat to score from anywhere on the court, yet is an unselfish player, too. Draws defenders and, then, passes to open teammate. Showed strong defensive skills, as well, using quickness and fundamentals to get the job done.

Ambeerlin Ortman (6-1 SF/SG FIRM AC): Multi-dimensional player who goes all out on every play. Drives hard to basket, yet hits perimeter shot effectively. Can play SG, SF, PF effectively. Already college-ready build. Looking at Duquesne, Bucknell, Dartmouth.

Lauren Carra (5-9 PG FIRM AC): Good-sized prototypical point guard who hits outside shot and makes great decisions. Good hands, hard-nosed defender. Made a 30-foot inbounds pass from the sideline to an under-the-basket teammate for an easy bucket. Looking at Delaware, La Salle.

Diamond Lewis (5-4 PG Jersey Sting-Hampton): Extremely quick point guard who can play that way without being out of control. Good decision-maker, makes outside shot and has lightning hands on defense. Picks pockets of opponents. Upper level of PG's here, and only a rising junior.

Jamie Halloran (6-1 C NEPA Flames-Glidden): Bulky big inside player who uses size to block and affect shots. Very good offensive touch out to 12-foot range. Catches, turns and shoots effectively. Great hands, catches everything and grabs rebounds in her area. Better conditioning will bring more mobility, improvement.

Afreyea Tolbert (5-8 SG NY Gauchos): Intense shooting guard who creates offense not only on her own, but is an unselfish passer from the two-spot. Tough to stop in the open court, beating defense down the court to hoop to finish. Quick hands on defense, can score with either hand in close. Recruited by Miami, among others.

Victoria Macaulay (6-4 PF NY Gauchos): Strong inside player who combines strength and athleticism to control the paint. Limited range on her shot, but scores when she gets the ball in the paint. Quality rebounded. Plays hard at both ends. Blocks shots and uses size to discourage shots.

Charmaine Tay (5-6 SG/PG NY Gauchos): She was the MVG on the 14:U level last year.

Skipped up to 16's with no problem. Can drain a jumper, or use quickness to go past defenders. Capable of playing either guard spot effectively. Excellent ball-handler who can score or dish.

Nicola Zimmer (5-8 SF/SG Fairfax Stars): Primarily a shooting guard who also showed ability to play a wing forward spot. Has an effective outside shot. Flashed ability to get past defenders and into the lane. Very aggressive player who uses her intensity to her advantage on the court.

16:U Honorable Mention All-GymRat CHALLENGE

Vanessa Moore (6-3 PF NY Gauchos)
Essence Townson (6-6 C NY Gauchos)
Tiffany Conner (5-9 SG NY Gauchos)
Devon Spirka (5-7 SG Albany City Rocks Eagles).
Alexis Osbourne (5-6 SG Albany City Rocks Eagles)
Jeanna Trimboli (5-0 PG New York Gauchos)
Megan Olson (5-9 SF/SG Albany Capitals National)
Emily Bayly (5-11 PF/SF Albany Capitals National)
Reagan Jewell (5-8 SG Next Level Athletics)
Ashley Caggiano (5-4 PG LI Xtreme Flynn)
Rachel Bantelman (5-11 SF Crystal City Stars)
Ryia Newsome (5-4 PG Boston Sharks)
Katrina Mallios (5-11 PF Boston Sharks)
Jennifer Morabiti (5-4 PG Crystal City Stars)
Victoria Macaulay (6-4 PF NY Gauchos)
Bridget Crowley (6-1 PF Springfield Sparks)
Alannah Driscoll-Sbar (6-0 SF Springfield Sparks)
Lushanta Savadel (6-1 C/PF Team Noah)
Natasia Hurd (5-5 PG Team Noah)
Jessica Flamm (5-10 SF Philly Triple Threat)
Tyler Simpson (5-8 SG/SF Philly Triple Threat)
Raquel Flemings (5-7 SG Philly Triple Threat)
Lia Zhan (5-10 SF WNY Lady Lakers-Parizek)
Ashley Zhan (5-10 SF WNY Lady Lakers-Parizek)
Carly Napier (5-9 SG WNY Lady Lakers-Parizek)
Jacqueline Schrödinger (5-7 SG New Heights NYC-White)
Shukurah Washington (5-10 PF New Heights NYC-Blue)
Nadirah McKenith (5-6 PG New Heights NYC-Blue)
Jalessa Lewis (5-6 SG NJ Northstars)
Emily Haines (6-3 C Sparks-Pa.)
Naquasha Britton (5-11 C/PF Empire Dragos)
Cora Maurice (5-9 SF Boston Monarchs)
Danielle Tucker (5-10 PF WNY Lady Lakers-Hart)
Jenna Barrett (6-0 PF/C NEBC)
Greta Buerman (5-10 SF WNY Lady Lakers-Hart)
Kelsey Wolfe (5-9 PF/SG Fairfax Stars)
Julie Foster (6-1 C LI Xtreme-Flynn)
Caitlin Hopkins (6-2 C Xtreme-Flynn)
Dana Coranato (5-7 PG Jersey Sting-Alvino)
Chelsea Aronica (5-6 SG Jersey Sting-Alvino)
Priscilla Moseh (5-6 SG Cardinal of Virginia)
Janea Jackson (5-11 PF Cardinal of Virginia)
Zoe Saulsgiver (5-9 SF Lake Champlain Lakers)
Kara Hackett (5-11 PF Lake Champlain Lakers)
Gabby Singer (5-8 PG Mid Penn Motion)
Caitlynn Moran (5-8 PG Hudson Valley Knights)

Chelsea Grover (6-3 C Jersey Sting-Hampton)
Sehmonyeh Allen (5-10 SF Jersey Sting-Hampton)
Tequila Lloyd (6-0 PF Triple Threat-NY)
Brianna Wilson (6-4 C Northeastern Lady Panthers)
Whitney Wilson (6-3 C Northeastern Lady Panthers)
Briana Szidat (6-3 C) Northeastern Lady Panthers
Nikki Lawton (6-1 C Next Level Athletics)
Olivia Suhr (6-0 C WNY Lady Lakers-Hart)

15:U Age Division: Gauchos Get No. 2, Look Ahead to No. 3

Is it too soon to start thinking about a “Three-peat?”

Not if your program is the always talented New York Gauchos, who captured the 15:U age division of the GymRat CHALLENGE with a hard-fought, but satisfying 38-34 final-game victory over the Central Jersey Hawks in this year’s event.

Six members of the eight-person roster, including MVG Taylor Palmer, were members of the 14:U team of 2007 that won that division’s championship here.

Most of them will be back for the 2009 event, competing in the 16:U division, trying to complete their three-year sweep of a title at each age bracket.

“That’s our goal,” said team coach Will Rampersant. “We want to come back next year with another win. Let’s do it. That would be really good.”

“Just winning back-to-back is something,” added Palmer. “If we could come back and do it again as 16’s ... that would really be special.”

It could happen not only because the team proved itself special, but its best player from last year’s 14:U squad, 2007 division MVG Charmaine Tay, moved up a level and was a key performer on this year’s 16:U championship squad. Tay could very well be back to play at that level again, rejoining the core of this year’s 15:U squad.

“If we had her with us this year, we’d have walked away with it,” said Rampersant.

The Gauchos still won this year. It just took a little more effort, particularly in the title contest when it never could build a substantial lead and had to hold on down the stretch.

Palmer, though, made key plays in the closing minutes, and the core of returnees from last year’s 14:U title team that included her, centers Shanyce Stewart and Martina Ellerbe, forward Tierra Clark and guards Briana Brown and Katrina Garrett refused to fall apart.

“I’m very excited about winning this award,” said Palmer, about being named the division’s MVG. “It is a privilege. “We were tired in the championship game, but everyone kept their composure. We look forward to coming back as 16’s.”

15:U GymRat CHALLENGE MVG - Most Valuable GymRat

Taylor Palmer (5-7 SG NY Gauchos): Multi-talented player whose work in the semifinal round (14 points) and all-around play in the championship contest helped secure the event crown. She is a pure 3-point shooter who combines athleticism and strength to be a tough rebounder. She also uses her strength to post up and out-muscle opponents. Has heard from Fordham, Boston College, UMass, Hofstra and Iona.

15:U All-GymRat CHALLENGE Team

Tierra Clark (5-10 C/PF NY Gauchos): Post player who is a strong rebounder and does the dirty work, controlling the boards and going for loose balls. Good footwork, outstanding spin move. Runs the floor well for her size and blocks or alters shots on defense.

Briana Brown (5-8 SG NY Gauchos): Makes things happen on the court. She is involved in every play. Good in transition, a playmaker and a finisher. She makes teammates better on offense and forces turnovers on defense. Plays with intensity. Being looked at by Siena, UMass, Providence and Xavier.

Jenniqua Bailey (5-5 PG/SG CT Heat): Sweet release on jump shot. She is great in transition. A strong guard who takes it to the hoop. Is a slasher and a playmaker. Really works on defense. Forces many turnovers.

Raeshonn Corbo (5-9 SG New Jersey Sparks) : Also a track athlete, and it shows. Very quick slasher who finishes around the hoop. Not afraid to take it inside. Active on both ends. Can stop and pop quickly. Great cross-over move. Just as good on "D" with tips, deflections.

Shaquanna Marshall (5-5 PG New Jersey Sparks): Outstanding shooter with NBA 3-point range. Breaks people down off dribble. Starts the break and runs it with great court vision. Finds open teammates. Active hands on defense.

Martina Ellerbe (6-2 C NY Gauchos): Dominate inside player and shot-blocker. Physical player. Can put ball on the floor and drive to basket. Good reverse pivot. Tough on the boards. More advanced than most forwards at this level. Being looked at by Georgetown, Penn State, Miami, Princeton and other Ivies.

Ezinne Kalu (5-8 SG Team Freckles): Consistent finisher on offense. Cuts and slashes to bucket. Handles pressure with ease. Great moves to get open away from the ball. Real defensive pest with quick hands who causes many deflections.

Channel Johnson (5-9 SG Team Freckles): Plays larger than her size because of athleticism and leaping ability. Tough match-up due to her strength, yet good ball handler. Has ability to create her own shot. Hard worker at both ends.

Latorri Hines-Allen (6-1 PF Jersey Knights): Very athletic, agile big player who has finesse game. Can handle the ball well enough to bring it up against the press. Aggressive on both offensive and defensive boards. Jumps out of the gym. Aggressive, but in control. Still developing.

Abigail Martin (5-9 PF Jersey Knights): Boxes out consistently as part of work to control boards on both ends. Plays larger than her size. Quick to outlet pass and, then, get down court. Has strong hands. Works hard on defense in the post. Gets position on offense. Getting looks from Manhattan.

Lauren Okafor (6-2 C/PF CT Select Da-FAM): Great potential, coachable player. Keeps ball up in the post. Looks to outlet and runs the floor well for her size. Lefty shooter. Knows how to seal off defender and works hard in the post. Getting looks from Georgetown and other Big East schools.

Myiesha Reynolds (5-5 SG CT Select Da-FAM): Good defender with active hands who anticipates passing lanes. Offensively can hit open jumper consistently. Very quick, versatile player. Uses both hands around the hoop to score. Effortless shooter.

Meg Morrissey (5-5 PG CT Storm): Rebounds well for her size. Good ball handler with good court vision. Has ability to penetrate and finish. Nice mid-range jump shot. She also can step back and hit a three-pointer.

Sydni Lester (5-4 PG Jersey Franchise): Very quick first step. She pushes the ball up court consistently. Has a nasty hesitation move. In half court can penetrate and kick it out to open teammates. Can score and also run a team.

Valerie Driscoll (6-4 C Bay St. Magic-Elite): Just a workhorse player. Goes after every rebound. Keeps ball above head. Smooth shooter who uses the backboard. Good free-throw shooter. Good shot-blocker. Playing style reminiscent of NBA's Tim Duncan.

Demetria Bell (6-0 C/PF Bay St. Magic-Elite): Good ball-handler for her size. Stepped up her game at key moments. Great drop step in the post. Finesse passer. Superb rebounder. She really cleans the board. All-out hustler.

Alexis Peters (5-9 SG Bay St. Magic-Elite): Playmaker by trade who is also a scoring threat from anywhere on the court. Penetrates and dishes or pulls up for jumper. Team plays better when she's on the court. A real leader who hustles for loose balls. She threads the needle with passes.

Julia Hinchey (5-9 SG/SF Triple Threat-NY): Gritty, scrappy player. She is not afraid to bang inside, or step outside. Fluid with the ball. Smooth dribble. She can control the pace of a game when she has the ball in her hands.

Minica Wignot (6-1 SF/SG Firm-AC): Great ball-handler who can play on the perimeter, yet rebounds on both ends. Uses her height to be an effective shot-blocker. Can shoot from anywhere with a great release. Runs the floor. Multi-skilled player getting looks from Villanova, Temple and Penn State.

Sami Himlin (6-1 SF/PF Firm-AC): Tough inside player, very good in the post. Tough inside and uses her aggression to rebound. Runs the floor very well. Catches the ball well on the break and finishes with either hand. Getting looks from several CAA schools.

Melody O'Connor (5-10 SG/SF Kingston Vipers): Stead, consistent player through the tournament. Plays with great energy and not afraid to take it strong to the hoop. Works both inside and out. Draws fouls and sinks FT's. All over on defense, great on traps.

Kristen Hoffman (5-7 SG Mass Premier-Oftring): Quick offensive player. She slashes and drives to the basket. Quick with the ball in her hands, has good offensive moves. Defensively she gets in passing lanes and causes deflections.

Kastine Evans (5-9 SF/SG N"Y Xplosion-Black): Great ball handler for her size. Great court vision who makes things happen with passes. Is also a slasher and a finisher and works well in the post. Crashes boards. Active defender who gets her hands on many balls.

Lauren Battista (6-1 SF Mass Premier-Bliss): Multi-skilled player who does good work inside and on the perimeter. A real scorer with a nice turn-around jumper in the post. Very unselfish player. Catches and looks for open teammates. Runs the floor very well.

Jaclyn Kates (5-5 PG Central Jersey Hawks-Bowler): Great court vision and unselfish player who makes the extra pass. Excellent shot selection, who doesn't force anything. Can get past a defender, stop and pull-up for mid-range jumper. Active defender who is all over the court.

Aaron Zimmerman (5-11 PF Central Jersey Hawks-Bowler): A prototypical power forward who

is extremely physical on both ends of the court. A great high/low player. Fundamentally sound performer who won't make any mistakes.

Shaylyn Sicard (5-5 SG Western Mass Cheetahs): Gets high marks for her shooting ability. A true three-point specialist. She also has a great mid-range jumper. One of the better pure shooters in the division.

Alexandra Jones (6-2 C/PF CT Storm): Can play anywhere on the court. Good inside-out player. She has great court vision and runs the floor well. Great rebounder on both ends. Nice footwork in the post on both ends. Finishes with both hands. Very coachable. Getting looks from Rhode Island, St. Joe's, Clemson, Holy Cross, Boston College and Maine.

Jacqui Brugliera (5-11 G/SF Team Massachusetts): Very quick player. Plays with intensity. Tough matchup because of size and hard play. Good inside player at both ends of the court. Hard worker.

Kelly Myers (6-0 PF CT Magic): Intense, tenacious and physical player. Runs the floor well for a post player. Works well in the post. She is an inside force to be reckoned with. Finishes around the hoop well on offense with either hand.

A.J. Guidi (5-9 SG NH Shooting Stars): Great court awareness. She is a deadly 3-point shooter. Team nucleus with her multi-dimensional skills. Strong defensively, she anticipates passing lanes and creates turnovers.

Melissa Geiger (6-5 C NH Shooting Stars): Intimidating defender in the post. Uses size well to block shots. Also, a good rebounder. Good foul shooter. Fundamentally sound, she keeps ball above head and can finish underneath. A hard worker. Getting looks from New Hampshire, Southern New Hampshire, St. Rose and Siena.

15:U Honorable Mention All-GymRat CHALLENGE

Meaghan Burns (5-8 SG Team Massachusetts)
Dionne Harris (6-0 C/F Lady Untouchables)
Kaitlyn Bovee (5-9 F CT Magic)
Reica Houle (5-5 G Empire Night Hawks)
Alex Marple (5-6 SG Elmira Lady Express)
Maria Thannhauser (5-7 SG Elmira Lady Express)
Katie O'Reilly (5-9 G/F Central Jersey Hawks-Bowler)
Missy Repoli (5-9 G/F Central Jersey Hawks-Bowler)
Jasmine Shabazz (5-11 F/C Niagara Rapids)
Olivia Logan (5-10 F/C Jersey Franchise)
Margo Hackett (5-8 SG Triple Threat-NY)
Catherine Thompson (5-10 F/C Triple Threat-NY)
Sabrina Eggnick (5-11 F/C Kinston Vipers)
Marissa Resnick (5-5 G LI Lightning-Brennan)
Shannon Doody (5-7 G LI Lightning-Brennan)
Cassidy Moore (6-0 C New Jersey Sparks)
Kayla Wheeler (5-11 F/C Saratoga Sparks)
Uju Nwankwo (5-10 F/C CT Heat)
Shanyce Stewart (6-1 F/C NY Gauchos)
Vanessa Hunter (5-7 G Team Freckles)
Katie Losty (5-10 Middlesex Rage)
Arianna Youngs (5-8 F Albany Capitals)
Roselyn Alexander (G/F 5-9 Albany Capitals)
Sabrina Jeridore (6-4 C NY Xplosion-Black)

Kayla Taylor (5-2 PG Lake Champlain Lakers)
Kelly Legg (6-2 F Rochester Warriors)
Becky Hebert (5-9 G/F Rochester Warriors)
Collen Hanscom (5-9 G Bay State Jaguars)
Katie Peterson (6-1 F/C Elmira Lady Express)
Alysa Leonard (5-6 G Western Mass Cheetahs)
Rosa Drummond (6-1 F NH Shooting Stars)
Alison Balalaika (6-4 C Team Massachusetts)
Christine Ganser (5-10 F Mass Premier-Bliss)
Mary Louise Dixon (5-6 G Mass Premier-Bliss)

14:U Age Division: Laney Leads Philly Triple Threat

The division championship earned by Philly Triple Threat in the 14-under division of the GymRat CHALLENGE was a case of the proverbial apple not falling far from the tree.

Or, proof that while basketball ability certainly is a product of hours, months and years of hard work it doesn't hurt to have a little extra help from genetics.

Philly Triple Threat coach Yolanda Laney was one of college basketball's top players of her era, earning Kodak All-American recognition as a senior at Cheney University in 1984.

Laney's playing days are over, but those of her daughter Betnijah Laney are just getting going in fine fashion.

The 6-foot inside force, whose work is reminiscent of her mother's from more than two decades ago, was on full display in the Triple Threat's run to the division championship that culminated with a 50-37 victory over the Rockland Rockets in the title contest.

Philly had barely been threatened along the way, but found itself trailing 18-11 midway through the first half of the final game.

That's when Laney took over. She scored six of her team's final points of the half while dominating the boards and providing an intimidating inside presence as the Triple Threat turned things around with a 19-5 run to grab a 30-23 lead at the intermission.

It was more of the same in the second half as the 6-footer added nine more points that helped her team to a 46-30 edge late in the game.

"It helps a lot to have a mom that was so good," said the younger Laney. "She has really helped me develop as a player. She has helped me with every part of my game."

But the Triple Threat's play here over the weekend was far from an individual tour de force.

Plenty of other help came from lightning-quick point guard Brittany Hrynko, who had a game-high 17 points in the championship contest, and from 6-2 center Crystal Ross, who helped make the team's inside presence even more intimidating.

"Mostly we played good defense and rebounded well," said coach Laney.

Much of that work came from her daughter.

"I think she's going to become an even better player than I was," added Yolanda Laney, which is high praise, indeed. "She's more advanced than I was at her age."

Yolanda Laney, though, had the good fortune to have played under one of the sport's all-time great coaches, Vivian Stringer, while at Cheyney University (then known as Cheyney State).

But, that only carries the comparison a little further.

While the younger Laney has three more high school seasons before she'll move on to college, she already has a future school in mind....It's Rutgers University whose women's program, probably not coincidentally, is coached by ... Vivian Stringer.

14:U GymRat CHALLENGE MVG - Most Valuable GymRat

Betnijah Laney (6-0 C/PF Philly Triple Threat): Extremely strong forward that causes match-up difficulties for opponents. She does most of her offensive work around the basket. An outstanding rebounder and defender. She just controls the paint with a combination of strength and athleticism. She can also handle the ball in the open court. Only going to get better. Hereditary connection makes Rutgers the early favorite for Laney to showcase her skills on the next level.

14U: All-GymRat CHALLENGE Team

Savanna Butterfield (6-0 F NH Shooting Stars): Lefty who finishes with either hand around the basket. Talented, athletic player with size and great potential. Rebounds extremely well, particularly on the offensive end. Can also face basket and hit medium-range jumpers off the dribble. Bright future.

Nichole Issacs (5-4 SG/PG NY Gauchos): Shoots extremely well from 3-point range when feet are set. Can penetrate and dish. She wants the ball when the going gets tough. Extremely clutch young player, equally capable of playing either guard spot.

Jasmine Jackson (5-9 PF/SF NY Gauchos): Strong, athletic player who works very hard. Defends and rebounds well. She makes things happen at either end. Capable of running the floor and getting to the hoop in transition and has an ability to draw fouls. Only going to get better.

Coriesha Hickey (5-5 PG Syracuse Select): One of the quickest players in the division. She slashes and finishes well. She can also dish when penetrating. An athletic player who will be even more valuable when she develops a medium-range jumper.

Chelsea Cornelius (6-2 PF Firm AC): A multi-talented big girl who can score inside or outside. Tends to play more on the perimeter offensively. Defensively, she sticks to the paint and rebounds and blocks shots very well. Can shoot 3's, yet can also get to the basket off the dribble. As she progresses, she'll improve her shot selection.

Kelsey Booth (6-1 PF/C CT Storm): Fundamentally sound big girl who uses the backboard nicely on her shots. Scores from the paint, yet runs the floor well and is an adept high-low passer. Potentially can be special, if she continues to fill out. Shows ability to hit medium-range jumper.

Megan Loneran (6-1 C L.I. Lightning-Sparacia): Lefty with good size. Has good ability to ball-fake in the low post. Capable defender who shows an ability to block and alter shots. Should have a bright future in the game.

Troi Melton (5-11 PF New Heights NYC-Rosa): An extremely athletic player who also has a strength element to her game. Goes to the basket and finishes very well, and either makes the bucket or draws fouls. She was a difficult matchup for anyone at this level.

Chelsea Baez (6-0 C/PF New Heights NYC-Rosa): Fairly skilled big girl. Extremely good interior passer. She can also hit the open jumper out to 15-foot range, but also possesses the ability to go inside and score in the paint. Capable of playing either power position.

Rachel McNair (6-0 C/PF Rockland Rockets): A player with a great deal of talent and potential. Clearly, one of the best in the division. She missed the championship game due to an ankle sprain, but did plenty of damage earlier with quick moves around the basket. Also proved to be an outstanding rebounder. Key player on a very good team.

Brittany Hrynko (5-7 PG/SG Philly Triple Threat): The leading scorer in the championship game with 17 points. One of the quickest players in the division who can drive the baseline very well. Defenders could not stay with her. She hit a three-pointer in the title contest, but her perimeter shot is still developing. A key component on a physically talented championship team.

Ashley Perez (5-8 SG CT Spirit-Denfield): A young (13 years old), competitive player who displayed maturity beyond her years. She can shoot and get to the bucket off the dribble. Speedy and quick, and uses those traits at both ends of the court.

Margo Hackett (5-9 SG Westchester Hawks): Very capable point guard who runs the show and makes things happen. She can get into the paint off the dribble with ease. She also showed an ability to shoot beyond the bonus stripe when set. Can score in transition and make big plays with the game on the line.

14:U Honorable Mention All-GymRat CHALLENGE

Ashley Cooper (5-9 SG Jersey Sting-Popyer)
Arielle Ward (5-7 SG Springfield Sparks)
Lea Lemoine (5-7 SG Exodus-Providence)
Cat Thomas (5-8 SF Westchester Hawks)
Crystal Ross (6-2 C Philly Triple Threat)
Katherine Poppe (5-4 PG L.I. Lightning-Sparacia)
Lynasia Frazier (5-6 SG New Heights NYC-Rosa)
Katie Stopera (5-8 SG NH Flames)
Megan Curra (5-6 PG N.Y. Fever)
Katie Mahoney (5-9 SG CT Storm)
Theresa Carnavale (5-6 SG Hoop Heaven Heat)
Samantha Graber (5-8 SG Hoop Heaven Heat)
Tasia Nolan (6-0 PF Triple Threat-NY)
Katelyn DeRaps (5-6 PG MBR)
Taylor Cordts (5-8 SG NH Shooting Stars)
Christa Scoglameglio (5-7 SG NY Fever)
Kassandra Kayser (5-4 PG NY Fever)
Morgan Murphy (5-11 PF CT Spirit-Denfield)
Hannah Kutny (5-9 SF/SG Saratoga Sparks)
Lauren Woods (6-0 C Saratoga Sparks)
Amanda Adam ski (6-0 PF CT Magic)
Aliah Curry (5-6 SG/PG Mass Frenzy)
Ellen Burr (6-0 PF Syracuse Select)
Melissa Lee (6-1 C Syracuse Select)
Jamie Romano (5-10 PF LI Xtreme)
Samantha Guastella (6-0 C/PF Jersey Shore Wildcats)
Niki Popyer (5-7 SG Jersey Sting-Popyer)
Yolanda Juste (5-9 SG Rockland Rockets)

Brianne Traub (5-8 SG Rockland Rockets)
Jamie Swabowski (5-5 PG Firm AC)
Shirell Butler (5-2 PG CAS Panthers)
Emonni Cropper (5-7 SG CAS Panthers)
Iyana Abrams (5-7 SG Westchester Hawks)
Katie Barnett (5-10 PF Exodus Providence)
Nicole Pepe (5-10 PF Rockland Rockets)
Dianna Thomas-Palmer (6-0 C Philly Triple Threat)