

New Galaxy of Stars Emerge In 2011 GymRat CHALLENGE

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LOUDONVILLE, N.Y. – The annual GIRLS GymRat CHALLENGE 2011 edition continued to uphold the event's tradition as a place where basketball reputations are built, and where future stars first begin to shine.

This year's seventh annual edition of the girls' event, though, did it in bigger and better fashion than ever before. A record field of 200 teams and more than 2,200 participants from 14 states and Canada were on hand to play games around New York's Capital Region, and the increased field (up from 2010's 156 teams) brought a similar increase in talented individuals.

Some of the standouts here, though, didn't need to "emerge," but used the GymRat CHALLENGE to solidify and enhance already sterling on-court reputations.

That was the case for 16-under age bracket MVG (Most Valuable GymRat) Amani Tatum, who is already getting high-major level interest from the likes of North Carolina, Louisville, Penn State and Stanford, among others.

Tatum's high-energy level of floor generalship helped a talented NYC Bulldogs' team to the championship of the 16-under division.

And, then, there was the play of 14-under division MVG Alliya Butts of the Philadelphia Freedom Stars, a 5-foot-2 point guard who spearheaded her team's rally from a 17-point deficit with just more than seven minutes remaining in Sunday night's championship game.

Butts scored 16 of her team's 38 second-half points while also playing a key role in an impressive overall defensive team effort after halftime to help lift the Freedom Star to a prestigious GymRat CHALLENGE championship.

Butts, despite her relative youth as a rising sophomore, has already attracted high-major level interest and already has a scholarship offer on the table from Penn State.

Both Butts and Tatum had already emerged as eventual high-major caliber college players before they came to this year's GymRat event.

But, Kayla Burton of the Bay State Rivals of the Boston area lifted her team to its first significant AAU tournament championship (it won the 15-under division) and put considerable shine on her own rising individual stardom that hasn't yet attracted major college interest but might soon based on her play here.

Burton displayed the type of ball-handling wizardry and long-range shooting ability reminiscent of current NBA standout Steve Nash, putting on the type of tournament-long performance that not only brought a Most Valuable GymRat award but, likely, considerable future interest from college recruiters.

Things were no different at the youngest age level contested here, the event's inaugural competition at the 13-under level.

A slew of talented young performers were on hand, but none as impressive as Jordan Augustus, an athletic small forward who displayed a variety of on-court moves that belies her youth. The current eighth-grader was all but impossible to stop on the offensive end, scoring 16 of her team's 46 points in the championship game to lead the CAS Panthers to their age-division title.

The previous six years of girls' play in the GymRat CHALLENGE has already produced a virtual who's who of players who have gone on to success not only in the major college ranks but professionally, as well.

And those who saw the talented individuals who competed in this year's event agree that the 2011 edition of the GymRat CHALLENGE will just send more proverbial stars into the galaxy of the next level of women's basketball.

16:U Age Divison

NYC Bulldogs' Championship a Surprise, Even To Team Members

LOUDONVILLE, N.Y. – If someone termed the NYC Bulldogs' run to the championship of the 16-under age bracket division of this year's GymRat CHALLENGE girls' AAU basketball tournament as "unlikely," even the Bulldogs' own players would have to agree.

"A lot of teams underestimated us in this tournament," said division MVG (Most Valuable GymRat) Amani Tatum. "Even we didn't think we could win it. But we just went out and gave it our all."

That was more than enough as the Bulldogs were never really threatened in any game, and captured the championship contest with a 64-47 victory over the NH Rivals Sunday night.

Tatum, though, helped ensure the team would overcome modest expectations here this weekend by constantly pushing the ball up court for transition layups of her own or open shots by teammates.

"That's what I like to do ... I like to push the ball down court," she said.

That type of uptempo attack continued to overrun teams throughout the tournament.

"As we kept winning games, we started thinking we had a chance," added Tatum.

That combination carried into the championship game as the winners pulled away from a 10-7 early lead with an 18-4 run during which Jasmin Alston had 11 of those points. By halftime the winners had a 30-17 lead and were never threatened after that.

While Tatum and Alston might have had the most-gaudy individual statistics, Bulldogs' coach Tom Catalanotto said the fact that individual accolades and statistics are of little concern to his players is a big reason for the team's success.

"These girls really share the ball," said Catalanotto. "They don't care who winds up as our high scorer. They don't even look at the scorebook to see how many points each of them had.

"They're more concerned about what we do on the defensive end of the court. That's where they work hardest. We did that well here in most of our games."

The Bulldogs' pre-event expectations might have been tempered some since they didn't know what to expect in the program's first-ever appearance in the GymRat CHALLENGE.

But, once here they showed their 16-under division opponents the way to win a championship: Team play, a dedication to defense and an uptempo offensive style.

And, in doing so the Bulldogs exceeded everyone's expectations ... even their own ... in capturing a GymRat CHALLENGE age division championship.

16:U All-GymRat CHALLENGE MVG – Most Valuable GymRat

Amani Tatum (5-6 PG) NYC Bulldogs/Archbishop Molloy H.S.): A smooth, lightning-quick guard who can break your ankles with her speed and quickness. She also has a pull-up jumper and showed three-point range here. She is adept at penetrating and kicking to open teammates. Nice court vision with excellent ball-handling skill. Knows how to use her speed. She directed the championship team here. Interest from North Carolina, Louisville, St. John's and Penn State, among others.

16:U All-GymRat CHALLENGE TEAM

Jasmin Alston (5-9 SF) NYC Bulldogs/Bishop Loughlin H.S.): Very smooth wing player with a sweet 3-point shot. She can break your ankles with her speed and quickness. Has a nice pull-up jumper that she sets up with dribble skills. Penetrates and draws fouls. Score big plays when the championship game here was still in doubt. A rising junior who is sure to get high-major level interest.

Tiana Johnson (5-7 PG) Albany City Rocks/New Mission School: Solid point guard with good ball-handling skills. She has an excellent first step and good passing skills. Aggressive on both sides of the game. Always on the attack defensively, putting pressure on the offense. Crafty and always under control on the offensive end. Northeastern, Oklahoma, Providence and UMass showing early interest.

Kollyns Scarborough (5-1 SG) NYC Lady Warriors/Christ The King H.S.): A smart, all-around athlete. She doesn't shy away from contact. Finishes well around the rim. Always moving on offense

with and without the ball. Good passer in transition. Great rebounder. Reads the opposition's offense and attacks the ball effectively on defense. Div. I talent.

Ashley Reaf (5-7 G) NYC Lady Warriors/Christ The King H.S.: Great pull-up jumper. Creates space for herself if she needs it. Very quick first step. Blows by defenders. Moves well without the ball. Definitely can knock down open three-pointer.

Stevie Ray (5-8 G) CNY Rim Rockers/Fabius Pompey School: Great length who uses it well. Good free-throw shooter. Sees the floor well in transition, especially when pushing the ball. Sees the court and finds openings when pressed. Good passer. Knocks down open 3's consistently. Early interest from Niagara.

Lizzy Ball (5-7 PG) NH Rivals/New Hampton H.S.: Scrappy, feisty and tenacious defender. Extremely aggressive on both ends ... a try GymRat-type player. Talented, but work ethic is her best attitude. Good shooter who can also drive and get to the rim. Outstanding court vision and delivers passes well. Makes her team better when she's on the court. Siena, Rider, UAlbany and Patriot League schools showing early interest.

Samantha Brenner (6-3 C) NH Rivals/New Hampton H.S.: Legit "big," but also has 3-point range. Nice offensive touch inside and out. Moves well for her size. Always looking up court off the rebound. Explodes upwards to rebound. Very good size and mobility. Early interest from Vermont, Delaware.

Daisy Jordan (6-0 F) NH Rivals/Tilton H.S.: Good build for an inside player. Carves out space inside and gets off shots with a nice touch. Keeps the ball high when she has it. Goes after rebounds. She can finish. Has ability to get in great position when she wants it. Likely to wind up at low-Div. I program.

Amber Dillon (5-5 PG) NH Rivals/Brookline H.S.: Very quick point guard with a decent handle. Has a good first step. Three-point range and a nice-looking jump shot from all over. She has ability to create both for herself and her team. Uses her quickness to get past defenders and into the lane. Early interest from Maine.

Maddy Blais (6-0 SF) NH Rivals/New Hampton H.S.: Great size for a guard/small forward. Spot-on shooter. Has three-point range. Decent ball-handler for her size. Good decision-maker. Needs work defensively when on the ball. But, uses smarts and anticipation to be an effective defender. Early interest from Providence, Virginia Tech and Marist.

Lexi Sells (5-10 F) NH Rivals/Bishop Feehan: Tireless worker on both ends of the court. Very good outside shooter. She uses pivot move well. A fundamentally sound scorer who is always around the ball. Strong ball-handler for her size. Already given a verbal to Providence.

Briana Sidney (5-10 F) Exodus Gold/Nazareth H.S.: Good spot-up 3-point shooter with a quick first step when defended closely. She can dribble the ball and create her own shot. She excels on the break and can finish with either hand. A high-level player with a nice shooting touch. Interest from Memphis, UNC-Wilmington, Rhode Island and UAlbany.

Briana Cuevas (5-6 PG) Exodus Gold/Nazareth H.S.: A young, small point guard with great court vision and an excellent feel for the game. Outstanding ball-handling skills. Deep shooting range with the ability to take over a game at any time. Played up a level, but already showed skills capable of taking her to the high Division I level.

Lubirdia Gorden (6-5 C) Exodus Gold/Mt. Vernon H.S.: An excellent low-post presence with good low-post moves at a young age. She played up an age level. She has great hands and mobility for her size and weight. Strong player who can finish inside with contact. Good shot-blocker and rebounder.

Darius Faulk (5-7 PG) Exodus Gold/Nazareth H.S.: Excellent driver with quick first step. Plays really well in an open-court situation, and can finish at the hoop with either hand. A great one-on-one player. She can get into the paint at will with her quickness. Early interest from highest levels, including Kentucky, Seton Hall, St. John's, West Virginia and Memphis.

Taylor Ford (6-1 PF) Exodus Gold/ Nazareth H.S.: A long, very athletic power forward. She runs the floor very well for her size. Has good and effective low-post moves and is a good rebounder. She is skilled enough to bring the ball up court on the fast break. Early interest from, among others, Penn State, Notre Dame, Georgetown, Georgia Tech and Duke.

Jatirah Diggs (5-8 PG) Central Jersey Rebels/Elizabeth H.S.: Lightning-quick point guard who has good ball-handling skills with excellent court vision. She is a willing passer and always seems to make the right play. Quick first step that allows her to create for herself and others. Active on the defensive end. Could attract some Division I interest.

Miranda Drummond (5-9 Wing) STNY FLYERS/ Harpursville H.S.: Smart, young player who played up a level. Good hoops IQ and skill set,. She can handle the ball, shoot it and is an excellent passer. She has a complete, smooth game and the poise of a veteran at a young age. The future looks bright for her.

Stazy Barret (6-1 F) Exodus Gold/Holy Trinity H.S.: An active defensive player who is also a very good rebounder. She is a long and athletic player. Good physical skills, athletic and strong. She uses those skills to good use to get things done on the court.

Kasey Chambers (5-7 PG) Central Jersey Hawks/St. Rose H.S.: She is a scrappy, aggressive yet a smart player. An under-control point guard who runs her team well. Also very effective defender both on and off the ball. Has already given a verbal commitment to Division I Monmouth.

Sami Clark (6-3 PF) Central Jersey Hawks/St. Rose H.S.: She already has a college-ready body built to play the power forward. But, she can also go out to the perimeter and make a 3. High hoops IQ. She runs the floor well for her size. Good passer and rebounder. Early interest from Rutgers, Seton Hall and Fordham.

Marcia Senatus (5-5 PG) Team Freckles/Roselle Catholic H.S.: Extremely fast and athletic. Great first step, and attacks the basket. Strong moves driving to the hoop and capable of finishing when she

gets there. Decent 3-point shooter. Aggressive with good hands on defense. Gets a lot of steals. Projects as low-Div. I or Div. II player.

Lauren Hebert (5-11 Wing) NE Lady Panthers/North Reading H.S.: Long, lanky guard/forward who has a good handle. She constantly attacks the basket and uses that skill to get to the foul line. Also showed a very good pull-up jumper. Gets in the passing lanes on defense to create steals. Early interest from several Patriot League schools.

Donnaizha Fountain (6-0 Wing) Albany City Rocks/Cambridge Latin H.S.: Very athletic and explosive player. Quick first step who gets to the basket and draws fouls. Finishes string when she gets to the lpp. Good ball-handling ability. A little over-exuberant here at times, though, but is a versatile wing player with Div. I ability.

Dianna Thomas-Palmer (6-1 C) Saint John Lady Phoenix/Penn Charter H.S.: Very mobile post player. She can handle the ball when necessary, but is also strong enough to finish inside with good post moves. Good rebounder. She is also an active defender. Interest from, among others, Drexel, St. Joe's and Hofstra.

Jaryn Garner (5-9 G) Saint John Lady Phoenix/Germantown Academy: Very active defender, one of the best here. Hustles at all times. Extremely hard worker. Good shooter who is very athletic and quick. Attacks the basket hard. Good handle. Can play any perimeter position. Already has interest from A-10, CAA schools and a couple from Big 10.

Anastasia Williams (5-11 F) Basketball Reuslts/St. John The Baptist School: Good hands. Runs the floor well. Very long, strong and athletic body. Good rebounder for her height. Not afraid to go inside and draws a lot of fouls. Knows how to play. Always seems under control. A little undersized for primarily a post player. Siena, and some other mid-majors have shown interest.

Shanell Glover (5-11 F) Rochester Premier/Gates-Chili H.S.: Strong, athletic build. Finishes strong going to the basket. She has a good mid-range game on offense and is an excellent rebounder at both ends of the court. A very hard worker, high motor. Projects as a mid-major Div. I or Div. II player.

Alexis Martins (6-0 F) WNBA Lady Knicks-Riley/Irvington H.S.: Long forward with a great wing span. She is smooth on the court and looks to attack on offense. Runs the floor and can finish inside. Can also shoot out to 3-point range. Understands weakside boards and finishes put-backs. She wants the ball. Tremendous work ethic and fight. Projects as a mid-major D-I player.

Maeve Parahus (6-0 F) WNBA Lady Knicks-Riley/Albertus Magnus: Long, lanky forward who is a 3-point shooter. Can drive right or left and finish. As her strength increases so will other aspects of her game. Runs the floor well. She doesn't shy away from contact at either end. Played up an age level. Projects as a low-Div. I player.

Diamond Williams (5-7 SG) NJ Flow/University School: Very aggressive off-guard who will excel in an up-tempo system. Good drive skills. Drives and dishes to open teammates. Got into it as an active

defender. Able to use her athleticism and competitiveness to her advantage at both ends. Some interest from Seton Hall.

Dawn Green (5-9 Wing) NJ Flow/Barringer H.S.: Tremendous athlete who is getting better every day. From a skill perspective she can drive and uses her length well to get to the glass. Will excel in a full-court system to take advantage of her athleticism and length. Interest from Syracuse and Seton Hall, among others.

Calli Balfour (5-9 SF) Hudson Valley Knights/John Jay H.S.: Explosive scorer who can take you to the basket. Nice touch from the outside and off the pull-up. Her athleticism and speed separate her here. She understands rebounding and defense. On offensive ends, she finds open teammates.

Briana Thomas (5-7 G) Basketball Results: She has a scorer's mentality. Crashes the offensive boards and uses her strength and length to her advantage. Works hard and can handle contact. The more she focuses on a consistent release the more consistent her shot will become. Interest from low-Big East teams, CAA teams and Manhattan.

Taryn Vinson (5-3 PG) Philly Triple Threat/Freire Charter School: Small, but very quick true point guard. She can run an offense, dribble into the paint and get to the basket. Has a pep to her step. Will likely need to be in an up-tempo program to have success. Projects as a low Div. I player.

Chantal Thomas (5-6 PG) Philly Triple Threat/Freire Charter School: An aggressive point guard who has a good hoops IQ. She can drive and distribute. Not afraid of contact and can also rebound. She is active on defense and is always looking to push it north and south in transition.

Indya Lucas (5-9 F) Philly Triple Threat/Imhotep Charter: Strong athlete who looks to score. She understands the pick-and-roll game and can attack from the high post or the wing. She moves well without the ball and changes speed/direction to get open. Nice turn-around jumper. Consistency and maintaining focus will bring further improvement.

Janell Lane (6-2 C/F) Baltimore Storm/Woodlawn School: Long and lanky power forward. Uses her wing span well and has nice post moves; favors drop hook/turnaround jumper. Nice touch off the glass. Excellent hands. Nice ups and is a good rebounder. Game changer now, but once she learns both ends of the floor she will get to another level. Much potential.

Shirri Ade (6-0 F) Baltimore Storm/Western Tech H.S.: Imposing physical forward with some perimeter skills. Has a triple-threat attack. Can hit the 3-point shot, can drive and has a nice passing game. Very good rebounder. She has work to do yet but there seems to be much potential here. Projects as low-Div. I player.

Myisha Hines-Allen (6-2 F) NJ Sparks/Montclair H.S.: Has a variety of attack moves on offense. Excellent driver, but also has a step-back 3. Fun to watch her break down a defense. Good turnaround jumper. Decent passer. Sees give-and-go action. Makes contact on box outs and goes after the ball. Will

improve with consistency on defense and more offensive intensity. Played up two age levels. Could eventually be one of the best players from this year's event.

Robin Perkins (5-11 SF) NJ Sparks/Trenton Catholic H.S.: Active and aggressive player on both ends of the floor. Thin build, but makes things happen. Gets into on the defensive end. Very good driver. Has active hands defensively. She knows how to create havoc in the passing lanes. Nice-looking shot. Interest from St. Joe's, Drexel, George Washington, among others.

Teana Muldow (6-2 C/F) N.J. Sparks Blue Star Elite/East Orange H.S.: Rebounder ... she wants the ball. Can score back to the basket and in the high post. Good low post moves, and can also shoot out to 3-point range. Explosive 1st step; has a scorer's mentality. Active and aggressive. Extremely athletic and versatile. Interest from ACC and Big East programs.

Jakelle Gilchrist-King (5-9 G) N.J. Sparks Blue Star Elite/Teaneck H.S.: Tall guard with an in-your-face mentality. Loves to get up in a passing lane on defense and bring the pressure. Will excel mostly in a full-court transition system where her speed and athleticism can flourish. Has ability to get to the hoop in the open floor. Big East, CAA interest so far.

Haliann Fitzgerald (5-6 PG) Kingston Vipers/Valley Central H.S.: Energetic player who runs the show. A point guard who looks to pass first, but will nail you with her scoring ability, too. Attacks either direction off the dribble and is a solid distributor. Makes very good decisions and is a draw-and-dish reader. Smooth 3-point shot. Decent handle. Uses body to draw fouls and finishes with contact.

Tara Flynn (5-6 PG) United NJ/Bayone H.S.: Active, aggressive player. Solid and steady point guard who can run a team and distribute. A strong offensive player. She can carry the team on offense, if necessary. 3-point shot is smooth and deadly. Good draw and dish skills. Doesn't back down on the defensive end. Interest from Siena, other MAAC schools, America East and NEC.

Corisha Hickey (5-5 PG) CNY Lady Rim Rockers/Corcoran H.S.: Great ball-handler. Extremely athletic with great jumping ability. Finishes well in transition. Lefty guard who plays much taller than her height. Passes extremely well. Knows where her teammates are on the floor at all times. Currently a senior. Probably a Div. II-level player.

Imani Tilford (5-7 G) Westchester Hoopers Blue/Woodlands H.S.: Will pull up in transition and make shots. Also, a great passer. Very quick first step. She has the ability to put the ball on the floor and go by defenders. Active defender who causes opponents problems with her quick hands.

Kelsey Glazman (5-11 F) Long Island Lightning/Center Moriches H.S.: Can put the ball on the floor and get to the hoop. Moves well without the ball. Rebounds well. Works hard on both ends. Can hit a fade-away 10-footer consistently. Good moves with back to the basket. Nice turn-and-face jump shot. UAlbany and many Div. II programs have interest.

Shaunice Woodson (5-7 PG) Westchester Hoopers Elite/Nazareth H.S.: Just a PLAYER. Great ball-handler who has superb passing skills. An outstanding point guard. Very strong player who uses her skills to go past defenders and get to the basket. Once there she is strong enough to finish.

Ashley Perez (5-8 PG) CT Starters/Manchester H.S.: Sees the floor great, and knocks down 3's, often from NBA range. An in-your-face defender. Has length and is athletic. Terrific passer. Can get to the hoop and finish. Prototypical offensive-minded point guard. Runs a team, yet provides much offense on her own. Providence, some A-10s, Vermont, Hartford and CAA schools involved.

Jazsala Laracuent (5-6 PG) Boston Show Stoppers/New Mission School: Terrific ball-handler. Playing up two age levels here, and did not look out of place at all. Real quick point guard who runs a team and can score. She does everything right now. Finishes well for her size and age. Much potential as she matures.

Alexis Coulombe (6-2 F) NE Crusaders Blue/McCauley H.S.: Long, lanky and versatile player. Outstanding shot-blocker. Decent handle. Sees the floor really well. Has a nice step-back jumper out to 15-foot range. Finishes well inside. Capable of playing any position on the court. Has already given a verbal to Boston College.

Elizabeth Belanger (5-11 SF) NE Crusaders Blue/Acton Boxborough H.S.: An athletic small forward who can really jump. Capable of hitting from the 3-point stripe. Great finisher even with contact. Posts up smaller defenders well. Very active on-the-ball defender. Runs the floor well. Verbal commitment to New Hampshire.

Kristin Schatzlein (6-0 G/F) NEBC Bombers/Tolland H.S.: A "point forward" who has great court awareness. Good size and nice shooter. Always finds open man. Needs to add some strength. Looks to pass too much sometimes. Good defender Has ability to get to the basket. Nice shooting touch. Already made verbal commitment to Fairfield.

Morgan Olander (6-3 C0 NEBC Bombers/EO Smith School: Good height, but slender. Knows how to play. Has two brothers on Div. I level. Keeps ball high. Has 3-point range. Gets good position on the block. Runs the floor well for her size. Knows how to use height to affect shots. Smart player. Has mid-major Div. I potential.

Celeste Robinson (5-9 SG) Firm AC Elite-Downing/Jim Thorpe H.S.: A very good defensive player. Uses her quick hands and feel to cause problems for opposing players. Plays hard. High-energy performer. Gets to the rim and finishes. Just a tireless worker at both ends of the court.

Dallas Ely (5-9 PG) Firm AC Elite-Downing/Montrose H.S.: Good size for how she plays. Can handle either guard spot, but looks like she'd be a nice college point guard. Good body control. Aggressive player and a good finisher. Solid defensively. Forces players out of the middle. Active on both ends. Good passer, clever offensive player. Mid-major Div. I interest.

Morgan Manz (6-1 PF) Exodus II-Matero/Taft H.S.: Big, solid body. Try power forward skills, yet has a nice touch from the perimeter. She moves well for her size and strength. Good, strong player who knows how to use her strength to her advantage on both ends of the court. Good power moves inside and uses body to good effect on the defensive end.

16:U Honorable Mention All-GymRat CHALLENGE

Nicole Ferguson (6-1 F) NEBC Bombers
Alee Lateria (5-11 F) NH Rivals
Erin Lyons (5-9 G) Rochester Warriors
Crista O’Gara (5-9) Exodus Gold
Ginella Cola (5-7 G) NE Landy Panthers-Lesard
Yuni Sher (6-0 F) Exodus II
Lauren Nuss (5-11 G) Exodus II
Hailey Dietrich (6-1 C) STNY Flyers
Nicola Matero (6-0 F) Exodus II
Casey Smith (6-0 F) Exodus II
Olivia Levey (6-0 F) Exodus II
Molly Lauver (5-7 G) Albany Capitals
Brooke O’Shea (5-9 G) Albany Capitals
Rachel Lander (6-2 F) NYC Bulldogs
Brooke Gurstman (5-9 C) NYC Bulldogs
Sarah Madden (6-1 F) Albany Capitals
Bridget Carney (6-0 F) Albany Capitals
Hannah Kutney (5-11 F) Albany Capitals
Sydonia Daniels (6-0 F) Team Freckles
Donovan Driscoll (6-2 F) NW Panthers-Chelmsford
Audrey Knowlton (5-8 G) NE Lady Panthers-Gloucester
Tiahana Mills (6-0 F) Team BX
Emily Lewis (6-0 F) Team BX
Melissa Frase (5-7 G) Rivals White
Brea Stratton (5-11 G) Albany City Rocks
Emily Durr (5-11 G) Albany City Rocks
Emia Willingham-Hurst (5-11 F) Albany City Rocks
Nola Henry (5-7 G) Saint John Lady Panthers
Lynette Payton (6-1 F) Saint John Lady Phoenix
Brittany Snow (6-0 F) Saint John Lady Phoenix
Liza Otto (5-11 F) Connecticut Cobras
India Davenport (5-9 G) NJ Sparks Elite

Rebecca Sparks (5-11 F) NJ Sparks Elite
Kyla Champagne (5-11 F) NJ Sparks Elite
Meagan Doherty (5-9 G) NYC Bulldogs
Carolyn Gallagher (6-0 F) NYC Bulldogs
Alexa Dietrich (5-6 G) NYC Bulldogs
Janicha Diaz (5-11 G) New Heights Blue
Sade King (5-4 PG) New Heights Blue
Shequana Harris (5-8 G) New Heights Blue
Makenzie Burud (5-8 G) Kingston Vipers
Regina Steele (5-11 G) Kingston Vipers
Camerin Spahn (5-1 PT) Central Jersey Hawks-Chambers
Carissa Jenkins (6-3 F) Central Jersey Hawks-Chambers
Tara Inman (5-11 G) Central Jersey Hawks-Chambers
Alissa Tarsi (6-0 F) United N.J.
Cierra Dillard (5-8 G) Baseline Elite
Alicia Wilde (5-11 G) Mass Premier
Deaisia Acklin (5-9 G) CAS Panthers
Emonhi Cropper (5-6 G) CAS Panthers
Shannon Ryan (6-2 C) Lake Champlain Lakers
Stephanie Linder (5-11 G) Lake Champlain Lakers
Amanni Fernandez (5-6 G) NYC Lady Warriors
Molly Hourigan (6-3 C) Unity Wildcats

15:U Age Division

Hard Work Pays Off with Title For Burton, Bay State Jaguars

LOUDONVILLE – Mark Twain once wrote that he’s a firm believer in good luck and, somehow, the harder he worked the luckier he got.

It’s a philosophy seemingly embraced by Bay State Jaguars’ standout point guard Kayla Burton, who was difficult to contain throughout this year’s 15-under age division tournament and particularly in its championship game.

Burton made every play necessary, both in distributing the ball and in scoring a game-high 22 points, to lift Bay State to a 62-60 victory over Ring City in the championship game of the 15-under division Sunday night at Siena College.

The 16-year old high school junior, who plays like a girls’ version of NBA standout Steve Nash, was a flashy on-court performer she was reticent off of it.

She deferred any credit to teammates and praised her opponents for their play in the contest.

Her own game? Clearly, she preferred to let her on-court work do the talking. And, it spoke volumes.

“She’s where she is because she works very hard at it in the off-season,” said Sam Doner, who not only coaches Burton in the Jaguars’ AAU program, but also does so when the 5-foot-7 guard is playing at Newton South High School during the scholastic season.

“She’s up at 6 a.m. three mornings a week before school to get into a gym and make 1,000 jump shots,” said Doner. “Other days she lifts. We practice several days a week as an AAU team. There are some days she’s getting in two separate workouts.

“That’s the type of dedication that she has. She thinks she’s lucky, but there’s nothing lucky about why she’s as good as she is. It’s all about the benefits of hard work. Hard work creates luck.”

Hard work, too, got the Jaguars through Sunday’s championship game. Burton scored 12 of her team’s final 26 points to secure the victory, but solid play from several team members and strong work on the boards also helped the winners hold on.

Ring City had a late-game possession with a chance to tie the game, but missed a shot and the winners’ Jennifer Berkowitz went up in traffic for a rebound with just seconds remaining to secure the outcome.

Doner said his team’s progress has had its growing pains, but that two years of hard work together is starting to pay off both on the court and philosophically.

“We really had a heart-warming moment here that just about brought tears to my eyes,” said Donor. “Last year we knew was a development year for this team, and I purposely played not to win games ... I got a lot of players in every game ... to help overall development.

“I know Kayla didn’t appreciate it. But, at one point during this tournament she spoke up and said she now understood why we played the way we did last year. We had a tough relationship for a while, but when she said that it just touched my heart.”

Burton, whose sister Kendall will be a freshman on the Villanova women’s team this coming season, certainly is opening up the eyes of college recruiters on the AAU circuit this spring/summer season.

But, she is as low-key about where she’ll eventually play as she is about her game.

“I have no goal to play at a certain program,” she said. “My only goal is to play at the Division I level.”

Burton said she doesn’t try to emulate anyone when she plays, but that her personal favorite is home-area Boston Celtic standout point guard Rajon Rondo.

Event watchers, though, saw a better comparison with longtime Phoenix Suns’ pass-and-shoot standout point guard Steve Nash.

“Division I schools are looking at her right now,” said Doner , about Burton who is a rising junior. “How high a level she can play at depends on her understanding the game a little better. She is still understanding how to make her teammates better. She probably needs to add a little floater and to get a little stronger.

“But she’s definitely willing to put in the energy and the effort to get there.”

Which means her continued improvement will make some future college program lucky to have her.

15:U All-GymRat CHALLENGE MVG – Most Valuable GymRat

Kayla Burton (5-7 PG) Bay State Jaguars/Newton South H.S.: A great floor general with unbelievable court vision. Has great range, out to 22-foot territory, and can stop on a dime and hit the pull-up jump shot. Very good foul shooter. Great ball-handler with a high basketball I.Q. Tenacious defender who loves to get out in transition. She finishes well with both hands. Always seems to find the open teammate. Continuous energy and never gets fatigued. Works hard at her game off the court, too.

15:U All GymRat CHALLENGE TEAM

Jennifer Berkowitz (6-2 F/C) Bay State Jaguars/Wayland H.S.: Has a great drop step in the post and finishes with both hands. Fundamentally sound and does a nice job of making herself available in the post. Passes well. She is a rebounding machine and blocks a lot of shots. Works hard on defense and causes a lot of havoc. Good free-throw shooter for her side. Lots of potential.

Anna Ross (5-9 G) Unity Wildcats-Mannion/Westhill H.S.: Very strong defender and gets her hands on a lot of balls. Goes hard to the rim and finishes with either hand. Not afraid of contact. Plays bigger than her size. Quick first step. Very unselfish. Versatile player. Can step back and hit the 3. Very strong cross-over dribble sets up penetration. Many MAAC schools interested.

Kelly Loftus (5-8 Wing) Cardinal Jr. Elite/Mount Vernon H.S.: Nice outside shot with unlimited range. Not afraid to attack the hoop and can take a lot of contact. Great rebounder at both ends. Can play with her back to the basket. Very versatile player. Can play either guard or forward. Capable of creating her own shot. Notre Dame, Maryland and Richmond have shown interest.

Sydney Sodine (5-11 F) Lightning-Pavinelli/Hills West H.S.: A solid slasher with the ability to put the ball on the floor. An inside threat with all the makings of a standout at the next level. Great size and a calm demeanor. Good moves to the hoop gives her many opportunities to scorer. She gets after it on both ends. Quick hands cause many turnovers.

Maggie Bill (5-7 G) Lightning-Pavinelli/St. Anthony's: Combo guard who can play either backcourt spot. A double-digit scorer, she has the knack for putting herself in the right spots for her team. A good passer. She sees the floor well. She can shoot off the screen and will get dirty on offense. Terrific athlete. Has committed to play lacrosse for North Carolina.

Casey McLaughlin (6-0 F) Mass Lady Warriors/Central Catholic H.S.: An all-around player who is exciting to watch. Able to finish with either hand which causes problems for opponents. A very good defender due to her size and quickness. She will fight for all rebounds which leads to second-chance points and fast break opportunities. Heavily recruited by Div. I and Div. II programs.

Morgan O'Brien (5-9 G) Mass Lady Warriors/Reading Memorial H.S.: A pure shooter with a great touch around the rim. Uses a killer crossover move to create space for her shot. Able to finish with either hand. She is difficult to defend. Can shoot from long range, which also helps her to distribute. Heavily recruited by Div. I and Div. II programs.

Mia Hopkins (6-0 G) Firm AC Elite/Pittstown H.S.: An oversized guard who controls the tempo of a game. She can penetrate or shoot the outside shoot. A very good passer that pushes the ball up the floor. She has great court vision. Also uses her height to bang around inside for rebounds. Looks like a Div. II player right now.

Isis Dwyer (5-11 F) Central Jersey Rebels/Piscataway H.S.: A force in the middle. This "big" causes chaos for opponents. A pure shot-blocker that defends very well. She does a good job at starting the break. Has a good, solid body. She will be a nice player at the next level, maybe Div. II or III.

Kimberly Quiles (5-0 PG) Triple Threat-NY Dawson/Ketcham H.S.: A true point guard with very high intensity. Super fast, she sees the floor very well. She knows when to push the ball and when to slow it down. Quick hands allow her to get her team out on fast breaks. A hard-nosed defensive player. Projects to be a Div. II player.

Morgan Roessler (5-7 wing) Lightning-Pavinelli/Massapequa H.S.: Long frame and athletic. She can pull up and shoot or go down low for points. Her long arms create havoc when playing defense. Good ball-handling skills also enable her to get some time at the point. Nice penetration-and-dish aspect to her game.

Alyssa Alston (5-5 PG) DA FAM/Barnard Middle School: An eight-grader. She is a definite game changer. Fast, smart with an ability to change her shot in mid air. She is a great passer who also has an impact by being a tenacious defender.

Tanaya Atkinson (5-11 Wing) DA FAM/Career Magnet H.S.: A 9th grader, she does just about everything on the floor. Fastest player on the court in every game. She can lead the break finish the break and start the break. A lock-down defender. Definitely has a bright future.

Olivia Healy (6-0 SF) Rivals Blue/Reading Memorial H.S.: A tall forward who is a match-up nightmare. She easily shoots over shorter guards, and post players can't guard her on the drive. High basketball IQ. Good at finishing in traffic. The ability of a guard in a forward's body. Also showed a dangerous 2-dribble step-in and pull-back jumper. Providence and America East schools have shown early interest.

Salich Serette (6-0 PF) Rivals Blue/Weston H.S.: An explosive forward who shows the athleticism to dominate the lane. Tremendous shot-blocking timing and crashes the boards hard. Rebounds well in and out of her area. She runs the floor better than most guards and does a great job of facing up and attacking the basket off 2 or fewer dribbles. Div. II Bentley is interested.

Asia Mitchell (5-8 PG) Rivals Blue/Oliver Ames H.S.: Athletic strong and tall point guard. She shows great court vision and is an efficient distributor. Has a quick first step and is so strong that once she gets beside you defenders can't recover. She can attack the basket at will Also shows passion and pride on the defensive and can be a lock-down defender. Early interest from America East schools but can probably play at a higher level.

Toree Cardaci (5-5 pg) Central Jersey Hawks/Holmdel H.S.: Lightning-quick point guard that displays a high hoops IQ and a never-quit attitude. A rising 10th grader. Already adept at passing or finishing with either hand. Quick and active hands on defense resulting in numerous steals and deflections. Has ability to dominate a game on either end. Unselfish court vision but can score whenever needed. Definite Div. I potential.

Jenna Erickson (5-4 PG) Albany Capitals/Tamarac H.S.: Tremendous end-to-end speed that allows her to excel in the open floor. In the half court she is a dangerous long-range shooter. The shooting ability, along with her quickness, makes containing her drive very difficult She displayed great court vision a yo-yo handle and a willingness to crash the boards.

Lauren Moses (5-11 PF) Philly Triple Threat/Rancocos Valley H.S.: An intimidating physical presence inside. She displays a high motor and attacks the glass relentlessly. She plays the game with no fear. Has end-to-end speed better than most guards. Great job of getting position inside and finishing

with a soft touch. Can also drive off the dribble. High majors North Carolina Rutgers Maryland Duke UConn showing interest.

Kalista Walters (PF) Philly Triple Threat/Fleetwood Middle School: Already a physically dominant player. Plays the game with fire and a nasty streak inside that coaches love. Runs the floor well. Shot at a high percentage here, out to 17-foot range. Attacks the boards at both ends and is a tremendous post defender. She blocks shots on the ball, and also blocks or alters shots as a help-side defender. Definite Div. I prospect.

Amina Farmer (5-5 G) Philly Triple Threat/Cardinal O'Hara H.S.: An athletic and strong guard who plays the game bigger than her height. Able to attack the basket with ease, and with a more-consistent jumper she is going to be tough to guard. She moves well laterally on defense, has quick hands and is capable of locking you down. America East and MAAC schools have early interest.

Taylor Rooks (6-0 F) Ring City/Nichols School: Great size with fantastic low-post moves. Can drive from the perimeter and also has a nice turnaround jumper. Ability to finish with both hands. Tough on the glass. Outstanding rebounder and intimidating presence inside. Nice athleticism, yet plays under control. Played her best against strong competition here.

Mariah Ruff (5-7 G) Catskill Mountain/Oneonta H.S.: Has a college-ready game. All-around offensive player who can score by driving, shooting a pull-up jumper or from long range. Plays with fire and is very competitive. Tremendous court vision and can make tough passes look easy. Defensively has a tendency to gamble. However, she can take over a game seemingly at will. Maine Canisius Siena have early interest.

Jordan Beers (5-6 G) Catskill Mountain/Franklin H.S.: An excellent long-range sniper. She displays great form on her jumper and follows through well. However, not just a spot-up shooter. Very good handle and is capable of getting to the basket and finishing when she wants.

Maria Wesely (5-5 PG) Connecticut Cobras/Mercy H.S.: The type floor general that every coach wants. She leads by example by working hard on both ends. Has the ability to be a scoring point guard, or she can get her team involved. Unselfish player who gives her all to the team. Shows the ability to drive to the basket with either hand and to finish. Can also hit the 3.

Cierra Dillard (5-7 G) Baseline Elite/Gates Chili H.S.: Strong guard with a great handle and catches most defenders off guard with a hiccup quick first step. Sees the floor very well and is capable of making full-court pin-point passes. She controls the game by attacking the hoop and either scoring or dishing.

Kaila Attry (5-6 G) Baseline NYC/Urban Assembly For Career In Sports: Versatile guard who can take over a game in any capacity. Displays quickness and athleticism to drive and score at the hoop and over bigger defenders. Also able to crash the glass and create extra shot opportunities with offensive boards. High work ethic and can also hit perimeter shots. She carried her team in stretches here.

Denisha Petty-Evans (5-9 Wing) Ring Cit/Bridgewater-Raritan H.S.: Silky smooth wing player that makes the game look easy. At her best in transition and when attacking the hoop. Showcased a high hoops IQ here as she rarely forces the issue and is always looking up the floor for open teammates. Excellent floor vision. Excels at grabbing the defensive rebound and leading the break.

Aliyan Huland-El (6-0 F) Ring City/Randolph H.S.: Extremely long and athletic. Does a great job rebounding in and out of her area, and alters shots. Runs the floor well in transition and has great hands and body control finishing on the break. Also displays the ball-handling skills to lead the break and the court vision to find open teammates. Played up a level. Huge upside.

Chiana Ray (5-8 G) Cardinal Jr. Elite/St. John's College H.S.: Lightning-quick guard with and without the ball. Tough defender with very active hands. Likes to get out in transition and will finish. Great court awareness and can split any double team. Not afraid to get dirty and rebounds well for size. Has great range on her shot. Can take over a game. High major interest including Tennessee, Penn State and West Virginia.

TGaylor Dunham (5-4 G) Cardinal Jr. Elite/Mount Vernon H.S.: Very quick player and a slasher to the hoop. Splits any defense and has great court vision. Unbelievable passing ability. Will hit the open 3-point shot. Likes to penetrate and has no fear of contact. Really makes things happen on the court.

Sade Gibbons (6-2 C/F) Long Island Lightning/L.I. Lutheran: Long wing span and blocks a lot of shots. Good rebounder. Stands in on defense and not afraid to take a charge. Loves to post up and has a nice hook shot with either hand. Moves well off the pick and roll. Nice mid-range jumper. Hard worker at both ends. Very coachable. A-10 and Northeast 10 teams have early interest.

Rebecca Musgrove (5-8 G) Long Island Lightning/St. Anthony's H.S.: Very hard defender, really shuts down opponents. Very good ball-handler, and can run any offense. Likes to attack. Not afraid of drawing contact and getting to the foul line. Very unselfish player. Getting looks from Ivies and many Div. II schools.

Bridget Murphy (5-8 Wing) Saratoga Sparks/Bethlehem Central H.S.: Very unselfish player with great court vision. Fundamentally sound. Works hard on defense. Likes to penetrate and pull up. Thrives in transition and moves well without the ball. Can post up and finish. Great court awareness and hoops IQ. Loves to hit the glass and is a good rebounder.

Madeka Nicholas (6-1 Wing) Riverside Church/L.I. Lutheran: Very versatile player who can play any position. Good ball-handler who loves to attack the hoop. Doesn't mind posting up and sticking it in the defender's face. Nice mid-range jumper. Long wing span allows her to block shots and rebound well. Likely Div. I potential.

Charise Wilson (5-4 PG) Riverside Church/North Babylon: Wonderful ball-handler and will navigate all around the court. Very quick with awesome court vision. Penetrates and will pull up at the foul line. Has a Chris Paul-like tear-drop shot in the paint. Causes a lot of problems on defense with her quickness.

Allison Stoddard (5-6 G) CT Storm/ East Lyme H.S.: Pure shooter who can hit from anywhere on the court. Great release and great rotation on her shot. Comes off screens well with shot ready. Very strong with left hand and can finish at the basket and against contact. Pushes the ball in transition and finds open players. New Hampshire, Stone Hill have shown interest.

Jontay Walton (5-5 G) WNY Elite/Holy Angels Academy: Great free-throw shooter, and she gets to the line a lot. Very tough kid who is not afraid of contact. Likes to penetrate, and has a very good first step. Very strong with left hand and has a nice mid-range jumper. Very active on defense, and moves well without the ball.

Kelly Carey (5-8 G) Long Island Lightning/Holy Trinity H.S.: Very good pure shooter who has unlimited range. Took and hit shots from 25 feet out here. Plays under control and has a very high basketball IQ. Has a quick release and a beautiful rotation on her shot. One of the better outside shooters her in the age division.

15:U Honorable Mention All-GymRat CHALLENGE

Joslyn King (6-2 C) Mass Lady Warriors
Kayla Leverone (5-6 G) Mass Lady Warriors
Alexis Esworthy (5-6 PG) Team BX
Katie Viennead (6-0 F) Team BX
Jess Hiscox (5-6 G) AC Firm Elite
Talah Hughes (5-10 F) Triple Threat-NY
Samantha Giosonni (5-6 G) Triple Threat-NY
Alivia Roseboro (5-0 G) DA FAM
Alex Krupp (5-4 G) Next Level Athletics
Rachel Couto (5-3 G) Mass Lady Warriors
Angelica Haver (6-3 C) Team BX
Kami Grewal (5-7 G) Central Jersey Rebels
Caitlyn Abela (6-1 F) Bay State Jaguars
Emilee Daley (6-2 F) Bay State Jaguars
Jessica Dolan (6-0 F) New York Falcons
Kristen McLaughlin (5-11 F) New York Falcons
Abbey Timpano (5-4 G) Unity Wildcats
Brittany Burgess (5-10 G) Cardinal Jr. Elite
Elisabeth Giegerich (6-1) N.E. Crusaders Black
Clairee Putnam (5-7 G) N.E. Crusaders Black
Johanna Impellizeri (6-1 F) LI Lightning
Lashana Tolliver (5-11 F) Saratoga Sparks
Olivia Marks (5-8 G) CT Storm-Guisti

Daesha Thomas (5-6 G) WNY Elite
Sheena Landry (5-10 F) Connecticut Cobras
Taylor McLaughlin (5-11 F) Connecticut Cobras
Sasha Puglisi (5-5 G) NY Pride
Alana Dudley (5-8 G) New Jersey Panthers
Erin Ferguson (6-0 F) New Jersey Panthers
Stefani Alston (5-10 F) New Jersey Panthers
Hannah Brophy (5-11 F) New Jersey Panthers
Nicole Cring (5-10 F) Catskill Mountain
Dejha Flood (5-7 G) N.J. Sparks
Kerry Mackinnon (5-5 G) L.I. Lightning-Lepore
Molly Martin (5-9 F) L. I. Lightning-Lepore
Molly George (5-10 F) Team ALETHIA
Emily Sischo (5-10 F) Albany Capitals
Cara Waterson (5-8 G) Albany Capitals
Victoria Nguyen (5-3 G) B2L White
Dianna Johnson (5-6 G) Baseline Elite
Ashley Lutz (6-2 C) Rivals Blue
Gene Restirano (5-5 G) Rivals Blue
Amirsh Brown (5-5 G) United NJ
Anna Feller (0 C) Albany Capitals
Jacquelyn Miller (5-5 G) Albany Capitals
Lauren Kelly (5-11 F) Centray Jersey Hawks-Westrol
Jenifer Chalk (5-11 F) Lady Sizzlers
Maisic Pipher (5-11 F) Lady Sizzlers
Alyssa Reaves (6-0 C) Ct. Starters
Alicia Kutil (5-11 F) Mass Pride Elite
Cara Adams (5-6 G) Mass Pride Elite
Ailis Hanley (5-11 F) Mass Pride Elite
Raincy Cox (5-9 F) Mass Pride Elite
Kara Cezar (5-5 G) Philly Triple Threat
Michael Harris (5-11 F) Philly Triple Threat
Deja Rawls (5-4 G) Philly Triple Threat
Aaliyah Worley (5-8 F) Philly Triple Threat
Talia Best (5-10 F) Baseline NYC
Karen Bellamy (5-6 G) Baseline NYC
Lauren Daugherty (6-0 F) Ring City

14:U Age Division

Late Surge Lifts Freedom Stars to Comeback Championship

LOUDONVILLE, N.Y. – The Philadelphia Freedom Stars knew they wouldn't be at their best playing a first-half zone defense, but they didn't figure the strategy would have them trailing by 17 points with less than eight minutes left in the championship game of the 14-under age division.

But the strategy, designed to give tired players a first-half breather paid dividends when the proverbial shackles of the zone defense came off.

A seemingly revitalized group of Freedom Stars players made life difficult for their Long Island Lightning opponent with a second-half pressing defense and up-tempo offense that erased the big deficit in quick order and enabled the Philadelphia-based team to run off with a 50-45 victory in the division's championship contest of the GymRat CHALLENGE AAU tournament played at Siena College Sunday night.

Division MVP (Most Valuable GymRat) Alliya Butts, a feisty 5-foot-2 point guard, led the way scoring 16 of her game-high points in the second half.

She made a pair of key three-pointers that helped her team cut its 40-23 deficit with about 7:40 remaining to a more manageable 42-31 deficit. It was part of a 20-3 run enabled the winners to tie things when Butts converted an old-fashion 3-point play with 2:50 remaining.

The winners then pulled away after that, getting a big hoop and foul shot by forward Chelsea Woods for a 48-43 advantage, and Butts' two free throws in the final seconds accounted for the final points. In all the Freedom Stars outscored the Long Island team 27-5 over the game's final 7:40.

Before that, though, the Lightning looked like the dominant team behind the exceptional play of its own stellar point guard Lauren Brozoski. She had 22 of her team's first 40 points to help build its 17-point lead early in the second half.

At that point, though, four Lightning starters went to the bench for a breather. By the time they got back in the game three minutes later the winners had cut the 17-point deficit down to six and had a stranglehold on the game's momentum that they never relinquished.

"We never lost confidence," said Butts. "Once we came out of the zone defense we didn't let their best player (Brozoski) dribble the ball and we played tough defense."

"Defense is our claim to fame," said Freedom Stars' coach Urian Garner. "Our kids were extremely tired coming into the championship game, so we felt we had to give them a little break with the first-half zone defense."

“When we switched back to our normal pressure defense you could see an increase in our energy. We went man-to-man with pressure. It made it tough for them (Long Island) to get the ball up court, and our front line made it tough for their inside players once they did get into a half-court situation.”

Indeed, the Lightning found it tough to do almost anything offensively once the Philadelphia team began making its run over the final 7:40.

After that Long Island made just two more baskets, getting off just nine shots in the final 7:40 while committing eight turnovers, including miscues on five consecutive possessions after the score was tied at 43.

14:U All-GymRat CHALLENGE MVG – Most Valuable GymRat

Alliya Butts (5-2 PG) Philadelphia Freedom Stars/Holy Cross H.S.: A point guard who can also score. Very quick. Exceptional ball-handler. Variety of dribble moves. Changes speeds. Has terrific court vision and delivers good passes. Can also hit the 3-point shot consistently. Extremely effective despite her size. She took over the championship game, leading her team back from a 17-point deficit. Already has an offer on the table from Penn State.

14:U All-GymRat Challenge Team

Alyssa Alston (5-5 PG) Da Fam/Bernard Middle School: A quick guard who penetrates well. She runs the show. Showed a nice cross-over dribble ability. Anticipates well on the defensive end. True point guard who is the team leader at both ends, and she makes an impact on the game both offensively and defensively.

Tamara Simpson (5-9 F) Da Fam/North Babylon H.S.: A very quick, athletic player. She gets to the basket regularly. She uses her quickness to her advantage at both ends of the court. Handles the ball well and passes well for her size.

Tanaya Atkinson (5-10 F) Da Fam/Career Magnet H.S.: A strong player who makes good decisions on the court. Prototypical power forward at this level right now. Very good player in transition. Finishes well. Good athlete and a capable passer.

Kara Hageman (5-11 F) United N.J./Hopewell Valley H.S.: An active player at both ends who runs the floor well for her size. Likes to face the basket on the offensive end. Can hit the perimeter jump shot. Also a strong rebounder.

Nicole Schott (6-0 C) United N.J./Warren Hills H.S.: A player with very good size for the division who seems to enjoy playing defense and defends the post well. Also a strong rebounder who gets to the ball quickly. Showed good passing skills for her size.

Sydney Zambrotta (5-7 PG) New Heights White//Robin Moses Middle School: Tough, young guard. A lefty who can hit the 3-pointer. Good ball handler. Showed a variety of dribble moves, including a cross-over and hesitation. Gets into lane off the dribble. High hoops IQ.

Cassidy Bundy (6-2 C) CT Storm-Labrie/Montville H.S.: Long post player who is very active on the boards. Aggressive at both ends. Communicates well on defense. Very good passer out of the post. Showed decent post moves with back to the basket.

Allie Clement (5-8 PG) Maine Firecrackers/McAuley H.S.: A tough, very valuable player who handles pressure well. Decent ball-handling skills. Will hit the perimeter jumper with regularity and has good range on her shot. Showed strong passing skills.

Olivia Smith (6-3 C) Maine Firecrackers/Yarmouth H.S.: Very good size. She runs the court extremely well, and sees the court. Will rebound, protect the ball and make good outlet passes. Nice release on her jumper. Makes free throws. Plays very hard. Tons of potential.

Jocelyn Willoby (5-9 F) Ring City/St. Phillips School: Only finishing up 7th grade. Has great potential. Very quick first step. Excellent off-the-ball defender. Showed leadership qualities, despite her young age. Long and strong athletic build. Good shooter inside 15 feet.

Bre Cavanaugh (5-7 PG) Ring City/Blair School: A tenacious competitor. Outstanding offensive player. Key role in leading her team to the semifinal round. Strong player who has a very quick first step that gets her past defenders. Showed nice hesitation dribble skill.

Shalix Hines (5-5 PG) CAS Panthers: Extremely quick point guard who played up an age level. Very good court vision. Distributes the ball very well. Smart player who shows leadership qualities already. Unselfish player, but showed the ability to score from the perimeter.

Morgan Belanger (6-1 F) Springfield Ladyballers/East Longmeadow H.S.: A true “big” at this level who finishes well around the basket with either hand, even against contact. Has good size already. Runs the court very well. She has much potential for the future.

Erin Garner (6-4 C) Philadelphia Freedom Stars/World Communications Charter School: Great size already, and off-the-chart potential. Very tough low-post player who also has agility. Runs the floor well for her size. Major defensive presence already.

Alana Gilmer (5-11 F) Bay State Magic Elite/Thayer Academy: Very strong player who can finish off plays around the hoop. Rebounds well. Plays under control at all time. Very good passer. Enjoys defense and is an impact player at that end right now.

Janelle Harrison (5-11 F) Connecticut Cobras/Cromwell H.S.: A long, active player who knows how to use her height advantage at this level. Good rebounding skills. Also a very effective defender, particularly inside. Led her team to the semifinal round here. Much potential.

Lauren Brozski (5-5 PG) L.I. Lightning-Slater/L.I. Lutheran: Excellent floor leader. Explosive in the open court. Quiet leader and a heady player. Terrific range on her jumper. Clutch player. Delivers at the end of games. Very athletic. Makes others around her better. Finishes nicely around the hoop. High-major level potential.

Nyasha Irizzory (5-8 G) NYC Lady Warriors/Archbishop Molloy H.S.: Plays with great passion. She can make shots off the dribble. A versatile player who contributes in many ways. Gets into the paint off the dribble. Played some point guard and was adept at running the team. Good ball-handler.

Samantha Hyslip (6-0 F) North Central Blaze/Westford Academy: A strong player with good height already. She plays aggressively. Very active on both ends. Moves well without the ball, and has good post moves when she has the ball. Active and effective rebounder at both ends of the court.

14:U All-GymRat CHALLENGE Honorable Mention

Trayniece Mims (5-5 SG) Da FAM
Lauren Williams (5-6 PG) Da FAM
Maya Kersletter (5-8 G/F) Mass Frenzy
Toni Deren (5-4 PG) L.I. Renegades
Abby Hearn-Gordy (5-8 SG) NE Lady Panthers
Anna Toke (6-0 C/F) N.J. Panthers
Kianna Patterson (5-6 PG) Albany Capitals
Aubrey Dobbs (5-6 G) Westchester Hoopers
Laurilyn Gelardi (5-11 F) Westchester Hoopers
Jenna Schumacher (5-9 G/F) CT Storm
Ashley Pina (5-8 F) Central Jersey Cardinals
Maury Cronauer (5-7 G) Firm AC Elite-Walker
Emma Lutz (5-9 G) NH Rivals
Kendra Hicks (6-2 C) Springfield Ladyballers
Alyssa Murphy (5-8 SG) PAL Running Rebels
Emma Redding (6-0 C) Lehigh Valley Hawks
Molly Reagan (6-2 C) Bay State Magic Elite
Bridget Herlihy (6-1 F) Bay State Magic Elite
Katia Oge (6-1 C/F) NJ Sparks Blue Star Elite

Heather Forster (6-1 C/F) L.I. Lightning-Slater
Kristen Drogler (5-7 PG) NYC Lady Warriors
Erica Hadad (6-2 C) NH Rivals
Hannah Hackley (5-11 F) North Central Blaze
Cynthia Perez (5-9 F) NYC Lady Warriors
Alyssa Velles (5-9 G/F) Connecticut Cobras
Kim Romanoff (5-6 PG) Connecticut Cobras
Jariah Johnson (5-9 F) CAS Panthers
Chelsea Woods (5-11 F) Philly Freedom Stars
Kathleen Everson (6-0 F) L.I. Lightning-Slater

13:U Age Division

CAS Panthers Overcome Obstacles To Capture Crown

LOUDONVILLE, N.Y. – CAS Panthers' coach Hammer Stevens wasn't overly disappointed when his program's 14:U team lost after the first round of championship bracket play.

That meant he had a full roster of players for the rest of the 13-under tournament.

The program brought 10 players to this year's GymRat event, all of them eligible to compete at the 13-under division. But, to give his players some extra experience, he had his team also play up an age level. When there was a time conflict in the first round of Sunday's championship bracket play, he sent five players to the 14-under game and the other five played in a 13-under game.

"When we lost in the first round of the championship bracket, I had all 10 of my players available for the rest of the 13-under division," said Stevens. "That's OK, though. I kept my five best players for the 13-under game because I knew we'd have a better chance of winning a championship here at that division.

Stevens' view of things turned out to be prophetic as his team's captured the 13-under age division with a 46-32 championship-game victory over the NEPA in Sunday's final game here at Siena College.

But even when he had all 10 available players together, there was still one other obstacle to overcome for his Panthers team to earn the championship of the inaugural GymRat CHALLENGE tournament at the 13-under level that drew 24 participating teams.

The Panthers proved not only to be the most talented merely because it won a quarterfinal-round game early Sunday afternoon with just five players, but the program's top three players, according to Stevens, didn't even make the trip to New York's Capital Region to play here due to other commitments.

But the players who were here were more than good enough, even after standout guard Jariah Johnson suffered a championship game injury after her 11 points helped the winners grab a 31-20 lead early in the second half was hurt and never returned.

After that, though, 5-foot-10 forward Jordan Agustus took over, scoring 10 points in the final seven minutes to ensure the Panthers would hold on. Agustus, who finished with a game-high 17 points in the championship contest, was named the division's MVG (Most Valuable GymRat).

"We've been together for a couple of years, so that really helps," said Agustus. "We've grown up together and we know how to play together."

They know how to play well, too.

"They're very familiar with each other and it shows," added Stevens. "Since we got this group together last year, we've only lost one game at this age level."

That loss came against a team from Fairfax, Va., last spring.

“We had a conversation not long after that to talk about what we have to do to ensure we don’t lose again, and how much we want to meet up with that Fairfax team (which did not compete at the GymRat) again to have another shot at them.

In the meantime, the CAS Panthers continue to roll on, not only overcoming on-court opponents but the obstacles of playing without some of their better performers and competing at two age brackets here, and doing so in championship fashion.

13:U All-GymRat CHALLENGE MVG – Most Valuable GymRat

Jordan Agustus (5-10 F) CAS Panthers/John Phillip Sousa Middle School: Strong frame but also has the requisite quickness and athleticism to be a force on the offensive end. Mostly an interior player who does most of her damage driving to the basket and using her athleticism to get off shots against contact. At her best offensively going one-on one, drawing contact and either finishing or drawing a foul. Defensively she can guard the perimeter. She also played for her program’s 14-under level team and was effective against older opponents, too.

13:U All-GymRat CHALLENGE Team

Jessica Genco (5-4 G) NEPA Flames-Jacobs/Scranton Prep: Super smooth guard who makes all the plays. Small stature, but not shy about doing dirty work. Comes up with rebounds and loose balls players her size don’t usually get. Tight handle and superb at using fakes on shots and passes. Can get her points in the lane or from the perimeter. Real good finisher.

Kiana Clark (5-4 G) NYC Lady Warriors/Middle School 226: Very athletic guard with versatile game. Great handle, and shot looks good although she didn’t take a lot of them here. Changes speed well and beats defenders into the lane. Vocal leader who gets others involved with good passing and drive-and-kick skills.

Abby White (5-3 PG) Rochester Premier/Aquinas: A real leader. Smart player who understands situations. Pulled her “biggs” off the lane on one late-game free-throw situation so the guards could position there and be better ready to press on the in-bounds. High hoops IQ for an 8th grader. Penetrates at will, draws defenders and kicks to open teammates. Pushes tempo in transition. Gets hands on passes defensively and is also a plus-shooter.

Elemy Colome (5-4 SG) VBC Yellow/The Charter School: Versatile do-all wing player. Not a true point because she plays off the ball, but makes good reads and creates opportunities for teammates. Is also a prolific scorer who weaves through defenses and gets to the rack seemingly at will.

Jariah Johnson (5-7 SF) CAS Panthers/Frederick Douglas Academy: A lefty wing player who can just flat out play. Real athletic with first-step quickness to beat defenders on the wing. Also has

size enough to go inside and have success on the block. Incredibly physical and a fantastic finisher even through contact. Also had success playing some games up a level here.

Demeya Felder (5-6 SG) Cardinal Rising Stars/Stafford School: Super active on the court, seems to always be moving. Big-time shooter. Every shot looks like it's going in. Dynamic enough to put it on the deck against good closeouts. Scored 34 points in pool-play games here, connecting on seven 3-pointers.

Charlotte Renker (6-1 C) L.I. Lightning-Masionet/Mineola School: A real 6-1 player with strength and basketball ability. Back-to-the-basket offensive scoring ability with passing skills when positioned at the high post. Comfortable handling the ball to get out of traps. Runs the floor and finishes in transition. Superb defensive presence who blocks and changes shots, and rebounds out of area effectively.

Casey Evans-Driscoll (5-10 PF) NE Crusaders-Gold/Londonberry Middle School: Excellent height and strength, but also gets up and down the floor very well. Active defender who knows how to help teammates. Rebounds well and makes great outlet passes. Also has an impressive-looking shot from the short corner and the high post.

Angela Vecchiarelli (5-8 PF) Mass Hoops Jaguars/Agawam Middle School: Plays bigger than her height. Only a 7th-grader, she scored 34 points in 3 pool play games. Tenacious player. Goes after rebounds and loose balls hard. Always on the floor, diving and hustling. Gets out for area rebounds even in crowds and against bigger players.

Jordan Wilmoth (5-7 Wing) New Heights: Leading scorer on a talented team. Physical player who finishes at the rim and also possesses a decent-looking jumper. Plays many roles for the team and can be problematic for opponents on the defensive end, too.

Zaria Carter (5-6 G) Albany Jr. Lady Falcons/Albany H.S.: Dynamic firecracker of a player that makes her team go. Very strong handle to go with a quick first step. Sees the floor well and handles physicality. Also possesses a great-looking jumper. Provided both scoring (inside and out) and assists in games here.

Alynn Williams (5-5 PG) Philly Triple Threat/Colonial Middle School: Tough, scrappy and gritty. A true point guard. Good handle. Pushes tempo and gets the ball up the floor fast. Uick with the ball in her hands and also a great transition passer. Passes ahead in transition. Superb on-ball defender, and outstanding long-range shooter.

13:U All-GymRat CHALLENGE HONORABLE MENTION

Cameron Graupman (5-7 F) WNY Lady Lakers

Hannah Friend (6-0 C) Albany Capitals
Kelsi McNamara (5-3 PG) Bay State Blizzard
Lisa Fields (5-4 G) CAS Panthers
Alyssa Kelly (5-6 G) Mass Hoops Jaguars
Sarah Pisani (5-3 PG) Long Island Maisonet
Samantha Venus (5-9 F) Long Island Maisonet
Kyla Forney (5-0 PG) New Heights NYC
Asyha White (5-7 F) Westchester Hoopers
Jessica Phinney (5-5 G) Bay State Blizzard
Jordyn Hellpap (5-4 G) NJ Sparks Blue Star
DeJanaire Deas (5-11 F) Albany Junior Lady Falcons