

## **Classics AAU Basketball Club Spring-Summer 2021 Tryouts/Player Evaluations – Where We've Been and Where We're Going**

**Where We've Been....** The Classics AAU Basketball Club is beginning its 45th year of operation in 2021 after experiencing our first ever mandated break in team and club operations that started on March 12, 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Our great, all volunteer coaching staff has been meeting for the past several months and preparing for reforming our teams and returning-to-play in a safe and controlled manner. The first thing we must say is that the safety and well-being of every athlete, coach and parent remains by far the most important consideration in every decision we make. That has been our approach for the past 44 years and it will not change now that we are approaching gradual re-openings in our area and the roll-out of vaccines and changing protocols.

**First a review of the past year.** Immediately after the initial lockdowns began in Montgomery County on March 12, 2020, we began to develop return-to-play plans and monitored CDC and Maryland state guidelines for youth sports activities. We developed a COVID-19 waiver and health screening protocol to be ready for early return-to-play protocols. By early May, after the state of Maryland issued draft youth sports guidelines with allowed activities, several of our teams initiated outdoor practices following recommended protocols for outdoor basketball practices focusing on individual skill development.

Our current 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> grades girls combo training group, 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls, our 5 girls high school teams, our boys 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade teams held outdoor skill development practices from May through early December, and as protocols changed over the summer and more interaction was allowed, intra-group/team scrimmages were included in these practices. Many of these teams also worked with our key training program with Pro Fit Athletes and attended weekly training with Coach Julian and his staff at the Pro Fit Gym. Many athletes (over 100) have continued to do so through the fall and winter.

In September and October, we held AAU Skills Challenges for individuals outdoors, allowing athletes to assess how their skills had improved. Several teams did enter competitions outside of Montgomery County. For example, our 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Girls teams played in over 60 games including winter leagues in Loudon and Harford counties where they went 13-1. Also, two of our 8<sup>th</sup> grade athletes, Cassidy Groft and Zoey Seymour, were selected by the Washington Mystics to represent them in the Nike/WNBA Game Changers movement to encourage more girls to play basketball. Cassidy and Zoey developed a proposal and it was selected by the Mystics out of several other submissions. Last year, in the inaugural year of the program, two other Classics' members were also selected for this honor.

All of these ongoing activities were governed by very stringent safety protocols which included players and coaches wearing masks, limiting or prohibiting spectators, maintaining distancing and spacing, cleaning bench areas between games, taking temperatures of all entrants, bringing jugs of hand sanitizer and wipes to clean off basketballs when passing drills and such were allowed by protocol changes over the summer. Pro Fit instituted similar safety measures as well with extensive facility cleaning efforts as well. These and other safety protocols will continue to remain in effect as we head into the Spring-Summer 2021 season.

You might be wondering how did we do since early May regarding COVID exposures? There were NO reported cases due to any specific team activities, and we feel this can be attributed to the screening program and protocols put in place for practices and other activities. While we are aware some of our

families, athletes, and coaches experienced COVID exposures, they quarantined and did not return until obtaining consecutive negative test results. We believe we can also attribute this outcome to everyone's due diligence and attention to their health, and following our health screening protocol and maintaining safe and controlled practices.

**Where Are We Going....** While the Classics AAU Basketball Club has never been about winning every game or tournament, every year our teams win various league and tournament championships. Our goal is and always has been to provide an opportunity for every child who wants to play the great game of basketball to learn from committed, volunteer coaches who are outstanding role models and dedicated to the success of their athletes on the court and in life. This approach is important now more than ever as we begin to put the COVID-19 nightmare behind us. Our children need sports more than ever and the many reasons that go way beyond just winning games. We very much want to help children to get back to normal as much as possible through sports. That is the right thing to do right now, and it has nothing to do with winning games – which will come along in time as teams reform and begin to practice and coaches can gauge where their group is at and when it makes sense to jump into events.

**Tryout, Tryouts, Tryouts...What's the WORD.....** Traditionally, we have held our spring-summer season tryouts in early March – typically the first couple of weekends in March with 2<sup>nd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade on the first weekend and high school grades the second weekend. Unfortunately, no gyms in our county are available or allowed to run such an event and very few gyms are even open for use of any kind. Montgomery County is still under fairly strict limitations of such indoor events. Even with the gradual return of MCPS to classes in March, community use of MCPS facilities has been cancelled through the end of April for now, and may likely not be happening until the fall of 2021. Because of this, we are approaching tryouts with a different outlook and taking it as a new challenge for the club.

While some people do not like the word "tryouts", we do need to evaluate potential players to make sure they are the right fit and at the right competitive level. While about 40% of our athletes have remained engaged since last spring, many have been away from the program. We are looking forward to the opportunity to welcome both new athletes/players interested in joining the Classics AAU Basketball Club and our prior athletes who have stayed away since March 2020.

As of today, our coaches are planning out their specific dates, times and locations to hold outdoor player evaluation sessions/tryouts for specific grade teams/groups for the Spring-Summer 2021 season. These will be held on weekends and some weekday evenings as the weather warms up a little at outdoor locations. We expect these will be starting about mid March (Weekend of March 12-14), and likely run through early April (up to the 10<sup>th</sup>). **Specific notifications about these sessions will be sent out via email to players who have a Player Profile submitted through the Classics website [http://classicsbasketball.d1scout.com/index.cfm?page=pdf\\_playerProfile](http://classicsbasketball.d1scout.com/index.cfm?page=pdf_playerProfile).**

**If you have been receiving Classics club wide email updates over the past several months** like about the gear sale and other updates, then you have a player profile set up and are registered.

**If you are new or have NOT been getting our regular updates over the past few months,** then go to the Player Profile page and register:  
[http://classicsbasketball.d1scout.com/index.cfm?page=pdf\\_playerProfile](http://classicsbasketball.d1scout.com/index.cfm?page=pdf_playerProfile)

We are going to approach the tryouts/evaluation period very differently as follows:

1. For those athletes who attended tryouts last March, were notified they were on a team, and have continued to practice and train with their coach(es) over the spring, summer, fall and winter, then you will continue with your current team's activities and attend the evaluation sessions (if you cannot make them let your coach know). We do want new players to the program to be able to see where our current players are at skill-wise. You will need to sign up for a spot for the evaluation sessions through the site [signup.com](http://signup.com). We are using this site to limit the total number of athletes per evaluation session. Specific details for this will be sent out via email by March 10<sup>th</sup>.
2. For those who are new or returning and do not meet the underlined criteria in 1 above, you will need **to ensure you have a player profile set up by no later than March 10<sup>th</sup> so you will receive notifications of the upcoming evaluation/tryout sessions**. In these email notifications, you will be provided instructions on how to sign up for a specific date, time and location for the specific age group/grade tryout event. This will be done through the site [signup.com](http://signup.com) where we can control the number of attendees at a specific evaluation/tryout session. You will also need to bring a completed and signed hard copy of the Classics COVID waiver form as well as a copy of the health screening form filled out for that day. Both of these forms are available from the main Classics page under the August 1, 2020 article.
3. All of the coaches will be formulating their specific dates, times and locations by early March and most will likely hold 2 to 3 sessions depending on the number of athletes that are in 2. above.
4. There will be no fee for these tryout/evaluation sessions.
5. Coaches will provide feedback to players who sign up within 2 to 3 days of the session(s) they attend.
6. Coaches will talk to parents at these sessions to review their expected plans for their team(s) regarding practices, COVID 19 precautions, expectations, and initial plans and schedules where available.

**Questions, questions, questions....** People are asking us many normal and reasonable questions relating to tryouts, teams, coaches, schedules, practices, and cost. These answers are usually very easy to address but that is not the case right now. Here is what we know:

- We have top coaches and professional trainers who have tremendous backgrounds.
- Coaches may use a combination of trainer-run sessions with either Coach Vaughn at Pro Fit at the Pro Fit gym, or outdoor sessions with Coach Harding or Coach Richie.
- Coaches will likely hold team practices most likely at an outdoor court in the late afternoons, or evenings as it stays lighter out, and also on weekends.
- As far as practices are concerned, this will be a flexible process which will be dependent upon the weather, finding reasonably located outdoor spaces, and if indoor comfort levels of players and parents with any rented indoor locations that may become available with added costs.

In other words, we will take all of this one step at a time. We are asking that interested players and families walk along this journey with us. We promise to be truthful, fair and always have the safety of every player come above all else. Space on teams may be more limited than ever before. It will be much more difficult to be placed on a team if a player misses the tryout/evaluation sessions.

We hope you will take advantage on this opportunity to be a part of the great 45 year Classics AAU Basketball Club tradition. It is more important than ever before to get our kids back to normal, and the Classics AAU Basketball organization and coaches are looking forward to being engaged with you in that incredibly important goal. For these reasons, we are planning to try and make every effort to place every player who comes to a tryouts/evaluation session on a team. It is NOT entirely clear how this will be carried out, or if it can be completely met, but we will be exploring and looking to find ways to make things work. For the better part of the past year, we all have faced one crisis after another, and we have all tried to get out ahead of these challenges for our families. We will continue to do everything possible to provide a valuable experience for every player that puts on a Classics uniform.

We can't wait to see you again at the Spring Tryouts.

Sincerely

Coach Andy and all of our dedicated volunteer Classics coaches