



March 9, 2010

Hello Parents and Players:

As the regular high school basketball season comes to a close, we will be transitioning into the exciting spring and summer circuit. This is the time of the year when more attention is placed on player development, the competition is fierce, player goals are established and a plan to reach those goals is formulated.

I am extremely excited about the upcoming spring and summer for several reasons. First of all, we have assembled a quality staff of coaches and trainers who will provide players with a high level of instruction so that they can improve their basketball skills. Given the changing landscape of college recruiting and the necessity to stay sharp at all times, our basketball training program is geared towards helping players get better and teaching them the skills to become better high school players as well as helping the fortunate few who have a chance to obtain a college scholarship or play collegiate.

The Academy

To help achieve the desired results, there are several components to our program. **The Academy** will be the primary training ground

for all of our players. It will address various levels of development, provide game experience through intra-league play and improve all players' strength and conditioning through workouts. Our desire is to provide the most comprehensive training program in the country.

In addition, we will continue to have the **Hoop Masters/Team Ariza travel team programs**. Players will be selected to those teams based on performance, readiness and commitment. Those chosen will play in local events and some out of town events, which will give them an opportunity to be seen by college coaches.

The ever-changing landscape of AAU HIGH SCHOOL basketball is going to allow us to do what we do best: train, develop and grow our talent.

Player Development

Over the past 12 years, I have learned that player development is crucial to player improvement. Simply stated, we have to identify the needs of each player and make sure that they are placed in the appropriate setting to reach optimum improvement. For instance, a player might be a tremendous athlete, skilled, etc, but needs to have the ball in his hand to be effective with his high school team and to have a chance to play at the next level. The challenge will be how to accomplish both needs. What team should he play on? A team loaded with guards? Or a team where he'll have to do the heavy lifting? Hopefully with the internal-league games we can help him balance both. Ultimately, players need a training program where their weaknesses will be addressed through training and game experience. You can't get better watching.

Recruiting Changes

Recently, the NCAA decided to eliminate the DI spring recruiting period when college coaches would fly all over the country evaluating players at different tournaments. The NCAA made the decision in an effort to lessen the number of days players missed class by attending travel ball tournaments. Their reasoning was that if college coaches weren't allowed to watch them, then fewer kids and teams would travel to play in the events. I actually think that the rule change is a good thing. It allows more time for player development, puts a greater focus on academic preparation and is less costly.

Even so, there are still local events that are worth attending and a spring tournament in Las Vegas where there will be a plethora of writers from major scouting services including ESPN, RISE, Hoop Masters.Com, Fullctpress.net, Hoops on Line, 411 hoops and West Coast Hoops Report.com. These services report on the top talent from around the country and most college coaches subscribe to these websites.

That is why it is imperative for every player to be at his best at every event because you never know who is watching. But over the past 4 years, I've learned that while these events are good exposure for players, *most* college coaches come to them with a specific list of players they want to see and are in pursuit of program changers.

Today, *most* college recruiting takes place over the phone and through networking. Because of our affiliation with the well-respected **Compton Magic program**, I have plenty of college basketball contacts. Your son's job is to get his game to the level where I will be comfortable and confident in recommending him to

a college coach. That is why **The Academy** is such a valuable resource. It will help him become a better player.

All College coaches are still allowed to attend tournaments during a two-week period in July. By that time, your son should be ready to showcase his skills after training several months at **The Academy**. Even then, most of the Division I coaches are going to focus their attention primarily on the top 100 players in the country. But if your son merits the attention of a college coach, we will pick up the phone and ask numerous college coaches to come take a look at him. Because of our relationships with them, once we make the call, they will come and check the player out if they are in the vicinity of the gym.

In *most* cases you only get one shot at impressing a college coach. If you *don't* do something that peaks their interest, they won't watch you again. College coaches look for five characteristics when evaluating players and deciding who should get a coveted scholarship:

- 1- Ability
- 2- Character
- 3- Work Ethic
- 4- Grades
- 5- Family

By joining the Hoop Masters, The Academy/Team Ariza program, you are not just signing up to play for a team, you are enrolling in a full-service basketball program that will provide you with the tools you need to get better and help you get the most out of your game.

What's next? Get in the gym.

Staffing

I am very excited about our high school staff this year. I feel that I've been able to assemble the ideal instructors and coaches to assist in the process of competitive development.

Ahmad Dolphin (A.D)- Head of High School Academy programs. A.D has been involved in basketball instruction and coaching for 15 years. He is a no-nonsense guy, who has a great understanding of how to improve players and make them more competitive. A.D played professionally in Australia and has an excellent grasp of teaching the game.

Josh Herscher, Head Basketball Coach for Team Program- Josh, has 10 years of experience as a boys and girls high school coach at Venice High School. At Venice, he was able to take average players and make them competitive. Coach Josh is a student of the game and will bring his passion and competitive drive to our team program Josh's strong suit is in player preparation and getting players to perform at a higher level than they can imagine. He has excellent drills that address not only skill development, but also game situations.

DeWitt Cotton- Head Coach of the Ariza Team program. DeWitt has over 21 years of experience coaching high school basketball at Westchester High School. Dewitt has coached some of the top high school players in the city of Los Angeles and was a coach and mentor to current Houston Rockets guard Trevor Ariza. DeWitt is very passionate and excited about taking our young talent and assisting them to become better players.

Rambo Rasheed – Skills coach and team coach. The former point guard at famed Westchester High School enjoys teaching young players how to handle the ball under pressure, how to manage the speed of the game and developing their ability to make

the right decisions. He is passionate about helping youngsters learn the fundamentals so that they have the skills necessary to improve as players. Rambo enjoys being a positive mentor to kids and giving back to the community.

Rambo learned how to play the game at local parks and recreation centers. After graduating from Westchester, he went on to play at South Dakota State where he was named to the all-Summit League first team and led the league in assists as a sophomore. He represented the U.S. while participating in the College Olympics. Following his collegiate career Rambo played professionally in Australia, Canada and with the Los Angeles Aftershock in the American Basketball Association.

When his playing career concluded, Rambo became a basketball trainer in 2001. He has worked with Los Angeles Clippers point guard Baron Davis, Los Angeles Lakers forward Lamar Odom and WNBA player Nikki Teasley. He draws inspiration from Magic Johnson and former Georgetown coach John Thompson. In the future Rambo would like to be an NBA scout or further his coaching career at the collegiate level.

Corey Dean –volunteer coach- Corey is a former head coach and founder of ING Hoops and has been around AAU basketball for more than 10 years. Corey has assisted the program for the past year by volunteering his time, driving players to games and just pitching in wherever assistance was needed. Corey's teams were always competitive and he knows how to bring the best out of his players.