

# First Time AAU Basketball Team Had a Wonderful Experience at the Virginia Commonwealth Games

For basketball coach Steven Amos, the Commonwealth Games of Virginia offered far more than just another tournament. The pageantry of the opening ceremony, medal presentations, the big-time feel of playing at a university, the integration of multiple sports happening in the same weekend – the entire scene impressed the team so much that Amos recommends to other teams to compete in the Games.

“We had a great time,” Amos said. “It was fun being part of a tournament that was more than just another AAU tournament. With the opening ceremonies and the medals, which was better than your average tournament.”



Amos coaches the sixth-grade boys' team in for the Excel Academy, an AAU program in Virginia Beach. The team traveled to Lynchburg to compete in the Games for the first time this summer, and the event left a lasting impression on both players and coaches.

Amos brought along his 18-year-old son who was preparing to attend Liberty University as a freshman, so the tournament on campus doubled as a chance to explore the school.

While the games will be moving to the Richmond area next year, Amos said the proximity to Virginia Beach will make registering for future games more likely for multiple teams, both boys and girls, within the Excel group and others they see at other tournaments.

On the court, Amos' team proved competitive, earning a bronze medal after a strong run through the bracket. They faced the eventual champions twice, once in the round robin and again in the semifinals.

“They were the best team, and I think we could have beat any team there but them,” he said.

Earning a bronze medal was enjoyable for the players who participated in the ceremony.

“The medals are definitely nicer than we normally get,” Amos said. “The kids liked the look and feel of them.”

By virtue of coming in third, the team is qualified to attend the State Games of America in Happy Valley, Penn., next year, a tournament they are eagerly anticipating.

“My team is 12- and 13-year-olds, so one reason we're excited about going to Penn State is to experience life on a college campus. It's great for them.”

Basketball is the sport with the highest participation in the Commonwealth Games and Amos understands the attraction.

“It was more than your average tournament,” Amos said. “We had a great time, and we had a lot of fun. Hopefully, we will be back but this time not for bronze, for gold.”