

# Future 'hoop' stars converge on Gulf Shores for premier tournament

By Dale Jones

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GULF SHORES, Ala. — Some of the NBA's future stars could be gracing the basketball courts of Gulf Shores and Orange Beach as Pleasure Island welcomes the 2nd annual Youth Basketball of America Gulf Coast Challenge.

On May 29-31, 60 travel basketball teams from across Alabama, as well as Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee will be traveling to the Gulf Coast to take part in the tournament.

Youth Basketball of America is a youth membership organization in the sport of basketball that strives to provide opportunities for personal growth and development of youth athletes while also reinforcing positive influences, self-confidence, self-esteem and the ability to excel on and off the court to those who participate. It is the only worldwide youth sports organization, involved in 10 other countries, in addition to the United States.

"We hold camps for ages 9-17 and send basketball goals to areas all across the globe," said John Allen, State Director of Alabama for YBA. "Here in Alabama we host 15 tournaments in five different cities and our season runs from the first of March until the championship tournament in July."

In one year's time, the tournament on the Gulf Coast has almost doubled in size.

"When we hosted this inaugural event last year, we had a moderate success of 35 teams playing in three gymnasiums," Allen said. "This year, however, it has grown by leaps and bounds thanks to our partnership with the Alabama Gulf Coast Sports Commission. We had 60 teams sign up by the end of March and now we are sold out."

Games will begin on Friday at 5 p.m. and play will resume on Saturday at 8:30 a.m. Sunday will be the final day of the tournament and will feature the championship game. Sunday's action will begin at 8:30 a.m. with the championship around 3 p.m.

Gulf Shores Middle School and high school, Foley High School, the Orange Beach Recreation Center and Gulf Shores Bodenhamer Center will be the sites for the games.

Admission is \$4 on Friday and \$5 on Saturday and Sunday. The daily fee will allow fans all day access to any of the tournament venues.

Other upcoming events sponsored by the Alabama Gulf Coast Sports Commission will be the USSSA South State Baseball Tournament (June 12-14), USSSA South State Tournament (softball) Kids Pitch State Tournament (baseball) (June 26-28), Gulf Shores Adult Tennis NTRP Classic (June 26-28), and the Global Sports Baseball (USSSA) World Series (July 8-12).