



THE NEXT BIG THING IN GIRLS' BASKETBALL COMING TO A CITY NEAR YOU

'THE LADIES BALL CHAMPIONSHIP' BRINGS TOGETHER TOP TEAMS, TELEVISION, LEGENDS, AND SWAG TO CELEBRATE A NEW TIME FOR GIRLS BASKETBALL

By Marc Boldurian, April 1, 2022

This June, Victory Elite head coach Reggie Bibb will be honored in Knoxville during Induction Weekend at the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame. He will meet basketball legends, be honored on stage before a vast audience, and receive a trophy and beautiful championship ring. His trip to Knoxville from Dallas will all come free to him. Bibb is not a Hall of Famer, nor will he be inducted into the Hall of Fame this year. Bibb is simply a terrific coach who built and trained the nation's top 5th-grade girls basketball team.

The benefits he received came from winning a basketball championship event called The Ladies Ball, a national event for girls which was years in the making and launched in 2021. It features the nation's top teams, grades 4th to 12th, supported and promoted by the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame. In its first year, hundreds of top teams participated.

Coach Bibb's team is from the Dallas area and was invited by event scouts to a regional qualifying event last October in Irving, Texas. His 5th-grade squad ran the table and earned their way to Knoxville to play against the other top teams from around the country. "What a special journey for myself, my daughter, and my team," Coach Bibb stated. "the competition, exposure, and the whole experience have been unbelievable."

In Irving, Coach Bibb's team played top teams from Oklahoma and Texas, but there was so much more. His squad enjoyed an excitement-packed experience. It included press conference interviews, a meet and greet with Hall of Famer Valerie Still, Kentucky's all-time leading scorer (for both men and women), a 3-point competition, and a court that looked like the NBA Bubble with looming signage that draped 30 feet high and 60 feet long.

Bally Sports Network produced their game for their television and digital network. The same company features content from NBA teams like the Rockets and Mavericks and holds the broadcasting rights to 38 NBA, MLB, and NHL franchises. This year, it secured a \$600 million broadcasting rights deal with the NBA. "Luca, LeBron, and my 5th-grade girls all featured on the same network one click apart, so cool", stated Bibb smiling in disbelief. The event will drive hundreds of hours of exciting content and hard-core fans to www.ballysports.com/national/ladiesball.

While in Knoxville, however, it was even better. Coach Bibb and his team toured the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame and were featured in a video shoot with a curtain drop like a LeBron James sneaker launch. All the girls received free swag from event sponsor Athleta and competed in a Tik-Tok challenge. Best of all, they ran the table against the top teams from around the nation and won the championship in a game that will be available on Bally Sports Network this month. Like the Little League World Series, each girl announced herself pre-game and shared her favorite activity. The team paraded their championship trophy through the Hall of Fame, posed for pictures before national media like Pass Tha Ball, and attended one last press conference before heading to Dallas.

The Ladies Ball stands out among the hundreds of basketball events held annually for young girls. It arrives at a time when increased television ratings and sponsor investment for women's sports are climbing like never before. But it is much more personal for the event creators, who also started events like the US Army Bowl (NBC) and the McDonald's All-American Game (ESPN), which feature the best athletes in the country on national television.

The event promoters had a personal stake in this event – their daughter. Event founder Kate McGuinness, a former PR and media executive, who created the US Army Bowl with her husband, has been on the girls' travel circuit with her daughter for eight years. She has watched her daughter Quincey score 1,000 points, win a sectional high school championship and prepare to play college basketball this fall.

"On the travel circuit, the games and weekends were always fun, but we wanted more. Most travel events looked the same," McGuinness shared. "These events should be a celebration and bringing together future stars with the basketball legends. The magic is elite scholar-athletes meeting real-life role models. These girls, coaches, and parents invest considerable time and money in this sport, so we owe them a big-time experience."

"Most importantly, these girls have unbelievable ability; they work so hard, they should be celebrated. Every team, athlete, and coach is on a journey and has a great story. We feel compelled to share it and tell it," McGuinness concluded.

Another significant influence for this event was partner Bob Geoghan, a dominant presence in the world of basketball for fifty years and who passed away this year. Geoghan is best known for creating the McDonald's All-American Boys Game starring Jordan, Kobe, and Lebron. He convinced McDonald's to start a girls' game in 2002. He also had a granddaughter who had played travel basketball. "Bob created a legacy of highlighting top girls on a national stage," McGuinness stated. Some of those All-Americans, like Tamika Catchings, have been inducted into the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame. "We will celebrate Bob's legacy at The Ladies Ball by honoring those who impacted the girls' game," McGuinness promised.

During championship weekend, several coaches were honored by Hudl as Coach of the Year recipients and awarded \$500. Hudl provides video analysis and capture for The Ladies Ball and will identify top teams through its advanced analytics. Among the winners was Caesar Harris, head coach of the Maryland Threat. Coach Harris stated, "No other event or program has supported our work like this event. We love what we do, but we all work hard and believe we are changing lives through basketball and teaching values." Event directors will also launch a podcast later this year featuring club coaches from throughout the nation who will share their stories.

But despite the swag and attention these teams receive, The Ladies Ball is a true showcase for the best of the best. "The hardest part may be getting in. With two to four teams per state invited from each grade level," Harris continued. "It is an exclusive opportunity."

The selection team has scouts across the nation and follows top teams and tournament results from 50 major events through the summer. By running this event in the fall, The Ladies Ball team has the chance to see and evaluate teams all spring and summer. The main criteria are the win-loss record, the strength of schedule, top athletes, and team efficiency (measured by Hudl). McGuinness adds, "Hall of Fame values are non-negotiable." The event accepts nominations from top teams throughout the country who access the website www.theladiesball.com

This fall, The Ladies Ball will host regional events in Irving, Texas, Portland, Oregon, Fort Wayne, Indiana, Greensboro, North Carolina, Scranton, Pennsylvania, and Boston, Massachusetts.

Like the NCAA tournament, The Ladies Ball has a big announcement plan for invited teams by releasing sample brackets in June at Induction Weekend hosted by the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame. Many legends are involved in the excitement. Last year, Hall of Famer Tamika Catchings invited a top 7th-grade team from Tennessee during Induction Weekend and brought them on stage like the NFL Draft.

For Coach Bibb he will head home to Dallas after making and being a part of basketball history in Knoxville this June. His next job is to defend his national championship this fall. "We can't wait to get back to Knoxville," stated Coach Bibb.



Victory Elite athletes, coaches and parents after championship game in Knoxville.



Victory Elite team checks out exhibits at the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame with the championship trophy and championship shirts.



Victory Elite pose celebrate with their Championship trophy at the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame