

# Indiana Elite Central 2017 wins GRBA Championship in Fort Wayne

By Justin Albers (jmalbers@indiana.edu)

John McCloud's 16U Indiana Elite Central team concluded a terrific summer with a title at the GRBA event in Fort Wayne over the weekend. Indiana Elite Central beat Hidden Gems 55-36 on Sunday morning to claim the championship.

"After playing in the Gauntlet [in Indianapolis] and Chicago, we knew we could play with anybody," said head coach John McCloud. "Going into Fort Wayne, there were two teams I wanted to play: Speice Indy Heat and The Family (who lost to Hidden Gems). I felt so great for the kids, seeing that joy on their faces. That's something I will cherish forever."

Central opened the event with a 50-39 win over TNBA Red on Friday. Warsaw's **Kyle Mangas** had 21 points and New Albany's **Isaac Hibbard** added 11 points in the win.

They finished Friday with a 66-33 win over the Tri City Heat. Zionsville's **Cole Gardner** had a team-high 16 points, and Mangas had 12 points.

A long Saturday began with a 56-41 victory over Team Michigan to advance to the quarterfinals. Mangas had 18 points and six rebounds, Carmel's **Sterling Brown** had 11 points, and Mt. Vernon's **James McCloud** contributed 10 points.

Indiana Elite Central advanced to the Final Four by beating MBA Select 71-54 on Saturday evening. Mangas had 15 points, Brown had 14, McCloud had 13, and Gardner had 11.

That's when Central earned arguably its biggest win over the season, a 63-61 triple-OT victory over the Speice Indy Heat on Sunday morning. Mangas had 21 points, and Brown added 13 points in the win.

McCloud and Co. managed to avoid a letdown following the emotional win, and earned the tournament championship as a result. McCloud had a

team-high 12 points and seven rebounds in the title game against Hidden Gems, and Brown had 11 points.

Indiana Elite Central 2017 was impressive all year long, and like our other 16U team, they closed the AAU season in the best way possible.

The team was balanced all summer, and the final stats show it. Seven players averaged between 6.1 and 10.5 points. Mangas was the team's leading scorer at 10.5 points per game, and he was outstanding in Fort Wayne during the final July evaluation period. Hibbard and Brown each averaged 8.5 points per game, and Hamilton Heights' **Sterling Weatherford** averaged 7.7 points per game before joining Indiana Elite 2017 in July.

Southport's **Dut Mabok** was the team's leading rebounder at 5.3 per game.

"We knew from the start that we had good pieces, but I was unsure how long it would take to gel," McCloud said. "We were close on several Sundays, falling short but learning about each other along the way.

"I would be remiss if I didn't mention the impact of coach Brandon Coffey, a bright young basketball mind who relates well with the players."

Congratulations to John McCloud and his team on their title, and a terrific summer.