



PSDians dominate Jr. NBA 12U

by Aaron Joel Nepomuceno

In an intense showdown that brought together the most aspiring young hoopers to battle it out in Qatar. From **April 17 - May 31, 2025**, the 2nd season of Junior National Basketball Association (Jr. NBA) provided a platform for up-and-coming athletes of various age divisions as a way for them to showcase their skills and potential.

The league brought in different camps and clinics from different schools and nationalities. They were assigned an NBA franchise name, which is a sign of inspiration that will create a competitive spirit throughout the event.

Organized by the Qatar Foundation (QF), in collaboration with the NBA and supported by the Qatar Basketball Federation (QBF), this tournament displayed instances of true potential, which illuminated the next generation of hoopsters to come.

Among the many intense age divisions, history was made in the 12U category. Leading the pack was **Movement Basketball Camp**, which represented the **Minnesota Timberwolves**, whose roster was composed of multiple PSDians players who made history as the first Filipino team of any age group to capture the Jr. NBA Qatar Championship Title.

The squad is owned by **Coach Mike Aliparo**, and alongside him in managing is **Sir Jay Galang Pua**. They led the way for this 10-player roster that consisted of several PSDians that include:

Florenzo 'Enzo' Cunanan - Captain - Grade 7 Student

Mike Andrei Mendoza - Grade 7 Student

Yuri Angelo Angeles - Grade 7 Student

Hugo Alfonzo Angeles - Grade 6 Student

Liam Kristoff Navales - Grade 6 Student

With sharp coaching from two PSDian parents, namely **head coach Michael Mendoza** and **assistant coach Erwin Cunanan**.

The **12U Minnesota Timberwolves (Movement Basketball Camp)** had a 4-0 record in the Eliminations and went on to win 4 straight in the Playoffs, which made them undefeated to bring home the bacon.

ELIMINATIONS:

Game 1: Won vs Portland Trail Blazers (Qatar Sports Club) - **66 - 20**

Game 2: Won vs Denver Nuggets (Hoops Basketball) - **62 - 31**

Game 3: Won vs Utah Jazz (DPS Modern Indian School) - **39 - 2**

Game 4: Won vs Oklahoma City Thunder (QF Recreation) - **91 - 11**

PLAYOFFS:

Round of 16: Won vs Detroit Pistons (Coach A Team 2) - **111-14**

Quarterfinals: Won vs New Orleans Pelicans (Junior Falcons) - **75 -28**

Semifinals: Won vs Chicago Bulls (Evolution Sports) - **57- 48**

Finals: Won Vs Indiana Pacers (Qatar Foundation Awsaj Team) - **59 - 47**

In the championship game, the **12U Minnesota Timberwolves** were driven with intensity and grit against their opponents right from the tipoff till the final buzzer. At the forefront, it was capital ball **Enzo Cunanan** who was spectacular throughout the game, dropping 28 points in an efficient 12/19 FG shooting, alongside 5 rebounds, 2 assists, 1 steal, and 1 block. Ultimately, his all-around effort earned him the title of **Most Valuable Player (MVP)** of the tournament.

In an interview with Cuecastt, some players and their head coach reflected on their journey that brought them this far.

MVP Enzo Cunanan was asked about the hurdles they faced on the road to the finals. The captain highlighted the grind they endured as part of their journey.

“Well of course, we had to play multiple games, go through many intense trainings and build our chemistry. The competition was high-level too, so we had to constantly push ourselves.”

Despite these challenges, Cunanan and his team mates powered through not just with talent but with heart and strong determination..

When asked to inspire younger athletes who are just beginning their sports journey, Cunanan offered strong encouragement:

“There are a lot of challenges along the way, so don't expect it to be easy. It can get tough. But if you train hard and never give up, there's nothing impossible.”

Following his advice, other PSDian players also shared their insights.

Liam Navales emphasized the importance of confidence and consistent practice.

“Just keep going, be confident and always show up to practice.”

Meanwhile, team mates Mike Mendoza and Yuri Angeles reflected on the benefit of trust and respect among team mates and coaches, stating:

“Always work hard, never give up and to always trust and respect your teammates and coaches.”

Furthermore, Head Coach Michael Mendoza was asked whether his players have the potential to reach and play in international competitions, he expressed:

“Yes, there's a big chance for these kids. At their age, they are already playing at a high level. The progress they have made is continuous. They have gained a lot of skills from the camp, and international competition is definitely part of the dream.”

Moving on from the interview, The EJC Squad especially the proud parents of Enzo Cunanan, shared their heartfelt pride following the team's big win,

“These kids showed unwavering grit, dedication, and love for the game. For parents, it was more than just a win—it was a journey we witnessed firsthand. The sweat, the tears, and the countless hours of training it all paid off.”

The EJC Squad also extended heartfelt gratitude to the coaches who helped the team to overcome the challenges, also in enhancing their players’ character..

“None of it would’ve been possible without the steady guidance and support of Coach Mike from Movement Camp, along with Coach Parents Sir Mike Mendoza and Sir Erwin Cunanan, who consistently stood beside the team throughout the tournament. From court strategies to character-building moments, their influence has been truly impactful.”

Furthermore, the EJC Squad explained that this victory goes beyond the scoreboard,

“This isn’t just a championship win—it’s a proud moment for the community. It’s proof that with the right support, Filipino talent continues to rise and inspire.”

The core players of the 12U Movement Basketball Camp had made their mark before in other basketball tournaments. They made noise as they also clinched the championship title in the **Junior Premier League Qatar 12U 2025**, were also champions in **Jammal’s Cup Qatar 11U 2024**, and secured **1st Runner-Up in Jammal’s Cup Qatar 10U 2023**.

The Movement Basketball Camp has earned its reputation as a widely known and elite basketball training team in Qatar. Its standout players have represented the camp in many prestigious tournaments in the Philippines that include NBTC Manila Live 2025 and Junior MPBL Philippines 2025. Additionally, many of its ballers suit up for various Qatar basketball Clubs and play in the Qatar Basketball League under QBF.

Salute to these future stars! You have made your mark.

1. 12U Timberwolves players and coaches pose together for a team photo
2. The 12U Minnesota Timberwolves proudly showing their championship rings.
3. With the championship trophy raised up high, the 12U Movement Basketball Camp triumph as the first Filipino Jr. NBA Champions.

