

Summer Camps: Pros & Cons

With the New Year here it's not too early to start talking about summer camps. Over the next few months, if not sooner, college coaches will start sending out camp invitations. So in the spirit of "camping" – and because it's among the most frequently-debated topics in the world of college recruiting – I thought I would offer up my proverbial 2-cents on attending college summer camps.

First off, you might be wondering, "What's the big deal with summer camps? What's the point of going to a camp, or two, or three this summer? How do camps help me? Should I include summer camps as part of my college recruiting strategy? Will attending summer camps warrant scholarship offers? Do they help increase exposure? Am I required to go to a school's camp in order to be recruited by them? How many camps should I register for? HELP ME!

Trust me, I understand what it's like to have many question and few answers. In fact, you may have been among the many who have submitted these exact questions to Student-Athlete Showcase recently.

The truth is, as with many college recruiting-related topics, you're bound to find several different perspectives and various answers to questions about summer camps. So depending on your individual collegiate goals, your projected Division I or II status, your availability and your budget, perhaps you should consider the pros and cons of attending summer camps before filling your calendar with camp dates.

The Good

Networking. Summer camps are great for networking with coaches and prospective athletes. You're going to meet other student-athletes from around the country and be able to share your experiences with kids from various backgrounds. Plus, it's NEVER a bad idea to build relationships with coaches, and camps are great face to face venues.

Instruction. Camps help enhance athletic development and skill levels with advanced college-level instruction. So if you're on the cusp of starting next season, what you learn at a camp may help give you the edge!

Accurate Assessment. Gain new perspective on your abilities by performing with and against other top players your age. It's common to overrate yourself. Camps often provide a stage for helping you more precisely assess yourself.

Unbiased Evaluation. College coaches usually don't "sugar coat" things. So at camps, you're likely to get the skinny about your true potential from credible sources that aren't around you everyday.

Fun. Camps can be a blast. Sure, you can pretty much count on working hard while you're there, but most camps reserve plenty of time for fun activities as well.

The Not-So Good

Expensive. Camps aren't cheap. In most cases, fees for overnight camps can range from \$300-1,000, depending on the duration, format and amenities. So choose wisely.

Crowds. It's true... tons of kids show up to these things! You might visualize a few days of 1-on-1 instruction, only to show up with 500+ other prospects who are all expecting the same thing. So do your due diligence before registering. Know how many athletes will attend and understand the teaching format. It will spare you much disappointment.

Exposure? Many camps have advertised in the past that their event was a great venue for creating national collegiate exposure. In reality, the only real exposure you should expect to receive is from the camp's host university. In fact, NCAA recently passed rules which prohibit coaches from other colleges attending camps and combines off campus. So don't attend a college camp this summer expecting national visibility, because it typically doesn't happen.

Where? A common question among prospective campers... which camps should I attend? Your big name, Division I powerhouses attract the nation's top prospects AND hoards of other campers every year. And it makes sense, too. Traditionally, camping at Pac 10, Big 10 and SEC-level schools were considered great resume-builders for hopeful college prospects. The problem is, most college coaches at these schools are relying on the attendance of a few key recruits. One college coach from an east coast Division I program told me recently that of the 400+ campers he is expecting to host, only about 7 or 8 of these athletes are on his staff's "short list," he called it. In fact, these were kids his staff had been corresponding with well in advance of the camp, and that the camp was a great opportunity for them to see these kids face-to-face. The other 290+ campers were sure to have fun and learn some important fundamentals, but they weren't going to factor into any future recruiting plans with this staff.

Our message to high school athletes who are considering adding summer camps to their already incredibly busy schedules...

Choose your camp locations carefully. Don't go to a camp simply because it's being hosted by a big-name school. Instead, camp at colleges that have already shown genuine interest in you; where you have begun building relationships with the coaching staff long before the camp date. That way, camps aren't just a place to spend 3 or 4 days and hundreds of dollars. Instead, they become part of your active recruiting game plan. Also, if you have your sights set on a particular college/university, and if you have the time and money to attend their camp, then do it! Go to their camp and have a blast. Hopefully, attending the camp will help solidify the coaches' interest in you. But don't put all your eggs in one basket, and don't be incredibly surprised if the camp doesn't produce a full-ride scholarship as a direct result of your attendance. For 99% of college prospects out there, several other stages of the recruiting process must occur before a scholarship offer is made.

Finally, remember that college camps are opportunities for YOU to evaluate the coaching

staff in person as well. While college coaches have the daunting task of narrowing their list of prospects from hundreds (sometimes thousands) down to just a select few, you too need to position yourself for multiple college options, and you should put in the time to thoroughly research these choices. Spending time on college campuses and spending time with college coaches is among your best research tactics.

If you have any questions or need help understanding general college recruiting processes, call me **612-245-4902**. I would be happy to schedule some time for us to chat and offer you a free education in college recruiting.

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