

Things to consider when choosing a Summer Camp

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Price isn't an accurate reflection of quality!!!

Many camps are little more than fundraisers for the educational institution hosting them. At these camps your child will find herself being coached by young student-athletes with little coaching experience and "Head Coaches" who are never present.

These camps are often among the most expensive with the "brand" (university institution) carrying the perceived value. Furthermore, the "Head Coach" for the camp will have an extensive resume that will dazzle parents. With that, their child may get to meet the head coach at Monday morning evaluations and then again at the end of the week during Friday afternoon scrimmages. When seeing a camp advertising a Head Coach with an extensive resume, make sure to ask for details on how many days he/she will actually be in attendance.

Simply stated, ask questions before committing to a new camp: Are instructors experienced school coaches; are they experienced club coaches; are they university-aged student athletes with little coaching experience?

Volleyball Camps are difficult to manage.

The singular greatest challenge at any summer volleyball camp is how to manage the wide variety of skill proficiency among its participants. Even hosting "Elite Camps" are a challenge with a number of athletes attending hoping the experience will push them to elite status rather than having achieved a high level of skill proficiency prior to attending.

Furthermore, even at camps with clearly defined categories of beginner, intermediate and advanced, the result is inevitably a mismatch of abilities with a number of athletes rating their skill level too highly. As you can imagine, only experienced head coaches can manage this challenge and provide all participants with a camp experience that benefits everyone.

Camp instructors are not the same.

When chatting with your child about his/her experience at camp you will likely find that most camps run drills that are generally fun and well-received by all participants. The difference between one camp and another involves the focus of drills. Drills without focus are little more than opportunities to touch the ball more. For example, a passing drill is not just a passing drill. Is the group working on footwork, communication, vision, or platform discipline? Experienced coaches will break skills down into elements that athletes can understand and will focus on these distinct elements during drills. Less experienced coaches will run passing drills, hitting drills and so forth. All perfectly sound drills but little will be learned.

Furthermore, error detection involves identifying specific bad habits athletes may have to correct. Experienced coaches can spot these challenges and guide athletes through the correction process by providing exercises they can perform throughout the summer so they can arrive at school in the fall better prepared to try out for their school team.

Things that are not important when selecting a volleyball camp.

- Where your child's friends are going: Of course, it will be more fun for your son or daughter if they have a few friends attending camp, however, that doesn't eliminate your responsibility to do your due diligence.
- Coach Credentials: As stated above don't get caught up in a coach resume. University coaches will find their next recruits at club volleyball provincials and not at their university's next summer camp. Also, participation by these coaches is somewhat limited as a general rule.
- Website/Sales Brochures: Quality marketing materials are no reflection of the quality of their coaching staff.

Things that are important when selecting a volleyball camp.

- Athlete Reviews: Any camp can easily capture comments and reviews by participating athletes. Video reviews are exceptionally credible as an information source for parents looking for feedback from past participants.
- Parent Reviews: Most websites will list testimonials from parents who have taken the time to provide their comments. These are generally a good complement to athletes' reviews.
- Venue: Camp venues with access to quality gyms and designated space for lunch are essential.

Some final comments.

Let coaches know what you hope to improve in...

Take the opportunity during breaks or lunch time to see coaches and let them know what you would like to improve in so that they can provide you with individual attention on how to get your game to the next level.

Always hustle!

Every coach loves to work with athletes who always try their very best... even at a summer camp. Motivated coaches will work harder for their athletes and that applies to camps as well. Young motivated athletes will find themselves surrounded by motivated coaches.

Ask questions!

Most athletes at camps find themselves too shy to ask questions, even though many others would ask if they could muster up the courage. Ask questions and be the hero at camp.

Listen!

Coaches appreciate it when athletes listen and do not juggle balls, bounce balls, or talk while they are explaining drills/skills. In fact, make sure to maintain eye contact, doing so will be appreciated by instructors.

Stay Positive!

As with school teams and club teams, coaches appreciate athletes who shag balls, support and encourage others and generally maintain a positive disposition.

You get out of a camp what you put into it!

Regardless of the varying levels of skills by participants and various degrees of experience by the camp instructors, young athletes should make the most of the experience and stay positive. Camps are always a great opportunity to meet others with similar interests and these may develop into good friends.

Now play the sport you love and have some fun!

Until next time,

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