

## **How to choose a hockey camp(s) for your competitive U14 and above player**

This time of year I get asked often about what camps our players should go to and which ones would I recommend. There are an overabundant number of summer camps out there and although I am not advocating one over another I want to give you some food for thought when choosing a hockey camp for your competitive player that wants to go onto play college hockey.

### **Philosophy of hockey camps**

First and foremost hockey camps are money-makers for the people who put them on. Whether it is \$3,000 or \$100,000 profit, they help subsidize other programs, or individual's wallets. I am not saying that is the only motivation for doing camps but for some it is the only reason they do camps, so just be aware. Get a clear picture of what the camps mission is or find out the reason why they run a camp.

### **Goals**

What are your goals for going to camp? For fun? Meet new friends? Gain competitive advantage? Develop your skills as a hockey player? For some parents it is to get their kids out of their house! For others...they are trying to create opportunities for their children to develop as athletes and even for others they are trying to gain exposure to the people that can coach at the next level. Make sure you decide what your goals are first so you can identify how to fulfill those needs.

### **Research**

Do your research! The Internet is an unlimited source of information. Google girl's hockey camps, search the information on the camps, age level, competitive level offered, size of the camp, cost, dates, # of days of camp, location, transportation considerations, who will teach the camp?

### **Age & Competitive level**

There are a lot of camps out there that title their camp "elite" but that does not guarantee anything as far as the enrollment is concerned. The only true camp where elite players are invited and can have college coaches there to run it is USA Hockey's National development camp. Otherwise all camps that have Div I coaches at them have to be open to everyone and all with no discrimination on level of play. (limited only by number, age, grade level and/or gender) NCAA rule

### **Cost**

Overnight camps are running anywhere from \$900-\$1,500/per player, plus transportation or airfare. How many overnight camps are you willing to pay for in a summer? Do you have that kind of money? I would suggest picking 1 overnight camp (2 at the most if you can afford it...3 would be an insane waste of your money...hockey season is where you get your exposure).

If you make it to USA Hockey's National camp that could serve as your 2<sup>nd</sup> option for an overnight camp. You are predominantly paying for ice time, room and board at the camp, make sure you are getting at least 3 hours of ice per day (for overnight camps).

### **Length**

Parents might like the idea of a one or two week camp (just to get the kids out of the house doing something constructive), but keep in mind that comes with a hefty price tag...probably the same amount of money you would spend on a full season's registration fees!

Anything over 6 days takes a toll on the body, especially because the kids have been idol since the end of hockey season and hockey camp.

### **Content**

What are you paying for? What do you want to accomplish? What is their development criteria for developing the athletes? Do they play actual hockey games at camp to be able to apply the information learned over each day? Do they have specific Defense, Forward, Goalie training? Does the camp offer a comprehensive and challenging off ice program? What extracurricular things will you learn at camp? example: nutrition, college hockey seminars, sports psychology, communication skills etc...

### **Size**

There are girls "showcase" camps that do not practice or develop your skills you just play games. Some of these camps have over 140 players attending. You will have to ask yourself will you get the exposure and attention you desire. Are the large game camps what you want to spend your money on? Are the smaller camps (30-70 players) a better option for your development and attention?

### **Location**

This goes back to cost to some degree. How much money in total are you willing to spend? Airfare, camp cost, miscellaneous expenses (baggage, exchange rate etc...) are you willing to pay for? A location consideration are for those looking to do unofficial visits to college campuses that interest you would be very beneficial.

### **Who's coaching the camp?**

What college coaches are coaching the camp? Will the camp you are interested in have coaches from the colleges you are interested in attending? You want to align yourself with the opportunity for exposure that attending that camp could provide you with some face time with those coaches.

### **Diversity**

Many of the Div I & Div III colleges run their own "select", "elite" or some form of prospect camp. This provides the colleges a close look at you to evaluate your talent and more importantly your character over a week's time. It gives them an opportunity to put you under the microscope within their confines. This certainly can be an advantageous situation or a detrimental outcome. Here's the trouble with attending one school's hockey camp, they will rarely bring in other colleges to help run their camps, therefore, your exposure is limited to one school only. Attending camps that have a diversity of

coaches will give you broader exposure and get to experience different styles and philosophies of coaching.

**NCAA Rules**

Just a quick note, the month of May is a self imposed month of “moratorium” for the **NCAA Div I Women’s Ice Hockey Coaches Association**. Therefore no Div I women’s hockey coach can recruit or attend a camp to coach in the month of May. If you are looking for exposure to college coaches...avoid camps in the month of May.

Just so you know the women’s hockey community is very small and it is rare that anyone would actually get recruited directly out of a camp. Remember your job is to continue your development, improve your game and prepare for your tryouts and season where the college coaches will see you play within your team environment.

Now you are armed with the necessary information to make the best decision for your player and your money.

Yours in Hockey!  
Marnie Hill