



College Specialist Camps

One of the more frequent questions I get every spring, especially from rising seniors and their parents is “which college specialist camps should I go to?” Kickers, punters and snappers will go crazy trying to map out a summer road trip to as many college camps as they can get to.

While this plan certainly makes for an exciting adventure, quality family time and exposure to a variety of college campuses (for which I will never question the value of), I do not think this is a best practice for most aspiring college specialists. Based on my experience running college specialty camps and on countless conversations with college coaches and specialists who have landed at the college level, here is what you need to know before you sign up for a college specialist camp.

In the last five years, there has been a significant increase in college specialist camps around the country. Just about every division one college sends out “exclusive” invites to thousands of prospects at a time. And while these camps present a chance to perform at a first rate facility, know that their primary purpose is for recruiting. Coaching staffs are attempting to evaluate as many elite prospects in one location as possible and are not as concerned that you walk away a better kicker, punter or snapper.

Unfortunately, most college specialist camps offer limited individual feedback because of a high camper to staff ratio and due to the format by which they operate. These events are more about charting, competition and a closer look for a limited number of prospects which are often pre-determined before camp. This even applies to events which are led by private kicking camp operators that must adhere to the demands of coaches who determine how an event will run.

As an aside, STS will only facilitate a college specialist camp if a school is willing to give us significant input on the format including time spent on instruction and the opportunity for small group coaching. If you have attended our camps before, you know that quality professional instruction is at the core of what we do and what we believe is in the best interest of kickers, punters and snappers in the long run.

And that is not to say we do not place high value on competition. But if your skills are not yet where you can be a consistent performer, you will have a tough time obtaining an opportunity at the next level.

For the select few specialists that are division one ready come the summer before senior year, attending several college camps makes perfect sense to get in front of coaches. To that end, make sure you are ready to perform and are at your maximum potential before going to a college camp to get evaluated.

However, for nine out of ten prospects, time is better spent on training and at camps where you will get the coaching you need to further your skills and have a great season in the fall. This is because over 90% of college recruiting decisions on specialists will occur in December, January or February of the senior year and will involve a significant evaluation of game film. At that time, if a coach wants to see a prospect perform live, they will find a way to do it.

In closing, think about where you are as a specialist and be honest about your development to date. Know that for most aspiring college kickers, punters and snappers, time is better spent on quality training and instruction which will pay huge dividends in making sure one is in a position to be recruited come senior year! -Lee McDonald, May 2016.