

Get The Most Out Of Summer Camp

By Don Hardin University of Illinois

On the first day of every volleyball camp at the University of Illinois, Coach Don Hardin passes out a list of the "Top 10 Ways to Have a Successful Camp Experience." There are actually 11 ways listed in the handout, which Hardin says is in keeping with the spirit of the Big 10 Conference. "There's 11 teams in the Big 10," he says. "Go figure."

1. Set Goals

Why did you come to camp? List at least three things you would like to accomplish at camp. Don't be afraid to share your list with the camp staff. Remember: You paid for this experience and the staff is working for you. They want to help!

2. Seek Golden One-on-One Opportunities

Most camps have a window of opportunity during which you can receive some individual attention. It may be called "grab-a-couch" or "free time with coaches," or it may involve arriving early or staying after. Review your camp schedule and look *for* these opportunities because *for* learning, these moments truly are golden.

3. Keep Notes with Keywords and Phrases

Be sure to keep notes on your experience. When you've made an exciting change and you see and feel the benefits, be sure to take note of it. It helps to pick out a key word or Phrase as a reminder for what you've learned. Post these key words **in** your locker or on your bedroom door when you get home. Be committed to lasting change!

4. Hustle from Spot to Spot and Encourage Others to Do the Same

The great thing about camp is that you get lots of court time. Be sure to make the most of it by hustling. Every camp will have directions for participating in drills and making your court run efficiently. More hustle and cooperation means more contacts and better instruction. Know that great learners make teachers great. Even the best of coaches can become ineffective working with athletes with poor attitudes.

5. Take Care of Your Body

Since you'll be spending hours on your feet, trying out a new pair of shoes the first day of camp can be a big mistake. If you have new shoes, be sure to also bring a pair of "broken in" shoes. After the first day, look out for "hot spots" on the feet, which can turn into blisters by Day 2. You can put a mild lubricant like Vaseline on these areas to reduce friction. Another common problem is ankle sprain. I suggest you invest in a pair of Active Ankles. You will see other players wearing them and they are an excellent product. Remember that all camps have a trainer. Take advantage of the trainer's expertise when it comes to sports-related injuries.

6. Make a New Friend

Volleyball is the ultimate team sport and it's very rewarding to play with friends. If you're a little bit afraid on the first day, don't worry, so is everyone else. Day 1 is usually more quiet and less fun than Day 3 and that's because everyone has started to relax and feel more secure about themselves. Have the courage to meet someone new. Look for someone eating lunch alone and ask to sit with them. If you're attending

camp with a friend, be sure to use your friendship in the best way and invite someone to join you. Learning to work together with different people is what makes volleyball such an enjoyable and challenging sport.

7. Keep Focused on Your Own Progress and Avoid Distracting Comparisons

Everyone is worried about how they fit in or which group they're placed in. When comparing yourself to others, be careful not to fall into two common traps. First you might notice you're not as good as someone else and quickly become discouraged. Second, you could notice that you're much better than someone else and become overconfident and conceited. Neither attitude is conducive to learning. If you must make comparisons, compare yourself to yourself. Before and after, how are you improving? This is the way of champions.

8. Good Nutrition

If you want to reach the "cutting edge" of refined performance, good nutrition and plenty of water is a must. Keep in mind that as you spend more in the gym, your body loses more fluids. If you wait until you are thirsty to get water, you are waiting too long. Be sure to drink plenty of water before practice. Learn about a balanced diet and eat well early in the day to give yourself more energy. Proper hydration and good nutrition really make a difference.

9. Combat Day 3 Soreness

Your body will build up lactic acid in the muscles from so much activity and this causes soreness. You can help by working some of this lactic acid out of your muscles. Massage your legs and take advantage of pool time on Day 2. Also spend time stretching after practice. Fight fire with fire. Help get your friends up and moving on Day 3. Activity will hurt at first, but helps in a short period of time.

10. Be Diplomatic About Taking Camp Ideas Back to Your School Teams

Be understanding about the fact there is more than one way to do something. Set up a meeting with your school coach before or during the pre-season to share some of the things you learned from camp you think might help the team. Let the coach know you are excited to get started. It is very important that you're on the same page as your coach. Pick out something from camp that you already learned at school and let the coach know you were happy to already know this. Be responsible for building a good learning relationship with your coach back home. Above all, don't complain or undermine your coach in front of teammates. You'll be asking for a losing season.

11. Have the Courage to Try New Things

You didn't pay this money and travel to camp just to leave the same player. Challenge yourself to change. Be willing to look or feel funny trying something new and be willing to risk short-term failure for long-term gains. True courage in learning is to make the attempt in spite of your fears. Go after that for which you came to camp. Don't let anything get in your way.

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