



2010 Resident Camp & College/Junior Coaches Weekend Wrap Up

The Bauer Selects just wrapped their Residence Camp and College Coaches Weekend. Both events were held at Seven Bridges Ice Arena in Woodridge, Illinois.

“It’s been exciting week for us,” said Bauer Selects founder/president Kevin Mann. “And as in past years, we met or exceeded everyone’s expectations. Once again both the Residence Camp and the Coaches Weekend were all we could have hoped for and more.”

Mann pointed out that one of his primary purposes in founding the Bauer Selects was to create an environment in which quality young players not only would play in top tournaments and be recognized for their dedication and talent, but also would learn more about the options for their futures. “This is why we’re so proud of the College Weekend,” he said. “It presents our players and their parents with an unbelievable opportunity to learn about the processes of advancing in competitive hockey. It helps them to assess their own personal situations and really takes some of the mystery, and anxiety, out of the equation.”

The College Weekend’s Question & Answer Forum with the junior and college coaches was once again a huge success with the parents. Topics at this year’s forum included the recruiting process, major junior versus the college hockey route, the need for most players to play junior hockey prior to attending college, and the importance of understanding the player’s individual development process.

One of the discussions concerned the reality that sometimes players and parents incur anxiety, even panic, because they see that one 15-year old player is being recruited while their son of the same age is not. All the coaches in attendance stressed that in spite of the occasional young recruit, the fact is that college commitments to players at such a young age are rare indeed. Far more common is the 19- or 20-year old freshman hockey player, the player who has spent time in junior hockey maturing physically, mentally and emotionally. Everyone develops at their own pace, and players and parents who understand that reality are far more likely to enjoy the whole process.

The coaches agreed that the issue of recruiting players at such a young age is a curious one on both ends of the spectrum. Most felt that if certain programs are confident that a certain 15-year-old is going to translate into a good freshman two or three years down the road, more power to them. But the general consensus was that most college hockey programs don’t mind waiting and finding out which kids emerge after one, two or even three years in junior hockey.

One coach pointed out that teams committed to younger players may sometimes be locked in with the younger guys and unable to offer a spot to an emerging, late-blooming junior player. And the colleges who do wait often get a player who can offset the very best of the younger players because he’s that much more mature. All the coaches agreed they were very comfortable with, and often times even preferred, the 20-year old freshman over the 18-year old freshman.

“They're all freshmen” was a common theme, with no guarantee that the younger freshman would experience more development as a player/person in his college years than an older freshman. While it may be tempting to think that, yet in reality a lot of development takes place between the ages of 19 and 24. The coaches all agreed that the Sidney Crosbys and the Jordan Staals of the world are few and far between, and that the best advice they could give the parents and players was to not panic. A player and his family should do their homework and be well-informed before they make any decisions on junior and college programs.

Another point of unanimity among the coaches was the importance to a player of maintaining strong academics through his high school years. With fewer than sixty Division 1 programs able to offer athletic scholarships for hockey, and with each school allowed only eighteen scholarships per team at any given time (typically 5 open up a year per team), it is clear that a top student retained the option to attend any of those schools, whereas a poor student might have excluded half of them due to his academic performance.

Bauer Selects Director Anders Sorensen echoed Mann’s sentiments on this year’s program but also focused on the future. “I’m already looking forward to the 2011 Bauer Selects,” said Sorensen. “We love our core programs but we will also continue to evaluate things and, if necessary, make whatever changes to our overall program we think will help us stay on top as the best option out there for the youth hockey players we serve.”

Director Ryan Taylor shared Sorensen’s excitement and vision for the future and confirmed that the core principles that have guided the Bauer Selects over the years will not change. “Our goal is to provide the environment so that when the time comes, our kids can make informed decisions about their futures, both in hockey and in life. We will continue to attract high-quality kids of strong character,” he said, “and we will continue to work hard to further the interests of all these deserving young players. Our mission is to foster the environment that will provide these players the best opportunities to develop and mature,” added Taylor.

Their formula appears to be working. At this writing, over 70% of the 1991, 1992, 1993 and 1994 age level players have either played or committed to USAH’s National Development Teams, Junior Programs and/or College Hockey. Each of these young men had multiple offers to choose from, just as several additional players from future Bauer Select teams will eventually have.

Kevin Mann proudly referred time and again to the Bauer Selects’ forward-looking mission which, in his words, is “to help prepare players for when the time comes.”

Well, judging from the events of last weekend, it is clear that for many of the Bauer Select players, their time is at hand.