

# Benefits of Traveling Sports Teams

Linnea Mowry

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In today's world, sports are what many people live and die for, even if they just watch them on TV. The Olympics, the Super Bowl, and the World Cup are just a few world-famous competitions where elite athletes strive to eventually compete. But how did they get there? Many athletes start participating in their sport from a very young age. They start dribbling when they are two, start passing when they are five, and before you know it, they are in the big leagues playing under blinding lights in front of thousands or millions of fans. Before they reach their final destination, wherever it may be, there is one crucial step that almost every young athlete must take. Traveling teams. Once athletes have grown out of rec leagues and are ready to move up the food chain, the next step is to join a traveling team. These teams practice regularly and often travel to places away from home. They introduce children and young adults to what elite sports are really like and it gives them a taste of turning sports into their career. Traveling teams are often where athletes find themselves fulfilling their dreams and becoming unrecognizable as a player.

No matter what the sport, athletes are always looking for ways to improve their skills and enhance their knowledge of the game in order to beat their competitors. Traveling sports offer athletes the opportunity to improve their athleticism much quicker than if they were to be a part of recreational leagues and local competitions. Athletes must be challenged in order to improve, so by always playing against the same competitors, it can be hard to see improvement. "While recreational sports leagues are great for learning the fundamentals of a game, as players get older, the best athletes typically make the jump from rec teams to travel teams" (*Top 5 benefits of playing travel sports*, 2017). To join a traveling team, athletes almost always have to tryout or prove to their coach and teammates that they are at an advanced enough level to be on an elite team. This can be a challenge for many athletes, causing stress and nervousness. However, any athlete who goes through a tryout is by far more prepared than those who choose not to. Just by completing tryouts, athletes are pushed to work harder and practice more often to increase their chances of getting a spot on the roster. This is just the beginning of how traveling sports help improve athletes' abilities. If the athlete does not make the team, the rejection can be used as fuel to work even harder and try again, which builds character. If the athlete does make it on the team, they are well on their way to making great improvements in their skills and advancing their athletic future. Being on an elite team and playing with and against first-class players, it is much more likely that athletes will learn new things and rise to the occasion when a game is on the line. By being a member of a traveling team, many athletes find themselves far ahead of their peers when they return to regular-season teams and go on to achieve major success in their sports careers.

As a traveling athlete, there is a lot of time spent on the road and between games. This is a great opportunity that teammates can use to grow closer and tighten their friendship. Not only is

bonding great for athletes, but it also brings teams together and helps improve their play on the field. As athletes grow closer, they create unbreakable bonds that not every team has. This causes bonded teammates to play better together, achieve greater victories, and have fun while doing it. If teammates have a strong connection, it is less likely to have drama which can create an unhealthy environment. By having a healthy team dynamic, teams are more likely to work together and have better attitudes whether they win or lose. Becoming upset with teammates is not rare in team sports, especially ones that travel together and are constantly on the road. However, by creating a healthy atmosphere, close-knit teammates are much more inclined to encourage, help, and be friends with one another. Being a member of a traveling team can help athletes who are more shy come out of their shell and reach their full potential as athletes (*Top 5 benefits of playing travel sports*, 2017). Not only does traveling with a team bring athletes closer to each other, but it can also tie families together. Family plays a major role in traveling sports. Riding in the car to practice and competitions, waiting in between games, and cheering each other on are all ways families can grow closer. Quality time spent with family members is the glue that holds them together. Traveling sports can play a critical part in every family by creating bonds that last a lifetime.

Not only do traveling teams unite families and teammates together, but they also encourage athletes and families to improve their time management skills. As a family and as individual athletes, time management is crucial when it comes to planning practices, competitions, and everyday activities. Scheduling school events and fun activities while also fitting in time for travel and training can take a lot of time and effort. Typically, athletes and families that are involved in traveling sports teams become very good at managing time and scheduling events. This can help families work together and help athletes become aware of what it takes to be an elite player. Learning time management at a young age is extremely beneficial for athletes because it can set them up for success later on, at school and in their career. “Studies show that, on average, young athletes have higher GPAs, more positive attitudes about school, and more interest in going to college than their peers who do not play sports” (*Top 5 benefits of playing travel sports*, 2017). Learning time management skills while on a traveling sports team improves athletes’ work ethic and teaches them discipline. By setting up young athletes for success in sports, they are also learning how to become successful later in life.

While traveling with an advanced team helps build better athletes, it also helps in other aspects such as school and work. Learning how to be a good teammate and work well with others is a trait that is highly valued in all areas. Whether it’s at school, work, or just in general, being a team player is a quality that everyone looks for in others. Playing high-level sports encourages athletes to be their best selves on and off the court. Winning and losing both come with their own set of challenges, each of which teaches athletes how to navigate acting and responding to the outcome. Knowing how to respond after having a success is just as important as learning how to act after a loss. Carrying yourself with dignity, respecting others, and being independent are just a few great examples of what athletes can learn from being on a travel team. Not only do they gain high-quality characteristics that improve their overall persona, but they can also set themselves up for success in their future career outside of sports. It is proven that student-athletes are more inclined to be successful at school, but that does not have to end after college. “A

survey of over 400 female executives found that 94 percent had played competitive sports in their youth. Similarly, a study conducted by Cornell University found that adults who played sports as teenagers had more career success and were more likely to be involved in charitable work” (*Top 5 benefits of playing travel sports*, 2017). Student-athletes learn countless vital skills that transfer into the real world, which is why traveling sports teams are so important to young athletes’ development physically and mentally.

As student-athletes, managing time can be quite tricky. Trying to juggle schoolwork, practice, competitions, social life, and even time to relax can seem like a daunting task. By just being involved in a traveling sports team, athletes can build better time management skills, but there are also some tips and tricks that can make scheduling everyday life a lot easier. When it comes down to it, most elite athletes would say that their sport is their number one priority. If this is the case, it is best to schedule everything else around practice and competitions. To improve athleticism and prevent athletes from becoming stagnant or even regressing in their skills, they must prioritize working hard and getting better individually and with their teammates. Another tip is to use a planner to schedule all events, activities, and free time. This helps athletes stay focused on one thing at a time and can help them from becoming distracted. By using a planner, athletes can physically see their plans and goals which gives them a clear mind when it is time to compete. While sports are very important to athletes, they cannot forget about schoolwork and put it on the backburner. Maintaining grades and earning a quality education should come before anything else. Therefore, it is a good idea to study during down time. Of course, athletes need some time to relax and have fun, it is also important to stay on top of coursework. Traveling to games, in between competitions, and after school are great times that athletes can utilize to get ahead in school. This goes along with avoiding procrastination. Procrastination is one of the main reasons student-athletes get behind in the classroom. By getting work done early and on time, athletes can focus on their sport rather than on their homework that they forgot about. “Completing your tasks on time will de-clutter your schedule and leave more time for relaxing and other hobbies” (Mitchell et al., 2022). While it may seem counterintuitive to complete schoolwork early and during free time, it can clear up more time in the future which can be used however the athlete chooses. And while it might seem like a good idea to get involved in anything and everything, being too busy is not always the best choice for student-athletes. It is important to prioritize rest and recovery and to remember that they are still kids who need to have fun.

Being a part of traveling sports teams is one of the best ways to grow as an athlete and as an individual. The life lessons that stem from traveling with teammates and family members can be nearly impossible to learn anywhere else. Whether it’s trying to level up their game, build strong relationships, learn time management, or enhance future success, traveling sports teams are where elite athletes turn to become the best version of themselves on and off the field.

## References

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