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Chip Shots: D1 coaches help out at Mannings' camp

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Will Bartholomew, president of D1 Sports Training, got a great text message about a month ago.

It was from Archie Manning, the former NFL and University of Mississippi quarterback who runs the Manning Passing Academy.

ADVERTISEMENT "Great job. Looking forward to next year. You guys rocked."

Bartholomew loved reading that. He sent 25 staff members, primarily coaches, to conduct speed and agility drills on the first day of the academy's summer camp, which was July 10-13.

The camp featured Eli and Peyton Manning, the most valuable players of the past two Super Bowls.

"Oh, man, that was fun," Bartholomew said. "That's why you're in the business, right there. They had a big crowd. I think there were around 1,000 kids. It might have been more."

The D1 coaches instructed the kids in one-hour workouts. Bartholomew said it's one of the largest football camps in the country.

"It was actually a really big thing for them to select us even though Peyton is involved with the business," Bartholomew said. "They've used the top strength and conditioning coaches in the country. For us to be recognized at that level was a big honor for my staff and D1."

Peyton, the Indianapolis Colts quarterback, is a co-owner of the D1 facilities in Cool Springs, Knoxville and Chattanooga.

The Manning Passing Academy has been held for 13 years — the past four at Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, La. The Mannings say they started the camp because they were concerned about a lack of fundamentals at the high school level.

Peyton and Eli's brother, Cooper, also helps out at the camp, which focuses on the offensive skill positions: quarterback, wide receiver, running back and tight end.

The camp has a 10-to-1 camper-to-coach ratio, with coaches and players from the NFL and college ranks. Jacksonville Jaguars coach Jack Del Rio and Georgia quarterback Matt Stafford were among the coaches.

Peyton and Bartholomew played together for one season at the University of Tennessee in 1997. Peyton helped recruit Bartholomew to UT, and both players were captains during their senior years.

"He was a senior when I was a (redshirt) freshman," Bartholomew said. "When I first got out there, I was a little wide-eyed freshman and I ran a flat route. He threw the ball at me, and I'd never seen a ball come at me that fast."

The pass almost knocked down the former Montgomery Bell Academy standout and whizzed through the running back's hands.

"I jogged back to the huddle and he looks at me and goes, 'Hey, if you don't catch the ball, I'm not going to throw it to you,' " Bartholomew said. " 'Yes, sir.' So it's safe to say I didn't drop any more from Peyton."

Peyton, who underwent surgery on his left knee two days after the academy ended, occasionally works out at the Cool Springs D1 when he's in town.

He was selected to the Pro Bowl for the eighth time last season, while Eli led the New York Giants to one of the biggest upsets in NFL history with a win over previously unbeaten New England in the Super Bowl.

Bartholomew said he runs into Peyton a lot at D1 events and UT functions during the course of the year.

"It's always good to catch up with him," Bartholomew said. "He obviously has a lot on his plate, but he's a great guy and a great friend."

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The D1 Sports Training coaches worked at the Manning Passing Academy in Thibodaux, La., in July. They are, bottom row, from left, Cameron Russell, Will Bartholomew, Rachel Robbs, Cos DeMatteo, Vicky Maloy, Toni Hutchison, Kurt Hester; middle row, Keith Henegan, Brendan Slymar, Darren Mustain, Carter Hays, Sam Lee, John Compton, Zach Karwandyar; top row, Nate Bandy, Steve Marsh, Jason Elkin, Rob Wilson, Eli Manning, Peyton Manning, Dan Murphy, Kevin Fitzgerald, Brian Jenkins, Chad Englehart, Dallas Terrell, Dunstan Kendrick.

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