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Manning to be part of west workout scene

New intense training facility for 'serious athletes,' future college players, is set to open April 15 near Lovell Road

Alan Sloan - Thu, Mar, 24, 2005



Don't look now, west siders, but Peyton Manning will likely be coming to a workout facility near you this summer.

And if D-1 Sports Training's Nashville and Memphis businesses are any indication, says Will Bartholomew, hundreds of local high school athletes will receive revolutionary training to prepare them for a shot at college athletics.

With Manning as a partner in the business, D-1's latest facility, on Lexington Drive near Lovell Road, is set to open April 15.

"Peyton told me, 'this is the type place I wish I'd had when I was a kid,'" said Bartholomew, former UT Vol fullback, captain and member of the 1998 Tennessee national championship team who is D-1 manager and Manning's partner in the local facility.

"We were talking, and he was looking at investing in a business that promoted everything that he represented. And he doesn't partner into a business that wouldn't represent that. ... Peyton just felt like it was a win-win for everybody. He knows that we're going to represent him well."

As for the star NFL quarterback and former Vol visiting for workouts, "... Peyton has a couple of off weeks in July, so you never know, you may see him around the facility," Bartholomew said.

Manning said, "I know Will personally and have the utmost respect for him and his abilities. I have watched him develop this process and am convinced, unconditionally, that a program such as this will help athletes achieve their maximum potential"

As for D-1's selling points, "We train young athletes, that's our primary business," he said. "We don't guarantee that they'll be Division One athletes, but what we do guarantee is that they will be trained like a Division One athlete.

"We train top collegiate athletes preparing for the NFL, and then we train professional athletes."

Already having state-of-the-art facilities in Nashville and Memphis, the Lexington Drive facility "will definitely be the nicest one," Bartholomew said of the 14,000 square foot space to be filled with the most modern equipment. "You've got Peyton Manning, you've got to have the nicest. We'll have new sprint turf that Tennessee has in its new indoor complex. We'll have all the bungies and speed cords and everything you could need from a speed device."

Five training specialists will be on hand full-time, each administer to training groups of six, "unless a team signs up," Bartholomew said. "What you're going to get from us is a lot of individualized attention.

"Most high school teams and high school strength coaches, they'll tell yah, man, when you've got five-hundred kids you can't spend a lot of time with the individual," he added. "We're former athletes and we're helping you to be a better athlete. We're a speed, strength and agility training facility that is customized for the athlete. If you've got kid, a linebacker that needs to get a little faster, man we'd love to work with him."

Athletes are grouped by age and by sport, Bartholomew said, adding that each session will last about 75 minutes a minimum of two times per week. "Generally we try to do four days a week," Bartholomew said. Workouts per week "depends on the athlete ... we

can do two-a-days if that's what you want.

"It's about hard work, discipline, focus ... Impacting these athletes not only physically but mentally and spiritually as well. We do a lot of character-building," Bartholomew added.

Training is sport-sensitive.

"For instance, if you're a baseball player, we're going to train you like a baseball player," Bartholomew said. "They're going to experience the same type of training that a baseball player at Tennessee would experience. The exact same training that the football players experience and why the football players get so big so quick, and we'll show 'em how as young athletes."

Concerning serious injuries, "If a kid blows his ACL out, he can come to therapy in a training environment instead of a therapeutic setting, which is great for an athlete's morale," Bartholomew said. "I was an eighth-grader when I tore my knee for the first time, and, I mean, being around a group of athletes to rehabilitate yourself around helps you come back quicker and work harder."

Jason Elkin, "who trains Peyton Manning in the off-season," will run the Lovell Road facility, Bartholomew said. "Peyton wanted him to be the man, he wanted him to be the guy to run this place. He just thinks the world of Jason."

Elkin is a former head strength coach at McCallie School in Chattanooga for seven years and a former strength coach at UT.

Johnny Long, head strength coach at UT, is a D-1 Sports Training consultant. "He helps design our program," Bartholomew said.

Bartholomew said "at least probably" 10,000 athletes have already been through the D-1 Sports Training program in the two year existence of the Nashville and Memphis locations.

As for results, "We've probably put out at least forty Division One athletes," Bartholomew said. "We've trained, in two years, twenty-five NFL combine athletes, we've trained Scott Wells (former Vol football center) Constantin Ritzmann (former Vol defensive end), Cedric Houston (former Vol runningback). The same is true of Shane Battier, former Duke basketballstar post and Memphis Grizzlies NBA standout.

"We've had a lot of great feedback," Bartholomew said. "I just got off the phone with Jason Elkin, he had talked to three or four high school coaches (late last week). Every single one of 'em said they either want to bring their team or individuals over to us."

High school athletes interested in training with D-1 Sports Training should call Jason Elkin at 865-966-5973 or visit the Web site at www.d1sportstraining.com.

Bartholomew also said that D-1 Sports Training is open to everyone — with one warning: "Train in order to train ... we're not looking for everybody, we're just looking for people who want to get better," the former Vol said about the intense workout level at D-1. "They could be in the worst shape of their life, but if they want to get better, we want to work with 'em. ... It's a hands-on, real intense, personalized workout."

However, "if you just want to buy your membership (to) hang out and see the pretty girls then we're probably not the place for you," Bartholomew said.

Grand Opening is Friday, April 15, an invitation-only setting with Manning. The facility opens to the public beginning with a reception from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturday, April 16, and from 1 to 4 p.m., Sunday, April 17.

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