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Lorne Smith Lacrosse Camp

By Lou Fancher



Students of different ages at camp Photo provided

Efficiency is the name of the game at Lorne Smith's Lacrosse camps, coming to St. Mary's campus for the first time this summer. The dictionary definition: "efficiency; the ratio of the useful work performed in a process to the total energy expended," is perfected in the finely-honed, deliberately-sculpted, 5-day overnight camps for boys ages 12-18.

Smith, an Orinda resident since 2007, grew up in Baltimore. He spent summers at Deerfield, a 7-week overnight camp in New Hampshire. "I think growing up there-I was a camper, then a counselor-having that in my blood, it was something I wanted to have in the Lacrosse camps as well." The "it" was the total immersion into a kid-centric community of campers all sharing a common purpose.

A Princeton grad and champion Lacrosse player, Smith "discovered" California during a 5-week RV road trip. He moved to San Francisco, played in a rock band, found work temping and began coaching at a South Marin lacrosse club. He also began offering lacrosse clinics. "That was my first experience running my own business and I kind of liked it." One thing led to another, and Smith ended up at Warrior and Brine, a national sports equipment company, working to improve their Players Club Experience camps (PCX).

An opportunity to move into sales made Smith the west coast sales representative for the company and allowed him time to develop his own camps. "Having the control over my own company meant I didn't have to depend on anyone else to get things done," he says. The move to Lamorinda with wife Ashley Battersby, a Lafayette native and Acalanes alum, started him thinking about an East Bay location.

Efficient, streamlined, singular; all words that apply to Smith's camps. What makes them stand out is the personal approach: Smith is at each camp every day, hires all staff, and supervises the games and practice sessions. What makes them successful for athletes is the deliberate focus on team skills. "Being able to anticipate what is coming down the line and thinking 2 or 3 plays ahead," Smith says, is vital to the sport. Off-ball skills, like recognizing and taking advantage of situations, move players from average to exceptional.

A third component in a successful camp is the location. With established operations in Oregon and Menlo College, the St. Mary's camp is Smith's newbie. "It's a beautiful campus, there's plenty of field space - there's potential to grow a camp here," he says. Hoping for 80-90 kids in this first year, he plans for up to 170 kids eventually. "Having a camp right in your backyard; it's kind of the ideal situation," he points out.

Smith's attention to detail is the final building block in the camp's careful construction. The coaches are hand-picked according to Smith's philosophy that to be the best, "you almost don't have to be a great lacrosse player; you have to know how to motivate kids and keep them engaged." Since goalies require particular skills, Smith also hires one coach for that position alone. "As a goalie, you have to know everybody's job," Smith explains, "you have to be loud enough to quarterback the situations. Really, it's the only position where you as an individual player make such a difference."

Perhaps because his name is on it, or simply because it's in his nature, Smith's lacrosse camps mean each player gets individual attention and motivation to support their team. They also get hours of practice, games, pizza, movies, awards and a good, solid look at the St. Mary's program. With luck, and time, the St. Mary's camp will find returning players, who stay and grow rich from the experience, right in their own backyards.

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