

NCAA recruiting showcases give Bellarmine and WKU a better shot at prospects

[Robert Rimpson](#) | Louisville Courier Journal Updated 21 hours ago



Courier Journal's Dominique Yates and Gentry Estes talk Bellarmine's move to Division I

Bellarmino made it official - it will head to the NCAA's Division I starting in 2020. The CJ's Dominique Yates and Gentry Estes discuss the move.

Alton Strupp, Louisville Courier Journal



College basketball recruiting scandals have brought unprecedented scrutiny to a process that had never been void of flaws, but has seen controversy reach a fever pitch – including [criminal prosecutions](#).

In an effort to clean up the messiness and offer increased exposure to a wider array of talent, the NCAA created sanctioned showcases in partnership with states' high school athletics associations.

Kentucky took its first shot at the set up in Shelbyville, hosted by several of the local high school and middle school gymnasiums. One of the first of its kind, it was a bit rough around the edges, a departure from the shoe-sponsored events drawing elite AAU teams from around the country under one roof.

This wasn't Peach Jam in North Augusta, South Carolina or any such acclaimed talent display. Still, it seems the 2019 Titans/Rockets Summer Shootout was a success, impressing NCAA coaches and high

school players alike.

Western Kentucky, Bellarmine University, Saint Louis University and Ball State University were just a few of the mid-major Division I programs there to scout.

More: ['Charles is back': WKU star Charles Bassey returns for sophomore season](#)

"After going through what we've been through (the scandals), there had to be some changes," said WKU coach Rick Stansbury. "I think this is probably a first good change and we'll see the adjustments and tweaks they can make as they move forward."

He added: "There's an awful lot of events ... kind of scatters us around a little bit, but I like the event in Kentucky, though. Most of your best teams and best players are in one area. Overall, it's probably a good thing to start experimenting with."

Bellarmino announced last week that it will be [making the jump from Division II to Division I](#) in the Atlantic Sun Conference. That will open new recruiting doors for the basketball program.

Knights assistant Doug Davenport took advantage of the chance to see potential recruits play in their everyday environment rather than on an AAU team in a summer league. While summer teams usually have gifted athletes up and down their rosters, high school teams usually play in a more organized manner, similar to how most teams play in the NCAA.

"It's different. Not better or worse, just different," Davenport

said. "They're playing with their high school coach and it's a bit more of a system. I think now these kids play so many weekends with their travel teams that the Nike and Under Armour circuit teams are very well-run and organized as well, but it's just different. The talent is a bit more spread out here."

Here, there were no AAU power teams like the one that featured this year's first and second NBA draft picks – Zion Williamson and Ja Morant. But for every player of that ability, there are hundreds more with the skills that would make them great college prospects, if they can be found. Events like this showcase could eventually make that easier.

"Right now, there's not as many prospects participating in these as there were (in other events) ... but you get to see them with their high school teams, which I like because you get to see how they play within a system a lot more and the way they practice," said Ball State coach James Whitford.

James Wiseman, No. 1 overall 2019 recruit, talks at Peach Jam

Fletcher Page, Louisville Courier Journal



The players here saw an opportunity to impress coaches.

"It's great to get to play for your high school team for coaches," South Oldham High School guard Luke Morrison said. "I think the main difference is when we're with our high school teams, we're always around those guys. We have a lot more time to practice so we play more in a system."

"I feel like it's a lot more together and it's more team ball than one-on-one," added Morrison's teammate Seth Johnson. "It makes for a better environment."

It's unlikely the NCAA recruiting events will overtake the showcases already in place. Kentucky's John Calipari and Louisville's Chris Mack are more likely to show up at a Nike or Under Armour tournament this summer than the governing body's event.

More: [Bellarmine's Scotty Davenport wants to schedule Louisville and Kentucky](#)

But 68 Division I teams make the NCAA Tournament, and every one of them wants a chance to watch players who could someday get them there.

"I think it's an awesome idea that the NCAA has done this," said Eastern Kentucky University assistant coach Mike Allen. "Having so many schools at one site, it's easy access for kids to get recruited."

These high school team tournaments are not yet in every state. In fact, Whitford said the coach-to-prospect ratio is off-balance. But that could change quickly if previously undiscovered talent surfaces.

"I'm sure there's going to be some tweaks with it just because there are a lot of teams and a lot of states not participating," Stansbury said. "There are some kids getting left out (and) I don't think that's ever a good thing."

Bellarmino basketball

Moving to Division I?



