Before You Say Yes: The Five-Question Test

A practical framework every sport family can use before paying for another event, team, camp, coach, showcase, or recruiting service.

Five questions. Ten minutes at the kitchen table. Used honestly, this test has saved families thousands of dollars, and more than that, it has saved them years of confusion. It gives you back the room to decide.

— Coach Beede

A test that gives you back the room to decide

WHY THIS EXISTS

The Five-Question Test is a simple framework families can use before they pay for the next event, team, showcase, camp, private coach, recruiting service, or training program. It is the test I run with a family when I am doing an evaluation or working as an advisor, and this guide walks through it the way I would walk through it in the room.

I use baseball here because it is the world I know best. The same decision happens in soccer, lacrosse, softball, volleyball, hockey, basketball, football, and every sport where families are being pressured to spend before they have clarity.

As you read, pay attention to three things: how the test does its work, what the right kind of answer sounds like, and what the wrong kind of answer sounds like. Page 10 shows both side by side. Page 12 is a worksheet you can fill in with your son the next time a check is on the table.

“You are not powerless in this system. You hold the checkbook. You hold the calendar. You hold the long view that no facility, platform, or brand can ever hold for you.”

— COACH BEEDE

The email lands on a Tuesday in May

ONE FAMILY, ONE DECISION

A family has a fourteen-year-old son who plays travel baseball. He is a good player. Not a star. Not a struggling one. He works hard. He cares. He loves the game.

His travel coach sends an email. It invites his son to a "Top Prospect Showcase" being held at a national-sounding facility four states away over Memorial Day weekend.

Cost per athlete	$895
Travel, lodging, meals	$1,200 to $1,500
Total family investment	$2,100 to $2,500
Time to decide	3 days

The pitch: "College coaches will be in attendance. Limited spots. By invitation only. Spots are filling fast."

Mom is leaning yes. Dad is unsure. The son is excited. And the fear in the room is the same fear in every kitchen in America right now: what if we don't do it?

This is the moment the test exists for.

Who owns this opportunity?

FOLLOW THE MONEY

The first question is the most overlooked. Most parents look at the brochure, the website, the email, the logo, and assume the opportunity is run by baseball people. Coaches. Former players. Someone with a name and a face. Sometimes that is true. Often it is not.

In our example, the family does a little digging. The facility is not owned by the people whose faces are on the website. It belongs to a national platform that runs dozens of events like this one, and the showcase is one of its brands. The event is a product, and the family is the customer, whatever the invitation says.

In some cases the local coach or organization also has a financial relationship with the event: a referral fee, a team incentive, an affiliate arrangement. Not always. But often enough that parents should feel comfortable asking, plainly, "Does anyone get paid if we sign up?"

The honest answer to Question 1

This opportunity is owned by a business and promoted locally through people or organizations that may benefit financially from families signing up. That does not automatically make the event bad. It does mean the family now knows who benefits from their decision, and that changes how they read every word of the email.

What exactly will my athlete receive?

NAME THE DELIVERABLES

Now we get specific. What will the family's son actually receive in exchange for nearly $2,400? The email is full of language like "exposure," "evaluation," "national platform," and "elite competition." Those are not deliverables. A deliverable is something you can point to after the event and say, "We got this."

The family writes the showcase organization and asks four direct questions:

1. How many college coaches have confirmed they will be in attendance, and from which programs?
2. Will my son receive a written evaluation from a qualified evaluator after the event?
3. Will my son have measurable data recorded and provided to him?
4. Will my son receive video he can use after the event?

The response is vague. "Many coaches will be in attendance throughout the weekend." "Evaluations may be available for purchase as an add-on." "Video packages are available starting at $299."

The honest answer to Question 2

The deliverables are thin. The promises are emotional. The real product is the parent's belief that this might be the weekend their son gets noticed. That is not a deliverable. That is a feeling. And feelings are what the modern youth sports marketplace charges the most for.

Is this development or is this fear?

THE HARDEST QUESTION

This one requires an honesty most families do not want to give themselves. Ask it this way: is my son a better baseball player on the Tuesday after this showcase than he was on the Tuesday before it?

If the answer is yes, because his swing improved, his strength increased, or his understanding of the game deepened, then this is development. If the answer is no, because he simply played five games in front of strangers and came home, then it is not development. It might be exposure. It might be experience. It might be fun. It is not development.

For this family, $2,400 over a long weekend buys exposure, experience, and a memory. The same $2,400 could buy:

- Three months of private hitting instruction with a serious coach
- A summer strength and conditioning program
- An honest player evaluation with a written report and a development plan
- Three months of academic tutoring to strengthen the transcript
- A focused two-week development camp in their own region

The honest answer to Question 3
This is fear. Real development at this age, for this athlete, lives somewhere else. Not because the showcase is bad, but because the family's money will produce more growth elsewhere.

Does this fit our family's long-term plan?

A PLAN HAS TO EXIST FIRST

The fourth question requires a plan to exist in the first place. A real one: where your son is in his development, where he is realistically headed, what level of college fits him, what academic profile he needs to build, and what the next twelve to twenty-four months should focus on. Without that, no individual opportunity can be evaluated against anything.

This is where most families get caught. They make every decision in isolation. They ask, "Should we do this showcase?" instead of asking, "What is this season for?" They say yes to opportunities one at a time, never noticing that the sum of all those yeses has no direction. They have hopes. They have anxieties. They have a calendar full of events. They have receipts. What they do not have is a written, considered, honest plan.

“Without a plan, every opportunity looks like a yes. With a plan, most opportunities reveal themselves as either fit or filler.”

— COACH BEEDE

The honest answer to Question 4

This showcase does not fit a plan, because there is no plan yet to fit it against. The most valuable thing this family could do this Memorial Day weekend is not attend a showcase four states away. It is sit at the kitchen table, with their son, and build the plan.

Will this still matter six months from now?

THE SIMPLEST QUESTION

The final question is the simplest. It is also the one that cuts the deepest.

Imagine it is November. The family is sitting at their kitchen table, looking back at the year. They ask themselves: did the Memorial Day showcase matter?

If their son improved as a player because of it, if a coach reached out, if a real connection was made, if a development plan emerged from it, then yes, it mattered. If it became one more weekend in a long string of weekends, with no follow-up, no growth, no meaningful change, then no, it did not.

The honest test of any opportunity is whether it can still be felt six months later. Most cannot. Most are forgotten by the next month, replaced by the next event, paid for and absorbed and never thought about again.

> **The honest answer to Question 5**
> Almost certainly not. The showcase will be one more weekend, one more receipt, one more set of photos on the phone. In November, it will be invisible. The $2,400 will not be.

They did not feel relieved. They felt clear.

WHAT THE FAMILY DID INSTEAD

The family in our example, having walked through all five questions, decides not to attend the showcase. For the first time in months, they have made a decision based on something other than fear.

They use the long weekend differently. Saturday is a regional event close to home. Sunday is the field with their son, just hitting. No tournament. No bleachers. Just work. Monday morning is the kitchen table, writing a real plan together.

The $2,400 they did not spend becomes a down payment on three months of private hitting work with a serious coach. By July, their son's bat speed has measurably improved. By August, two of his at-bats look completely different than they did in May.

By November, the family looks back and remembers the Memorial Day weekend they almost spent four states away. They are glad they did not.

“You hold the checkbook. You hold the calendar. You hold the long view.”

— COACH BEEDE

What a good answer sounds like

SEND THESE QUESTIONS. READ THE REPLY AGAINST THIS PAGE.

The questions on page 5 are the test in its shortest form. A serious program answers them with facts it already has. A program built on feelings answers them with adjectives. This page shows the difference.

THE QUESTION YOU ASK	A VAGUE ANSWER	A GOOD ANSWER
Which college coaches have confirmed?	"Many coaches will be in attendance throughout the weekend."	"Eleven confirmed. Here is the list by program and division, and the sessions each one is scheduled to watch."
Will my son receive a written evaluation?	"Evaluations may be available as an add-on."	"Yes. Every athlete receives a written evaluation within ten days, from a named evaluator. Here is a sample."
Will measurable data be recorded and provided?	"We use the latest technology at all our events."	"Yes. Exit velocity, arm velocity, and a timed sixty, recorded on the day and sent to you, at no extra charge."
Will my son receive video he can use?	"Video packages are available starting at $299."	"Every at-bat and inning is filmed and delivered as raw files you own, included in the fee."
Does anyone get paid if we sign up?	Silence, or a change of subject.	"Yes, our organization receives a referral fee. We recommend it anyway, and here is why."

A good answer is specific, arrives quickly, and costs nothing extra. Notice that a good answer to the last question does not disqualify the event. Honesty about who gets paid is the mark of an organization you can do business with.

The Five-Question Test

SAVE THIS PAGE. PRINT IT IF YOU HAVE TO.

The next time your family is about to write a check you are not sure about, the test will be here, waiting.

1 **Who owns this opportunity?**
Follow the money. Know who benefits before you sign.

2 **What exactly will my athlete receive?**
Name the deliverables. If the answer is vague, so is the value.

3 **Is this development, or is this fear?**
Will your athlete be measurably better because of it?

4 **Does this fit our family's long-term plan?**
If you do not have a plan yet, building one comes first.

5 **Will this still matter six months from now?**
Most things will not. Ask honestly before you spend.

Run the test on the next one

FILL THIS IN WITH YOUR SON AT THE TABLE

Two rules. Fill it in together, and be honest in the third column. "Unclear" is a real answer, and three of them is a no.

THE OPPORTUNITY			
What is it, and what does it cost, all in?			
THE FIVE QUESTIONS	**YES**	**NO**	**UNCLEAR**
1. Do we know who owns it and who gets paid?			
2. Can we name what our athlete will receive?			
3. Will he be measurably better afterward?			
4. Does it fit the plan we have written down?			
5. Will it still matter in six months?			
THE DECISION			
Yes, no, or not yet, and the one reason why.			

Keep the finished sheet. Six months from now, read it again and check your own answer to Question 5.

Where your family goes from here

TURN CLARITY INTO A PLAN

The Five-Question Test works best when a family has somewhere to bring the answers. That is what the Clubhouse is for.

The Clubhouse is my membership for families who want a plan instead of a calendar full of events: the full Coaches Corner interview archive, the age-banded courses from the backyard years through college recruiting, and direct access to me when a decision like the one in this guide is on the table. Run the test, bring the sheet, and we will decide it together.

Join the Clubhouse at coachbeede.com

> **Who owns this guide**
> The test asks who benefits, so here is the answer for this one. I own shares in Baseball Blue Book. I have a partnership with Showball, a showcase operator, promoting college coaches and their programs; Showball does not pay for my channel and does not decide what I say on it. The Clubhouse is my paid membership. Now you know who benefits from your decision, which is exactly what Question 1 asks you to find out.

Not ready yet? Stay close.

Subscribe to Bluebook Weekly, the free letter from Baseball Blue Book. Honest guidance. Every week. No noise.

And if you want to know which stage your son is in before you decide anything, download the companion guide, The Long Game: Ages 3 to 22, one page per stage, at coachbeede.com.

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Save this guide. The next time your family is about to write a check you are not sure about, the test will be here, waiting. That is what it is for.