

Members only: Hub Q&A with Denver native and USA Hockey development camp participant Ellie Reiter

By Heather Rule, SportsEngine, 07/29/19, 3:00PM MDT

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The Yale commit discusses her participation in this year's Girls U-18 Select Player Development Camp and gives her thoughts on girls competing with and against boys on the ice.



Denver native Ellie Reiter (front) said she chose to attend the USA Hockey U camp to improve her skills playing against top-flight competition and learn from some of the best coaches in hockey. Photo by Matthew Reiter

Denver native **Ellie Reiter** was among a small group of Colorado girls' hockey players invited to participate in a USA Hockey select camp in Minnesota this summer.

Reiter, a 5-foot-5 center, joined 71 other players in the 2019 Girls U-18 Select Player Development Camp from July 15-21 at the Herb Brooks Hockey Center in St. Cloud,



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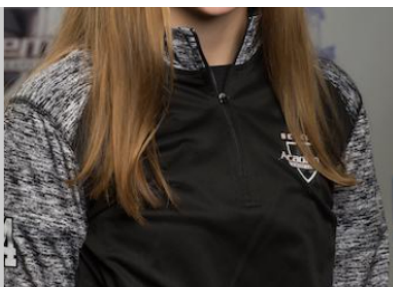


Minn. The camp divided the girls into four balanced teams with 10 forwards, six defenders and two goalies each. Reiter played for the Blue Team and registered an assist in four games.

The skaters arrived in St. Cloud from across the country and received on- and off-the-ice training in disciplines such as hockey skills, nutrition and strength training.

Reiter will graduate from Selects Academy at Bishop Kearney in Rochester, New York, next spring and is committed to continuing her hockey career at Yale.

The Colorado Hockey Hub caught up with Reiter to talk about her experiences.



Ellie Reiter was one of eight girls from Colorado to attend USA Hockey development camps this summer.

Photo by Judi Morrissey

Colorado Hockey Hub: Why did you decide to attend the Girls U-18 Select Player Development Camp in St. Cloud this summer?

ER: I saw it as an opportunity to play with some of the best girls in the country and to get some of the best coaching that I could, and also learn a lot from the other staff that they have on — so the nutritionist, the strength and conditioning coaches, the mental skills coach. So I think, overall, just to learn a lot and improve my play as best as I could.

CO Hockey Hub: What were some of the hockey skills that you learned or improved upon at the camp?

ER: I think that talking with the coaches, I learned more on my positioning in the defensive zone and other areas of the ice. And I learned a lot about my own speed, and position and stuff like that. So, kind of the littler, finer details of things.

CO Hockey Hub: How did your experience at the camp differ from your expectations?

ER: I think that I had a lot more fun than I was expecting to. I mean, it was good fun. I think that all the girls were really accepting and everybody just came together really quickly. And I wasn't necessarily expecting that. So that was super cool. Our team had great chemistry, too, which was really good.

CO Hockey Hub: You were one of eight girls from Colorado to be invited to USA Hockey development camps this summer. What did it mean to represent your state at this camp?

ER: I think that, obviously, Colorado isn't a huge state for hockey. Having this opportunity to represent my state is huge. There are so many girls that have a lot of talent in Colorado; they just don't get the same exposure. Hopefully by being one of the players that's from Colorado getting this exposure I can draw the attention toward some of the Colorado girls more.

CO Hockey Hub: Minnesota prides itself on being "the state of hockey," which especially rings true for youth players. How did you experience Minnesota as a hockey state while you were at the camp?

ER: A lot of the players at the camp were from Minnesota, so it kind of tells [you that] Minnesota is a huge hockey state. Also, just the fact that it's held in Minnesota. Obviously, they hold it in different areas for different purposes, and I think having it in Minnesota kind of brings a whole hockey atmosphere to the camp and makes it so much more real and intense.

CO Hockey Hub: What was a day-in-the-life at this camp like?

ER: Well, it depended. We sometimes only had one ice session a day, or we would have two and then a bunch of stuff. Usually we'd wake up — some mornings were early — but it usually wasn't too bad and then we'd walk to breakfast as a team. From there, sometimes we would go to the rink and then have some sort of seminar, and then have a practice or game and then cool down. We would usually go to lunch after that. And then sometimes you would have time at the dorms, and then go back to the rink and have another seminar or something, or maybe strength and conditioning. Then a warm-up game and cool down, dinner, and then that was kind of it.

Colorado Hockey Hub: Why would you recommend camps like this to other young hockey players?

ER: First I think it's a great way to get a lot of exposure, but also you learn a lot from these camps from the coaches, and players and all the staff. It's very exclusive and I think it's something that you can't get anywhere else really. And all the people that you meet, you'll see around the rinks at tournaments, and that's super cool to connect with them. So it's a huge honor, and it's kind of a once in a — well not once in a lifetime — but it's a very good experience I would highly recommend to anybody.

CO Hockey Hub: What were some of the other things you learned? I know you mentioned a nutritionist.

ER: Obviously nutrition. This time they focused on supplements and just what's important. You should know what you're putting in your body. Whatever you put in is fuel for your body. Then we worked with a mental skills coach named Tiff Jones and she was incredible. We learned a lot about these three different performance zones that you want to be in. She really focused on giving us tools to stay in those ideal performance zones and really focus on what we're doing. She talked a lot about confidence, and negative thoughts, and how all athletes have a lot of negative thoughts, but she helped us focus on how to stay out of that kind of mindset and to focus on what you did well and stuff like that. So, between nutrition and mental skills, they definitely gave us a lot of tools to use moving forward. Not just for athletes, but also in your every-single-day life to really hone in on these certain skills.

CO Hockey Hub: What other players at the camp did you enjoy playing with/against or learn from?

ER: Every player at that camp is meant to be there. They were selected to the top 72 players in the country. It's really cool to play against each player, but especially the girls who are on the U-18 team. It's cool to see how everyone's different, between someone who's really skilled with their hands versus somebody who's a lot faster, or somebody who's a lot taller and uses their body. But I really enjoy playing with the girls on my team. I felt like we had great chemistry as a team, and it was cool to see that. It was just cool to play with people with different playing styles.

CO Hockey Hub: What is the one big take-away from the camp for you?

ER: I think no matter what, hockey isn't the end-all, be-all. Right now, it's definitely one of my huge goals. Even — they kept repeating it — that even if you don't make this team, you still have a future in hockey for you. I think for me it's just to keep my eye focused on that one goal. And even though I might not make the short-term teams and stuff, that I can eventually make it in the future.

Outside the box

CO Hockey Hub: If you could go on vacation anywhere in the world, where would you go and why?

ER: I would say probably Greece. It's just — from what I've heard — the culture is amazing there, and the people. It just looks gorgeous. I would love to go there.

CO Hockey Hub: Who is your favorite athlete?

ER: [Colorado Avalanche center] Nathan MacKinnon, just because of his skill, and his speed and his relentless work ethic.

CO Hockey Hub: What's one thing you like to do when no one's watching?

ER: I like to read. If I read in front of people, then they're like, 'Oh, you're going to Yale, you're reading.' I kind of like to read alone.



Ellie Reiter calls herself a defensive forward who is more of a playmaker than a goal scorer. Photo by Matthew Reiter

CO Hockey Hub: How would you describe yourself as a hockey player?

ER: As a center, I'm a very defensive forward. I think I see the ice very well, and I can get passes to people in certain areas, more difficult areas. I'm definitely a two-way forward, so I play both offense

and defense. I know that a few people are kind of one-way. I'm more of a playmaker than a goal scorer.

CO Hockey Hub: What is your biggest motivation to keep playing hockey and keep improving?

ER: I think personally the love of the game for me. I've loved it from when I was little. Just the opportunities that hockey gives you are incredible. I think that definitely fuels me. And also my family — my parents, and my three older brothers and my grandpa are huge supporters. So I think that fuels me, too, and makes me want to continue to be my best.

CO Hockey Hub: What accomplishment — in hockey or otherwise — are you the most proud of in your life?

ER: Obviously making the select camp was a huge accomplishment, but I think back in 2015 when I made the West Coast Selects team. That was kind of the turning point for me in hockey where I went from a Colorado team to the bigger hockey world and the more competitive side of it.

CO Hockey Hub: What do you look forward to most about playing hockey after high school?

ER: I think that playing in college is a much bigger stage and a much bigger opportunity. I get to play with girls from all around the country, and from around the world too, which is super cool. But I just look forward to the speed of the game increasing and the talent of the players, too, and the coaching. Because you're kind of at one of the highest levels you can get in hockey with DI college (hockey).

CO Hockey Hub: How do you think girls' hockey can still grow and improve as a whole?

ER: I think definitely a lot of girls can continue to start playing hockey. Even in Colorado, it seems like the girls' programs are growing — like a lot more girls are starting to play. But I think just increasing the amount of teams in certain areas. It's hard to gain interest from fans, obviously, because you're competing with the NHL, but I think once the women's league starts to get more attention from everybody, then younger girls will look up to those women and start to say, 'Oh, I want to play hockey.'

What is your first memory from playing hockey?

"I don't know how old I was, but I was playing boys, and it was right off a faceoff and (the puck) went back to the other team...I went in between the two [defenders] and got a breakaway. I scored, and I think it was like my first breakaway goal or something. It was the most amazing thing that had ever happened to me at that time in my life."

—Ellie Reiter

CO Hockey Hub: How long did you play boys' hockey? Was that a situation where there wasn't a girls' team, or you chose to play with boys?

ER: I grew up in Colorado playing boys, and I have three older brothers, so I think I didn't really know much about girls' hockey and so I played boys. We moved to Massachusetts when I was, I think, eight [years old]. I played boys for a year or two, and then I played girls. Then we moved back to Colorado and I played girls for a year. And then I went back to the boys and played for two years, and I would practice with them. Then I started playing with a girls' team in St. Louis, so I played both boys and girls.

CO Hockey Hub: Do you have a strong opinion, either way, as far as whether girls should play with boys when they're younger?

ER: I don't think it's bad to play with girls, but I think growing up you should definitely try to play with boys as long as you can because their game is faster. I think as long as girls can play with the boys, they'll definitely have an advantage speed-wise and probably strength. Also, since we don't check in girls' hockey, a lot of players don't necessarily think about getting their head up right away, but in boys' hockey, the boys constantly have their heads up looking for that hit and being ready for impact. I think that's another thing that would give you an advantage in girls' hockey.

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