

The Recruitment Process for Athlete, Coach, and Parents

The best way to get it all right is by starting early –meaning now.

One of the biggest mistakes that high school coaches and their athletes can make is to wait until the fall of the athlete's senior year to begin the college selection process.

The selection process is too important and too complicated for such cavalier treatment. It involves a lot of people, a lot of research, and a lot of thinking, and both the coach and the athlete can use all the good resource information they can get.

We believe that the accompanying guidelines can help everyone involved in this challenging process.

STUDENTS (ATHLETES)

1. Work very hard at your studies, as there will be more opportunities for academic scholarships than for athletic scholarships. The old saying, "Good grades do not guarantee anything, but bad grades guarantee nothing" is very true. The habits you establish now will open more possibilities for you in the future.

2. Standardized Testing: Take as many practice tests as you can. The more you practice, the more familiar you will become with the test process. And the better you score, the greater your chances will be for an academic scholarship. We recommend taking the PSAT to learn where you need improvement. Based on your PSAT score, you may want to take both the ACT and SAT during your junior year. If you do not score well on these tests, you should consider taking preparation courses.

3. Find out early how the financial-aid process works and what type of aid is available at the schools you are considering. Make sure you know the difference between financial aid and scholarship awards.

Some questions to consider:

- What type of packaging is done (i.e., what percentage is grant,

loan, and work study)?

- After four years, how much debt does a typical graduate have from that school?
- Is your aid package guaranteed to be the same or will it change during your four or five years at school?
- A general time line to follow during the athlete's high school years:

Sophomore Year: Make informal visits to the schools you are interested in and attend the college days run by the high schools in your area. The more schools you visit, the better decisions you are likely to make when the time comes. You may want to begin doing research on the schools, utilizing college guides, career centers, and the internet.

Junior Year: Begin visiting colleges and universities. Spend the night if possible. Meet with the coaching staff and professors in your area of academic interest. Also take in a practice and check the playing facilities, as well as spend time with current student-athletes.

Questions to ask current students when visiting any school:

- Why did you choose this institution?
- What other schools did you consider?
- Would you choose the same school if you had to do it all over again?
- How much class time is missed due to athletics?
- Where does the coach prioritize academics?
- What do the students do for fun?

When you contact the schools you are interested in, make sure to arrange a visit with the coaching staff. Do not be afraid to call and set up an appointment if they have not previously contacted you. If you are serious about your athletics, most coaches will welcome the chance to visit with you.

Questions to ask college coaches during a visit:

- Where do “I” fit in with your program?
- How do you structure your practice/season?
- What kind of weight training/conditioning program do you have?
- Do freshman typically get to compete for starting positions?
- How long have you been here and how long do you plan to stay?
- How does athletics fit in with the student’s academic plans?

Another resource you may want to consider is alumni and graduates. Questions on their experiences and job opportunities might be particularly useful. You may also want to visit the schools.

Senior Year: Work up a list of schools you are seriously interested in. If you become disinterested in a school and decide not to attend, let the coach know. You will save yourself and the coach a lot of time and energy.

If you have not yet visited schools, do so before your sport season begins.

Start the application process early. Be very detailed in completing each and every application. If you have poor penmanship, you may want to type the application.

If you have been admitted and the financial aid package is acceptable, you might want to revisit the school to obtain a final look. Make sure you see the team compete on your visit. This could provide invaluable information on the current team's ability and where you may fit into the program.

Things to look for during competition:

1. Coaching Style.
2. Mannerisms.
3. Style of play.
4. Team support.
5. Fan support.
6. Equipment and facilities.

Decision time: Once you have decided on a school, make it known. Feel good about it, it’s your four years

PARENTS

1. Expose your daughter or son to as many schools as you can. Information can be

gathered from college guides, visiting schools, meeting with admission counselors and professors. Remember, early exposure will make the recruiting experience less stressful for everyone.

2. Accompany your daughter or son on the school visits, if possible. You may also try to have him or her stay overnight with a student-athlete-providing a great opportunity to get a realistic picture of college life.

3. You can learn more about the coaches by talking to them. (Would I want my daughter or son to play for this man?) You can check the training and weight room, and ask questions about the facilities and programs, plus:

What kind of care is given to injured athletes?

Do parents attend the games?

What is the geographic distribution of the team?

4. When coaches call, ask questions. Try to get to know them. When decision time comes around, be up-front with the coaches who have been recruiting your child. The coaches will always respect a student's final decision.

5. Financial aid: Once the packaging has been received, don't be afraid to call the financial aid office. If you have concerns about the loan amount or lack of funds, it does not hurt to ask them how they arrived at these figures.

H.S. COACHES

1. Fill out the response cards and questionnaires sent by the college coaches. Don't file them away or wait until the last minute to return them. College coaches really need help in the recruiting process. The information you provide will open many doors for your athletes in the future.

2. During your athlete's junior or senior year, contact the college coaches your athletes are considering. Your calls may turn out to be the icing on the cake for the college coaches interested in your kids.

They know how much time you have spent with the prospect and your calls can give them extra insight into the athletes and let them know what kind of role models they had during their early years of development.

3. You can help your athletes learn about the colleges by taking them on visits or encouraging them to attend both big-college

and small-college games and introducing the college coaches to them. Always remember, it's a big treat for a high school athlete to be taken to a game by his coach.

The recruiting process is often very long and confusing. By beginning the process during the student's early (sophomore and junior) years, both the athletes and the coaches can gather a great amount of useful information before any decision has to be made.