

The Recruiting Advantage

Understanding the Process of
College Athletics Recruitment

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Hi there! I'm Ryan Moore Founder and President of On Track College Advising. If you are a high school student athlete who is just beginning the recruiting process or if you are already fully connected with college coaches, then you have come to the right place. This E Book is specifically designed to guide you through the transitional recruiting process from being a high school student athlete to becoming a member of a collegiate team. With my experience of over 20 years in the NCAA Division 1 college system, I have successfully recruited numerous dynamic young athletes who were eager to take on new challenges. However, I have also encountered students who struggled to effectively communicate with coaches and those who lacked the necessary knowledge to navigate the recruiting process. I have also spoken with students who showed up without any preparation awareness or realistic ways of contribution to the program I was building year after year. My goal in sharing this E Book is to prevent you from making the same mistakes get you prepared prior to engaging with coaches and to help you make the most out of your recruiting journey. I commit to you that following my advise will get you engaged in meaningful ways and create real connections with programs you want to belong to. So, let's get started!



It All Starts With You

As a coach, my focus has always been on building the individual as well as the athlete. I believe that sports have the power to shape not just physical abilities, but also character and life skills. Throughout my career, I have dedicated myself to building sweat equity, constantly striving to improve the programs I was a part of for the benefit of the student athlete experience. This has allowed me to make a positive impact on the lives of hundreds of university students, helping them grow not just as athletes, but as individuals as well. One of the most exciting aspects of my job as a coach is the opportunity to impact not just my own team, but also the community at large. While my primary goal still remains the development of successful athletes, I also recognize the importance of using sports as a platform to build better people. Through On Track College Advising I have challenged my student athletes to think critically about who they are and the roles they play on the team, and it has been incredibly rewarding to see them grow into confident, responsible, and well-rounded individuals through the recruiting process. To that same end I am going to ask you to take an honest assessment of your own athletics abilities and consider the legacy you want to leave.

What Are My Options?





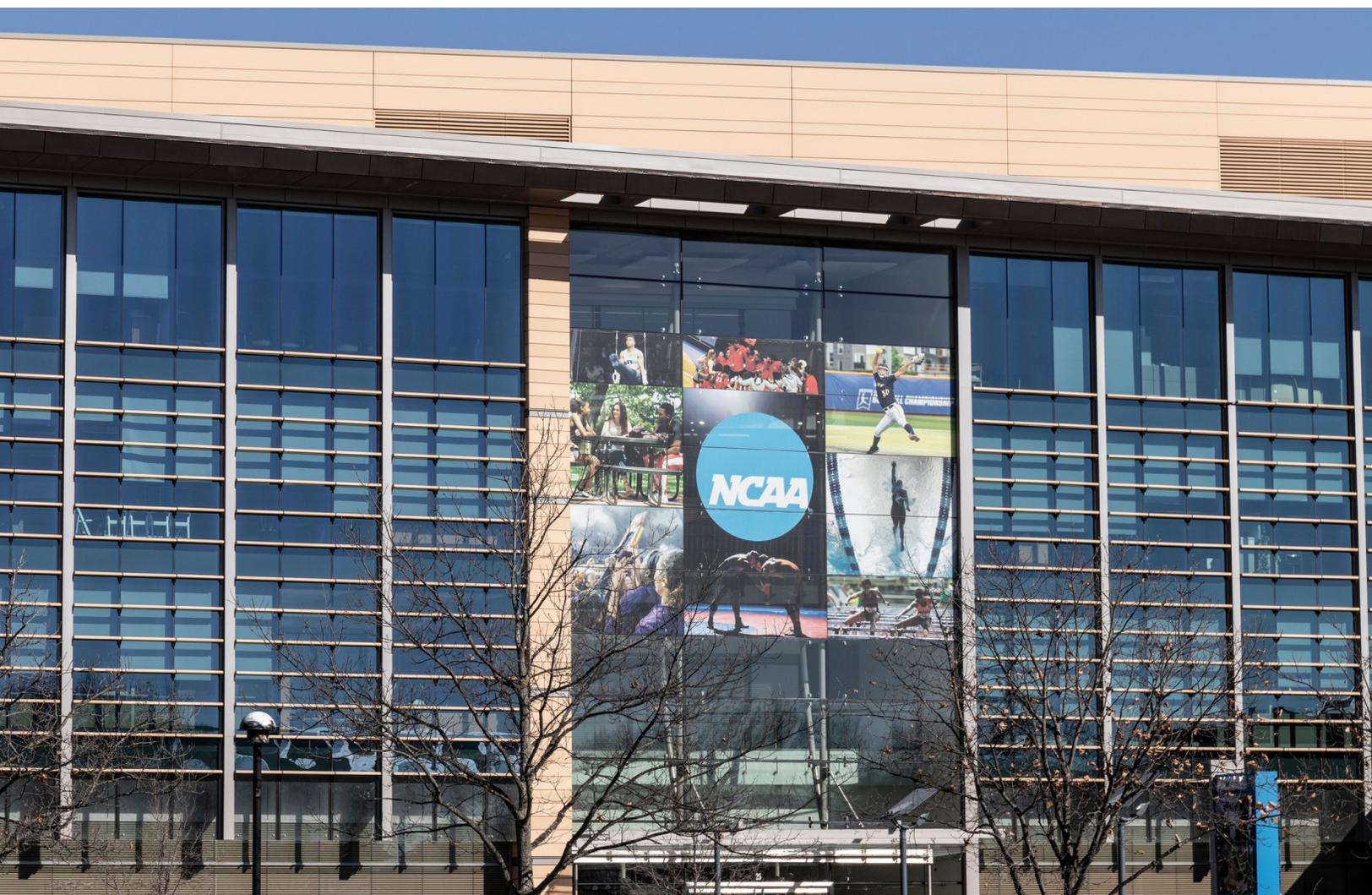
As a high school student, my view of college athletics was heavily influenced by what I saw on TV. The schools with big-time football and basketball programs were constantly broadcasted on national television, making them seem like the pinnacle of college sports. I was in awe of the massive 300-pound linemen on teams like Penn State, who were bigger, faster, and stronger than anyone I had ever seen. Seeing some of these players go on to have successful careers in the NFL or NBA only solidified my belief that these were the most prestigious and desirable college athletic programs.

However, my view of college athletics was also shaped by the schools that my family and relatives had attended. These were typically smaller, local schools that were not as well-known on a national level. As a result, my perception of college athletics was limited to these two extremes - the big-name programs and the smaller, local schools.

It wasn't until later that I discovered the vast array of options available for student-athletes at different levels of play, and the importance of exploring all of these options before making a decision about college athletics.

Let's take a look at the many options available to students through both the NCAA and the NAIA and explore their makeup starting with The NCAA.

The National Collegiate Athletics Association is the first of 2 main governing bodies of athletics available to student athletes wanting to compete in college. This Association is made up of 3 divisions 1,2,and 3 with 1 being the top tier level of competition. While D1 has what I believe are the greatest number of high level athletes competing it is important to share that top athletes across all three divisions have competitive abilities. Lets look at the D1 level and do a deeper dive.



NCAA Division 1

NCAA Division I schools are known for their highly competitive and prestigious athletic programs, which attract top athletes from around the country. These schools have a strong emphasis on sports and invest significant resources into their athletic departments to ensure their teams have the necessary facilities, coaching staff, and equipment to compete at the highest level. In addition, Division I schools are typically large universities with a high enrollment and a strong commitment to promoting and supporting their athletic programs. This combination of factors makes them an ideal fit for the NCAA Division I classification, and allows them to compete against other top schools for national championships and recognition. At the Division 1 level, it is important to understand the difference between headcount and equivalency sports. Headcount sports, such as football, basketball, and gymnastics, offer full athletic scholarships to their athletes. This means that all of their financial aid is covered because of athletics and they do not have to rely on any additional aid or funding. It's worth noting that a full ride is not the norm. Only 2% of all high school students receive a full ride scholarship. On the other hand, equivalency sports, which include all other sports, only offer partial scholarships. This means that athletes in these sports may need to supplement their scholarships with other forms of aid, such as academic scholarships, in order to cover the full cost of attendance. Therefore, it is crucial for athletes in equivalency sports to prioritize their academics in order to be competitive for these additional forms of aid.

In most cases, equivalency sports rely on a mix of aid and provide partial awards to their athletes. This highlights the importance of academics for these athletes, as their academic performance can greatly impact their overall aid package. Merit-based aid and gift aid can make a significant difference in the amount of financial support an athlete receives, and can ultimately make or break their ability to attend college and participate in their sport. This emphasizes the fact that, at the Division 1 level, academics are just as important as athletic ability in order to secure a successful and well-rounded college experience.

Division I Continued

Athletes must be dedicated to their sport and willing to put in the time and effort required to excel. This level of commitment is not just physical, but also mental and emotional. It takes a strong mindset and a deep passion for the sport to push through the challenges and sacrifices that come with being an athlete.

At any level time and energy must be focused on for success but the D1 level of your commitment also extends beyond the individual. It involves being a team player and being committed to the success of the team as a whole. This means showing up for practices and games, supporting and encouraging teammates, and always giving 100% effort. Athletes must also be committed to their coaches and trainers, trusting their guidance and following their instructions. This level of commitment not only leads to personal growth and success, but also strengthens team dynamics and fosters a sense of camaraderie. Ultimately, commitment is a crucial aspect of being an athlete and is what sets them apart from others in their dedication and drive to constantly improve and achieve their goals.

For these student athletes, their sport is not just a hobby or a way to stay active. It is a full-time commitment that requires dedication, discipline, and sacrifice. They have to balance their academic responsibilities with rigorous training schedules and strict nutrition plans. They also have to prioritize rest and recovery in order to prevent injuries and maintain peak performance. This level of dedication and focus is necessary in order to compete at the highest level and achieve their goals.

In addition to the physical demands, student athletes at the D1 level also face immense pressure to perform well and maintain a certain level of success. This can be mentally and emotionally draining, and it requires a strong mindset and resilience to handle the challenges that come with being a top athlete. Student athletes must also learn time management skills in order to balance their athletic and academic responsibilities. Despite the challenges, most student athletes will tell you that the rewards and opportunities that come with competing at the D1 level make it all worth it.

NCAA Division II

NCAA Division II (D2) is a highly respected level of competition that prides itself on maintaining a balance between athletics, academics, and extracurricular activities. With 312 member institutions spread across 45 states and serving over 80,000 student-athletes, D2 offers a wide range of opportunities for athletes to compete at a high level while also focusing on their academic and personal growth. While D2 may not have the same financial resources and scholarship opportunities as Division I, it still offers a competitive and rewarding experience for student-athletes.

One of the unique aspects of D2 is its emphasis on equivalency sports, where scholarship funds can be divided among multiple athletes. This allows for a more diverse and inclusive athletic program, as athletes with varying levels of talent and skill can receive financial aid to help cover their expenses. D2 athletes often combine athletic scholarships with academic or need-based scholarships, making it possible for them to pursue their athletic dreams while also receiving a quality education. With 25 national championships (12 for men and 13 for women) in a variety of sports, D2 provides a platform for student-athletes to showcase their talents and achieve success both on and off the field.

D2 schools typically have smaller student populations, which can create a more close-knit and intimate learning environment. This can also mean smaller class sizes and more personalized attention from professors. However, this can also limit the diversity and resources available on campus compared to larger D1 schools. D2 schools also tend to have more modest budgets, which can affect the variety and quality of programs and services offered.

Generally speaking while D2 schools may not have the same level of state-of-the-art facilities as D1 institutions, they still prioritize providing quality facilities for their students. This can include well-maintained athletic facilities, modern classrooms and labs, and comfortable living spaces. D2 schools may not have the same level of funding as D1 schools, but they still strive to create a positive and functional learning environment for their students. While D2 schools may not receive as much media coverage as D1 schools, they still offer competitive sports programs and academic opportunities that can attract attention on a regional and sometimes national level.

NCAA Division III

NCAA Division III (D3) is known for its strong focus on academics and the overall student-athlete experience. With over 150,000 student-athletes at 442 colleges across 36 states, D3 is the largest division in the NCAA. Unlike other divisions, D3 does not offer any athletics scholarships, allowing student-athletes to prioritize their education and participate in sports purely for the love of the game.

One of the key principles of D3 is the balance between athletics, academics, and extracurricular activities. This division recognizes that student-athletes are not just athletes, but also students and members of their communities. This focus on the holistic development of student-athletes creates a well-rounded and enriching college experience. D3 offers 28 national championships, with 14 for men and 14 for women, providing opportunities for athletes to compete at the highest level while still maintaining their academic pursuits. Overall, D3 is a highly respected division that places a strong emphasis on the academic success and overall well-being of its student-athletes.

Despite being lower division schools, many DIII universities have been able to boast impressive facilities thanks to the support of their alumni network. These alumni, who are often passionate about their alma mater, have generously donated time and money to ensure that their school's athletic programs have state-of-the-art facilities. For example, some DIII schools have been able to build multi-million dollar stadiums, gyms, and training facilities, all thanks to the contributions of their alumni. This level of support and dedication is surprising, as DIII schools do not offer athletic scholarships and are often overshadowed by larger, more well-known universities.

The impact of these alumni donations can be seen not only in the quality of the facilities, but also in the success of the athletic programs. With top-notch facilities, DIII schools are able to attract talented athletes who may have otherwise chosen to attend a larger, more prestigious university. This has led to an increase in the level of competition and success for DIII programs, as well as a sense of pride and unity within the alumni community. The continued support of alumni has allowed DIII schools to compete at a high level and create a unique and rewarding experience for their student-athletes.



National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics

The NAIA provides a unique opportunity for student-athletes to compete at a high level while also prioritizing their academic success. With over 250 member schools, the NAIA offers a wide range of athletic programs in various sports, providing students with the chance to excel in their chosen sport while also receiving a well-rounded education. Unlike NCAA Division II and III, the NAIA allows for full athletic scholarships, although not the norm it can help in making it a more affordable option for student-athletes who may not qualify for NCAA Division I scholarships. Additionally, the NAIA places a strong emphasis on character development and service, encouraging student-athletes to be leaders both on and off the field.

The NAIA also offers a sense of community and camaraderie among its member schools. With 21 conferences and 29 national championship sports, there are plenty of opportunities for student-athletes to compete against teams from all over the country. This allows for a diverse and competitive environment, promoting growth and development for student-athletes. The NAIA also has a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion, with 65% of member schools being faith-based institutions. This creates a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere for student-athletes of all backgrounds, promoting a sense of unity and teamwork. Overall, the NAIA offers a well-rounded and fulfilling experience for student-athletes, making it a highly regarded organization in the world of collegiate athletics.

"D1 or Bust" Mentality

Moms and dads have a natural bias towards their children and often believe that their son or daughter is the best at whatever sport they do. They see their child's potential and have high hopes for their future as a star athlete. This belief is often unshakeable, regardless of any setbacks or challenges that may arise. To them, their child is the best and there is no talking them out of that opinion.

However, this inflated sense of self can be dangerous for young student athletes. While it is important to have confidence and belief in oneself, it is also important to keep a realistic perspective on one's abilities. There will always be someone out there who is better and at some point, every athlete will face failure and setbacks. It is important for parents to support their child's athletic dreams, but also to encourage them to keep an open mind and not fall for the "D1 or bust" mentality. Instead, finding a team or program that aligns with their abilities and allows them to grow and develop as an athlete is crucial for a fulfilling and successful athletic experience.

Assessing your own athletic abilities is a critical piece of the puzzle when it comes to determining your potential for playing sports at the collegiate level. With thousands of colleges in the US and millions of high school student athletes, the competition is fierce. It's important to be realistic and honest with yourself about your skills and potential for success at the collegiate level. While it's possible to be a Division 1 athlete and receive a full ride scholarship, it's not the norm. Only a small percentage of high school athletes will go on to play at the college level, making it a great accomplishment for those who do.

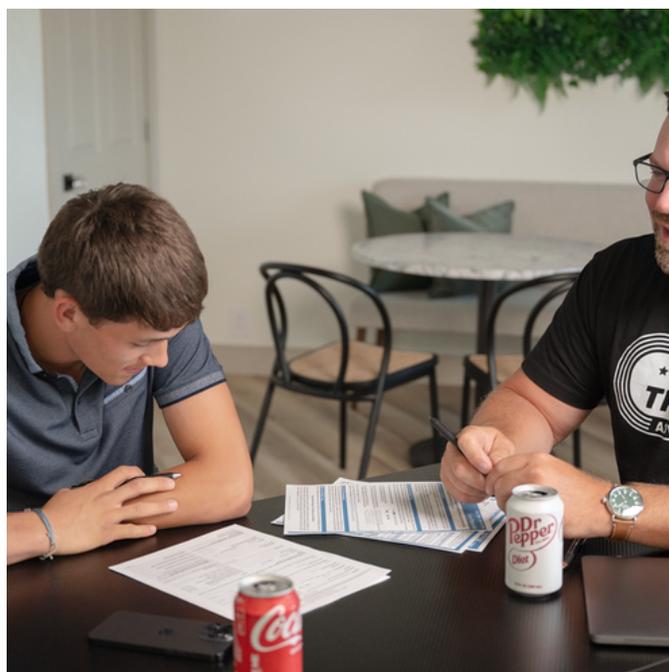
Secondly, it's important to believe in your abilities and have confidence in your skills. While being a Division 1 athlete may not be within reach for everyone, there are still opportunities to play at other levels and receive scholarships. It's important to set realistic goals and work hard to achieve them. Playing sports in college, regardless of the level, is a great achievement and should be celebrated. So whether you are a D1 athlete or playing at a smaller school, be proud of your accomplishments and continue to strive for success. My advice to you is to find coaches with a real grasp of what it takes to achieve at these levels and who are willing to speak the truth to you. These people are invaluable. They can help point you toward a level of play that will challenge you.



What Level is Right For Me?

The first factor in determining the appropriate level of competition for a student athlete is their ability and skill level. It is important for the student and their coaches to have a realistic understanding of their strengths and weaknesses in order to make an informed decision about which level of competition is most suitable. This can be determined through evaluations, tryouts, and feedback from coaches and trainers.

In addition to ability, there are other important factors that should be considered when deciding on the appropriate level of competition for a student athlete. These include the student's motivation and drive to compete, their physical and mental readiness, and their academic and personal goals. It is important for the student to reflect on these factors and have open and honest discussions with their coaches and family to determine the level of competition that will best support their growth and development as an athlete and as a student. Ultimately, the right level of competition for a student athlete is one that challenges them to improve and reach their full potential, while also allowing them to have a positive and fulfilling experience.



Here's a list of questions broken down into specific areas that many coaches want to know about their student athlete. These can help provide some insight into what drives you to compete: These are designed to help you discover the right path for college athletics, get you thinking about level of play, and can be a starting point for emails phone calls and in person interviews.

Personal Motivation & Drive

1. What motivates you to keep pushing yourself in your sport?
2. How do you stay focused and driven, even when things get tough?
3. What personal goals have you set for yourself in your sport?
4. How do you handle pressure during a big game or competition?
5. What does success mean to you as an athlete?
6. How do you stay motivated during the off-season?
7. What inspires you to improve and get better every day?
8. How do you mentally prepare for a game or competition?
9. What is your ultimate dream or goal in your sport?
10. How do you deal with setbacks or losses?

Team Dynamics & Leadership

11. How do you contribute to your team's success?
12. What role do you play on your team, and how do you feel about it?
13. How do you handle conflicts or disagreements with teammates?
14. What have you learned from being a part of a team?
15. How do you support your teammates, both on and off the field?
16. How do you lead by example in your sport?
17. What do you think makes a great teammate?
18. How do you balance individual success with team success?
19. How do you motivate your teammates during challenging times?
20. How do you celebrate team achievements?

Commitment & Sacrifice

21. What sacrifices have you made to excel in your sport?
 22. How do you balance academics, social life, and athletics?
 23. What keeps you committed to your sport, even when it gets hard?
 24. How do you stay disciplined in your training and practice?
 25. What does your daily or weekly training routine look like?
 26. How do you manage your time to ensure you meet all your responsibilities?
 27. What have you learned about yourself through your athletic journey?
 28. How do you handle burnout or fatigue?
 29. How do you ensure that you're constantly improving as an athlete?
 30. What is the most challenging part of being a student-athlete, and how do you overcome it?
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Choosing the right level of play in college is a crucial decision that can greatly impact your overall college experience. By taking the time to carefully consider the answers to important questions, related to your personal motivation and drive, Team Dynamics and leadership, and commitment and sacrifice, not only can you determine the best level of play for you but this assessment can help ensure that you are challenged enough to improve and grow as an athlete, but not overwhelmed to the point of burnout or disappointment.

Furthermore, considering these questions can also help you find the right balance between academics and athletics. Choosing a level of play that aligns with your academic goals and allows you to maintain a healthy balance between sports and school can lead to a more fulfilling and successful college experience. It is important to remember that the right level of play is not just about your athletic abilities, but also about finding a fit that allows you to thrive both on and off the field.

Keep Your Options Open Early

Starting your college search should be exciting!

Many students are drawn to the idea of playing for a big name school with a well-known athletic program. They see the glamour and prestige associated with these schools and assume that it is the only option for them. However, what they may not realize is that there are many other great options available for them to compete in college. These options may not have the same level of media exposure, but they can still provide a fulfilling and successful athletic experience.

It is important for students to do their research and explore all of their options before making a decision about where to play in college. Choosing a school based solely on its athletic program can be a mistake, as the school may not be the right fit academically or socially. It is important for students to consider their own personal preferences and needs, as well as the requirements for competing at a certain level, before making a decision about where to play in college. By being open-minded and considering all options, students can find the best fit for their athletic and academic goals.

Through thorough research and an honest assessment of your skills, you can create a list of schools that align with your academic and athletic needs. This process allows you to narrow down your options and focus on schools that will be the best fit for you. It's important to not only consider the athletic program, but also the academic offerings, campus culture, and location. By taking the time to research and evaluate your options, you can ensure that you are making an informed decision about your future.

Once you have a list of potential schools, it's crucial to actively connect with coaches and ask thoughtful questions. This shows genuine interest in the program and demonstrates that you have done your homework. Coaches want to see that you are invested in their program and have a strong understanding of what they have to offer. By asking engaging questions, you can learn more about the program and determine if it is the right fit for you. This also allows coaches to get to know you better and see your passion for the sport and their program.

Create Thoughtful Ways to Engage

Taking the time to thoroughly research the program and coach is crucial for anyone looking to join a sports team. By understanding the team's history, culture, and performance, you can gain valuable insight into their strengths and weaknesses. Knowing their recent achievements and the coach's tenure can also provide a better understanding of the team's overall success and potential for growth. Additionally, understanding the team's style of play can help you determine if it aligns with your own skills and preferences.

Equally important is getting to know the coach. Learning about their background, coaching philosophy, and what they value in players can give you a better understanding of their coaching style and expectations. This information can also help you determine if the coach is a good fit for you and your goals. Knowing the coach's values can also help you prepare for tryouts or interviews, as you can showcase qualities that align with what they are looking for in players. Overall, taking the time to research the program and coach can greatly benefit your experience and success on the team.

When it comes to making a great impression on someone, whether it be a potential employer, a new friend, or a romantic interest, it can often feel overwhelming and nerve-wracking. The pressure to make a good impression can be even higher when you don't know the person yet, and you want to make the most of the opportunities to connect. It's natural to feel anxious and unsure about how to approach the conversation and present yourself in the best light. However, the key to overcoming these feelings is to prepare and practice beforehand. By setting aside time to do a mock phone call or interview, you can get yourself comfortable with the process and gain confidence in your ability to make a great impression.

Practicing a mock phone call or interview can help you feel more at ease and prepared for the real thing. It allows you to work out any nerves or awkwardness and get a feel for how the conversation may flow. This way, when the actual interaction happens, you will be more relaxed and able to focus on connecting with the person rather than worrying about how you are coming across. Additionally, practicing can help you anticipate potential questions or topics that may come up, allowing you to have well-thought-out responses and showcase your best self. By putting in the effort to prepare and practice, you can ensure that you are putting your best foot forward and making a great impression on the person you are talking to.



Expectations For Recruiting Conversations: When, How, How Often?

In most sports, it is important to establish a relationship with the coach in order to improve your chances of being recruited. However, it is equally important to keep in mind that coaches have certain restrictions when it comes to communicating with potential recruits. In most sports, NCAA D1 coaches are not allowed to return calls until after June 15 of your sophomore year. This means that if you call the coach and they pick up they are free to talk with you but if you leave a message and expect to hear back, they may not be able to respond until after this date. The same holds true that if you choose to email or text the coach, they are not allowed to respond until after June 15 as well. This is an important rule to remember, as it can be frustrating to not receive a response from a coach. Once the June 15 deadline passes, coaches are free to communicate with potential recruits through private channels such as direct messaging, texting, or calling. This is the best time to establish a relationship with the coach and showcase your skills and potential as a player. If you are calling before the June 15th date and want to ensure you have a follow up conversation with a coach you would do well to schedule it out with a coach if they are available. Having an established time to call ensuring they will pick up helps you stay engaged with them and their program.

Initiate Contact Early:

I prefer making a phone call first when reaching out to coaches because it allows for a more personal and immediate connection. However, I understand the importance of being polished and prepared for the conversation. It's crucial to have a thorough understanding of the coach or team's program and to be able to hold a quality conversation through the phone. This shows the coach that I am genuinely interested in their program and that you have taken the time to research and prepare for our conversation. It also allows for a more organic conversation, rather than just reading off a scripted email.

If you are not quite ready to make a phone call, I believe that sending a well-crafted email is a great alternative. It allows you to introduce yourself and provide important information such as your name, position, graduation year, and athletic and academic achievements. Personalizing each email to the specific coach and program is crucial as it shows my genuine interest in their program and how you can contribute to the team. Including key information such as my athletic resume, highlight video, and academic information also helps to showcase your abilities and strengths. Additionally, ending the email with a call to action encourages the coach to respond and keeps them engaged with my recruitment process. If you don't hear back, you must understand the importance of following up with a polite email or phone call to show my continued interest in the program.



Be Professional and Polite:

Professionalism is the standard of behavior that is expected in a workplace setting. It is a crucial aspect of any job, and it is equally important in the world of sports. Treating all interactions as you would a job interview is a key component of professionalism. This means using proper grammar, avoiding slang, and being respectful in all interactions, whether it is with coaches, teammates, or opponents. By maintaining a professional demeanor, athletes demonstrate their commitment and dedication to their sport and their team.

It is also important for athletes to show gratitude and appreciation for the opportunities they are given. Sending thank-you notes after significant interactions, such as a phone call or visit with a coach, is a simple yet effective way to show appreciation. These small gestures may seem old fashioned, but they can make a world of difference to a coach. It shows that the athlete values the coach's time and is grateful for the opportunity to learn and grow. Thank-you notes can also set athletes apart from others and leave a positive impression, which can be beneficial in the long run.



Be Honest and Transparent:



Honesty is the best policy, especially when it comes to being a student athlete. It is important to be truthful about your abilities, stats, and any other offers or interests from other schools. By being honest, you are not only showing respect to the coaches, but also giving them accurate information to make their decisions. If you are not a fit for the program, it is important to communicate that to the coaches. This not only saves your own time, but also the time of the coaches who could be focusing on other potential players. It also shows integrity and maturity on your part.

Commitment is key in any sport, and it is important to communicate your level of interest to the coach. If you are genuinely interested in the program, let the coach know and show your dedication. On the other hand, if your interest wanes, it is important to communicate that as well. This allows the coach to have a clear understanding of where you stand and make decisions accordingly. With thousands of student athletes to communicate with, coaches need to know which players are truly interested and committed to their program. By being honest and upfront about your commitment level, you are not only being respectful, but also helping the coach make the best decisions for the team.

Leverage Social Media For Your Good Because Coaches Are Watching

Social media can also provide a unique opportunity for student-athletes to stand out from the competition and make a lasting impression on coaches. By using social media to showcase their skills, achievements, and personality, athletes can give coaches a glimpse into their potential as a player and as a person. It can also be a way for athletes to network and connect with other players, coaches, and recruiters in their sport, potentially opening up new opportunities and connections. However, it's important for student-athletes to strike a balance between using social media as a tool for self-promotion and maintaining a sense of authenticity and sincerity. Ultimately, social media can be a valuable asset for student-athletes in the college admissions and recruiting process, but it's important for them to use it wisely and with a clear understanding of its impact.



Stay Organized to Maximize Your Recruiting Success:

It's important to remember that during the recruitment process, you will likely be connecting with multiple coaches from different schools. It's important to keep track of all these communications to ensure that you are staying organized and on top of your recruitment process. By keeping a record of emails, phone calls, and meetings, you can easily refer back to previous conversations and pick up where you left off with each coach. This will also help you manage your time and prioritize which coaches and schools you want to focus on.



In addition to keeping track of communications, it's crucial to understand the timelines for recruitment in your sport and division. Different sports and divisions may have different deadlines for applications, official visits, and signing periods. Make sure to communicate with coaches about their specific timelines and make a note of them in your records. This will help you stay on top of important dates and ensure that you don't miss any opportunities. By setting timelines and staying organized, you can make the most out of your recruitment process and increase your chances of finding the right fit for you.

Be Patient, Persistent, and Prepared:



Trusting and respecting the process of recruiting means understanding that it is a lengthy and complex process that requires patience. Coaches receive numerous inquiries and have to carefully evaluate each potential recruit. It is important to not get discouraged if coaches do not respond immediately. Instead, continue to work hard and showcase your skills and achievements. Trust that the right opportunity will come at the right time.

Consistent follow-up is crucial in the recruiting process. It shows coaches that you are committed and dedicated to playing for their team. Keep coaches updated on your progress both on and off the field. Share new videos, achievements, and stats to show your growth and improvement. This will keep you on their radar and demonstrate your determination to be a part of their program. However, it is important to not be too pushy or demanding. Respect their time and be patient for their response.

Interviews?

As I previously suggested mock interviews are an excellent way to prepare for a college visit and the potential time spent with a coach. By using current coach friends or family members to practice answering common questions, such as why you're interested in their program, your strengths and weaknesses, and your goals, you can become more comfortable and confident in your responses. This will not only help you during the college visit, but it can also give you a competitive edge when it comes to meeting with coaches and standing out among other potential recruits.



It's essential to be yourself during mock interviews and conversations with coaches. While it's essential to showcase your skills and accomplishments, it's also crucial to let your personality shine through. Coaches are not only looking for talented athletes, but they also want to recruit individuals who will be a good fit for their team and program. By being authentic and genuine, you can make a positive impression and show coaches that you are not only a skilled athlete, but also a well-rounded individual with a unique personality.

NCAA Eligibility



Initial Eligibility Requirements for Division I

The process ensures that student athletes are qualified to meet the rigorous demands of college athletics. It ensures that they are academically prepared and have the necessary skills to compete at the collegiate level. By completing all required high school classes, student-athletes are better equipped to succeed both on and off the field.

Students should speak with their High School guidance counselor for assistance in registration and help sharing required info.

This process must be done in advance of aid offers and helps finalize your ability to receive them. It is mandatory for all first-year Division I and II student-athletes. This process serves as a way for the NCAA to ensure that student-athletes are meeting academic standards throughout high school and are on track to graduate. It also helps maintain a level playing field for all student-athletes, as they are all held to the same academic requirements. By requiring student-athletes complete all required high school classes, the NCAA is emphasizing the importance of academics and setting them up for success in their collegiate careers.

To be deemed a qualifier you need to have graduated from high school complete 16 core courses (anything that is considered college prep as certified by NCAA) 4 years of English 3 years of math (Algebra I or higher) 2 years of natural or physical science 1 additional year of English, math or science 2 years of social science 4 years of extra core (any of the above categories, foreign language)

Its important to note that 10 of 16 courses must be completed prior to senior year and you must earn a minimum core course GPA of 2.3

Division II Initial Eligibility Requirements

To be deemed a Division II qualifier you need to Graduate from high school
Complete 16 core courses over 8 semesters Earn a core course GPA of 2.0

Complete the following courses: 3 English; 2 Math (Algebra I or higher); 2
Science (including one year with a lab); 3 years extra (English, Math, Science); 3
years Social Science; 4 years other.

Division III Initial Eligibility Requirements

The requirements to compete at the Division III level are determined by
admission to the institution.

Visit Offerings



General Visits

Student athletes have several unique opportunities to visit multiple college campuses before making a final decision on where they want to attend. This gives them the chance to explore different campuses, get a feel for the atmosphere, and see what each school has to offer in terms of athletic programs. By taking advantage of these visits, student athletes can make a more informed decision about where they want to spend their college years. Even if they rule out a school after a visit it's important to spend time processing why they made the decision.

I highly recommend that student athletes make at least 2-3 visits to campus whenever possible. Perhaps the first visit consists of a casual drive-through covering a few different campuses, where the student athlete can walk around and get a sense of the campus size and surrounding environment. This can be done during the summer following their sophomore year, giving them plenty of time to gather information about feel and make decisions on what they like and what they don't like. These initial visits can be more general in nature, allowing students to get a better understanding of factors such as distance from home, weather, and other considerations that may play a role in their decision-making process. Don't expect to fully know what campus is like without students around but getting a baseline for physical environment is helpful during this time.

Overall, multiple campus visits can greatly benefit student athletes in finding the perfect fit for their academic and athletic goals.

Unofficial Visits

Unofficial visits to universities in the context of college athletics refer to visits made by prospective student-athletes to college campuses at their own expense. Unlike official visits, which are arranged and funded by the college or university's athletic department, unofficial visits are organized and paid for by the student-athlete and their family. These visits are arranged by the Prospective Student-Athlete: Unofficial visits are initiated and scheduled by the prospective student-athlete and their family. The college or university is not responsible for coordinating or funding these visits but will likely help in setting up the schedule and connecting individuals to areas on campus they are interested in exploring.

Official Visits

Official visits in college athletics refer to visits that are arranged and paid for by the college or university's athletic department for prospective student-athletes. These visits provide an opportunity for the student-athlete to experience the campus, athletic facilities, academic offerings, and overall atmosphere of the college or university paid for in part or by whole by the university. These are typically used when a university has equal interest in the student athlete and there is a good likelihood that an aid offer or roster sport will be made/offered to the student. Students must meet the initial eligibility requirements or show they are on track to complete all the requirements prior to graduation in order for schools to pay for the visit. Student athletes must meet all of the following in order to be eligible for an official visit.

- (a) A prospective student-athlete must present the institution with a high school (or college) academic transcript;
- (b) A high school or preparatory school prospective student-athlete must register with the NCAA Eligibility Center; and
- (c) A high school or preparatory school prospective student-athlete must be placed on the institution's institutional request list (IRL) with the NCAA Eligibility Center.

Regardless of whether it's Unofficial or Official it's my opinion that the next visit should take place as students enter Fall of their Junior year. At this point they should either have a solid list of schools they are interested in or be in process of developing one.

If this is your first time on that particular campus a day visit is fine and can provide a student athlete with as much connectivity and time as they want on campus. Coaches are able to assist with setting these visits up and I encourage students to work with a prospective coach to create an itinerary that meets your needs. Likely they will work with the admissions offices to assist in the process.

If this is a second visit to campus I encourage overnight visits if it's your second trip to campus as this allows an athlete the chance to not only engage on campus and do all the academic and athletics offerings but allows students to have continued connectivity to future teammates during the down time. Students can often stay with athletes on the team they are interested in being a part of.

COMPARING OPTIONS BEFORE YOU COMMIT

When it comes to choosing a school to continue your athletic career, it is important to look beyond just the athletics aspect. Making sure you are able to do an apples to apples comparison of offers each school has for you is a critical step in the recruiting process. This means taking into consideration factors such as academics, financial aid, campus life, and overall fit with the school. By doing so, you are ensuring that your decision is not solely based on athletics and that you are choosing a school that will provide you with a well-rounded college experience.

Choosing a school based solely on athletics can also be risky. Your reasons for choosing a school should go beyond just the sport you will be playing. It is important to make sure that all the non-negotiable things you desire in a school, such as a strong academic program or a certain location, are available. This will ensure that you are happy and fulfilled at the school, even if your athletic career does not go as planned. Additionally, being able to compare offers from different schools will help you make an informed decision and choose the best fit for you both athletically and academically.

After thoroughly comparing all the options and having all your doubts and questions answered, it's important to take a step back and do a gut check. This is the time to trust yourself and your instincts, and believe that you are making the best decision for your future. It's easy to get caught up in the opinions of others or the rankings of schools, but ultimately it's your own gut feeling that should guide you towards the right choice.

Choosing where to attend can be a daunting decision, but it's also an exciting one. This is an opportunity to invest in yourself and your future. Trust that you have done your due diligence and have chosen a school that aligns with your goals and values. It's time to move forward with confidence and excitement for the journey ahead. Remember, this is your education and your future, so trust yourself and make the best decision for you.

When to Let Your Coach Know You're Ready to Commit

When a coach is in the process of building a team, knowing which players are committed and ready to join is crucial. As a coach, I always appreciated when a prospective athlete let me know they were ready to commit. It not only showed their dedication and enthusiasm for the team, but it also allowed me to focus my efforts on other aspects of building the team, such as recruiting and training. This open communication and commitment from the athlete also creates a sense of trust and mutual respect between the coach and player, setting a positive foundation for their future relationship.

Moreover, letting the coach know that you are ready to commit also demonstrates your maturity and professionalism as an athlete. It shows that you understand the importance of communication and are willing to take the necessary steps to be a part of the team. This courtesy not only benefits the coach, but it also benefits you as an athlete by solidifying your spot on the team and allowing you to start preparing for the upcoming season. Overall, as soon as you know you are ready to commit, it is important to let the coach know so that both parties can move forward with confidence and excitement.

The Importance of following Up With a Coach You Will Not be Playing For

As an athlete, it can be tough to have to break the news to a coach that you will not be joining their team. After all, you may have spent months building a relationship with them and they may have invested a lot of time and effort into recruiting you. However, it is important to remember that coaches have a responsibility to their team and program as well. By letting them know about your decision to go elsewhere, you are allowing them to move on and find a replacement who will be a good fit for their team. This shows respect for the coach and their program, and can help maintain a positive relationship for the future.

It may be tempting to avoid having this conversation and simply ghost the coach, but this is not a responsible way to handle the situation. Coaches put a lot of effort into recruiting and deserve to know your decision. By communicating openly and honestly, you are also showing maturity and professionalism, which are important qualities for any athlete to possess. It may be difficult, but having a conversation with the coach about your decision is the right thing to do for both parties involved.

Verbal Commitments

A verbal commitment is one step in the recruitment process for student-athletes. It signifies the athlete's intention to attend a specific college and play for their athletic program, and it is a way for coaches to gauge the level of interest from potential recruits. However, it is important to note that a verbal commitment is not legally binding and does not guarantee a spot on the team or an athletic scholarship. The recruitment process can still continue after a verbal commitment, and coaches from other schools may still reach out to the athlete. Ultimately, the decision to attend a particular school and play for their athletic program is up to the student-athlete.

Making a verbal commitment is a serious and ethical commitment in the world of college athletics. It is important for student-athletes to understand the implications of their commitment and to communicate openly with coaches throughout the recruitment process. Reneging on a verbal commitment can have reputational consequences and may affect future opportunities for the athlete. Therefore, it is essential for student-athletes to carefully consider their options and make a commitment only when they are certain it is the right decision for their academic and athletic career.

I personally would suggest students pass on this option and continue exploring their options until they are certain about their decision and then move forward and have received and are ready to sign a athletics scholarship offer, financial aid agreement, or roster spot guarantee.

Offers of Athletics Aid

The NCAA has strict regulations in place regarding the timing of athletic aid offers. According to their rules, written offers cannot be made to prospects until August 1st of a student's senior year. This means that coaches and universities are not allowed to communicate with potential recruits about financial aid until this date. This ensures that students have completed their high school education and have a clear understanding of their academic standing before considering any athletic scholarships.

In addition to the timing restrictions, there are also certain requirements that must be met before a student can receive an official offer for athletic aid. These include completing the following.

(a) A high school or preparatory school prospective student-athlete must register with the NCAA Eligibility Center;

(b) A high school or preparatory school prospective student-athlete must be placed on the institution's institutional request list (IRL) with the NCAA Eligibility Center; and

(c) A high school, preparatory school or transfer (if applicable) prospective student-athlete must complete the amateurism certification questionnaire administered by the NCAA Eligibility Center.

These Letters of Aid do have structured timelines for when they can be signed each academic year. Current and future [NLI Signing Dates](#) can be found here.

Roster Spot Guarantees

If you are not eligible for athletics aid, it may seem like your chances of playing on a college sports team are slim. However, there is still a way to secure a spot on the team through a guaranteed roster spot. This agreement between the coach and the student athlete ensures that the student will have a place on the team, regardless of their financial situation. It not only provides peace of mind for the student, but also shows the coach that the student is committed and dedicated to playing for the team.

A guaranteed roster spot allows a student athlete to have a sense of security and stability in their college sports journey. It also allows them to focus on their academic and athletic performance without the added stress of trying to secure financial aid. This agreement is a great option for students who may not have received a scholarship or financial aid, but still have a strong desire to play for their college team. It also gives the coach the opportunity to have a talented and dedicated player on their team, without the financial burden of providing aid. Overall, a guaranteed roster spot is a win-win situation for both the student and the coach.

National Signing Periods

National signing periods, are specific timeframes during which prospective student-athletes can officially commit to a college or university by signing a written offer of athletic financial aid from an NCAA member institution. These serve as Binding Agreement for Financial Aid. By signing the financial aid agreement during a designated signing period, the student-athlete agrees to enroll at that institution. In return, the institution commits to providing the athletic financial aid outlined in the agreement, provided the student-athlete is admitted and meets NCAA eligibility requirements. Typically this means the end of the recruiting cycle as once a student-athlete signs a financial aid agreement (formerly the NLI) with an institution during a signing period, other NCAA institutions are generally prohibited from continuing to recruit that student-athlete. Thus bringing an end to the recruiting process for both the athlete and the signing school.



Important Considerations When Signing:

Early vs. Regular Signing

Periods: Some sports, like basketball and football in Division I, have early signing periods in the fall or winter, allowing student-athletes who are ready to commit early in their senior year to do so. There is also a regular signing period later in the academic year for those who need more time to make their decision.

Seven-Day Rule: Generally, once a written offer of athletic financial aid (or NLI for Division II) is issued during a signing period, the student-athlete (and their parent or legal guardian if under 21) has seven days from the issuance date to sign the agreement and have it considered valid.

Voluntary Signing: Signing a written offer of athletic financial aid (or NLI) is voluntary. Student-athletes are not required to sign on the first day of a signing period. However, there can be strategic advantages to signing early if a student-athlete is certain about their choice.

No Signing Period for Division III and NAIA: NCAA Division III institutions do not use the NLI or binding financial aid agreements with signing periods. Similarly, the NAIA does not have a national signing period, although individual programs may have their own commitment letters.

Final Touches

When you have finalized all your college decisions and are ready to officially commit to a school, it's important to share this exciting news with your high school coach. Your coach has likely played a significant role in your athletic journey and has supported you throughout the recruiting process. They will undoubtedly be thrilled to hear about your signing day and celebrate this accomplishment with you.

Not only is it a courtesy to inform your coach about your signing day, but it also allows them to recognize and celebrate your achievement with the rest of the team. Your coach can also offer valuable advice and guidance as you prepare for the transition to college athletics. They may have connections or insights about the program or school you have chosen, and can provide valuable insight as you navigate this new chapter in your athletic career. Sharing this information with your coach also allows them to continue to support and mentor you as you embark on this exciting new journey.

One of the best ways to build a strong and lasting relationship with your new coach is by taking the extra step to write them a personal letter. This simple gesture shows your coach that you are truly invested in the team and excited to be a part of it. By expressing your enthusiasm and eagerness to get to work, you are setting a positive tone for your future interactions and collaborations. Your coach will appreciate the effort you put into reaching out and will likely remember this small gesture for a long time to come.

Not only does writing a personal letter to your new coach show your commitment and dedication, but it also helps to establish a personal connection. In a world where communication is often done through electronic means, receiving a handwritten letter can feel special and meaningful. Your coach will likely feel touched by your thoughtfulness and will be more inclined to develop a strong relationship with you. This personal touch can lay the foundation for a positive and successful partnership between you and your coach, setting you up for success on and off the field.



In Conclusion

It's important to remember that every student's journey to finding the best college fit will be different. Some may have a clear idea of what they want from the start, while others may take longer to figure it out. However, by following the steps outlined in this ebook, you can approach the college search process with confidence and a solid understanding of The Recruiting Advantage. With this knowledge, you can make a well-informed decision that will have a lasting impact on your future.

As you embark on this journey, know that it may not always be easy, but it will be worth it. The college search process can be overwhelming and stressful, but with the right guidance and resources, you can navigate it successfully. Whether you choose to continue exploring on your own or seek the help of a On Track College

Advising, remember to stay true to yourself and your goals. With perseverance and determination, you will find the best college fit for you and set yourself up for a successful future. Best of luck on your journey!

In conclusion, my hope is that this book was able to get you thinking about next steps in your college selection journey and give you an idea of what all is involved. It was designed with you in mind. If you are a high school student athlete or a parent of a high school student athlete I would welcome the opportunity to explore these topics and many more as you work toward college selection. On Track College Advising services are available both in person and virtually. Our goal is to provide you with selection support from start to finish. Use www.ontrackcollegeadvising.com to set up your free consultation today.