



SUCCESSFUL SPORTS PARENTING

How to Handle College Recruiting

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Soon after the turn of the century when an Ivy League university constructed a stadium that would seat tens of thousands of spectators for the university's football games, collegiate sports became big business. They have continued to be so. If your son or daughter has had a truly outstanding high school sport career, he or she is going to be invited into this multibillion-dollar enterprise. He or she will be recruited.

For the high school athlete and his or her parents, recruiting can be a very positive culmination of a fine youth athletic career, or it can mean weeks of irritation, frustration, and anxiety, leading eventually to a much-regretted decision about the athlete's future education and athletic opportunity.

Playing the recruiting game demands a well-thought-out game plan. What follows are some guidelines to how the recruiting game is played and how to end up a winner.

- Know the rules. Don't try to play this game without knowing them.
- Know how good your athlete really is. How badly are people really going to want him or her in their program?
- Set down some guidelines and rules for dealing with recruiting in your own personal family situation. What are you going to allow and what is going to be off limits in your particular situation?
- Know as specifically as possible what your son or daughter really wants in a school. What kind of an academic program and school should it be, and where should it be located? What kind of sport program will your child be happiest in? These things should be well thought through before the recruiters are in the living room.
- Parents and athletes alike have to realize at the outset that they must be completely honest with themselves and the school's representatives. Prolonging the attention and courting may be a titillating game, but the athlete will end up the loser. Recruiters who are not dealt with in a reasonably straightforward way won't be misled. Your athlete isn't the first one they ever tried to entice to their school.

How Will Colleges and Universities Know About Your Athlete?

Intercollegiate sport is an intensely competitive activity, and one can feel confident that little of the talent that makes for winners is ever overlooked. In spite of the instances in which eventual sport stars were overlooked true athletic talent at the high school level is not very apt to be by-passed. Youth sport coaches get great satisfaction in bringing to the attention of college coaches their 'well-coached' young stars. The college coaches, their assistants, former athletes, and other alumni all monitor high school and youth sports in various geographic areas, on the lookout for the potential collegiate performer. Depending on the sport, there may also be highly efficient professional recruiting services used by collegiate sports programs. If your son or daughter has the potential to be a collegiate athlete, college coaches are very apt to know about it.

Playing any game demands that the players know and abide by the rules. It is especially true in this recruiting game. Breaking the rules (and the easiest way to break the rules is not to know them) can cost your son or daughter a college athletic career and perhaps a college education. At the first sign of college athletic recruitment, get a copy of the [NCAA Guide for Student Athletes](#). The young athlete and his or her



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parents should be familiar with the information in this pamphlet and should heed the statement: "Do not permit prospective student athletes to jeopardize their collegiate eligibility through involvement in violation of NCAA legislation."

How Good Is Your Athlete?

How Interested Are Colleges Going to Be?

It is essentially impossible for any of us as parents to be completely objective in appraising the real abilities and talents of our children. It is hoped that most of us perceive our offspring (regardless of intermittent evidence to the contrary) as sensational. The high school or club coach of your talented son or daughter may also lack objectivity. Yet it is important to get a reasonable measure of the young athlete's true potential and capacity to compete. Is the athlete physically big enough or fast enough to compete in college? The six-foot-five high school basketball player is going to be middle height in college basketball and may be a half-step too slow in the eyes of a college coach. It is best to know from the start any limitations your athlete might have and at what level of college competition he or she can play.

Establishing Some Recruiting Ground Rules for You and Your Athlete

Before things go any further, some questions about handling recruiting are in order. Who will talk to the recruiters? How are you to decide whom to talk to? Whom will you allow to visit in your home? How are you to control the effects of these invasions on your athlete's school responsibilities and after-school life? How are you going to keep some balance with other family members' interests and priorities?

Some planning can eliminate much of the disruption and potential distress. First, some decisions should be made as to what the athlete sees as top priorities in his or her college experience.

- How important are prestigious academic opportunities, and in what general academic areas do your athlete's interests lie?
- How competitive is he or she academically?
- Does your athlete need academic assistance?
- Does the athlete feel strongly about staying close to home, or is there a sincere desire to go to some other part of the country?
- Will your athlete go anywhere for the right academic or sport program?
- What kind of sport program will the athlete be most successful and satisfied in?
- What style of play, coaching, and team personality will he or she find most satisfying?

Answering these-questions early in the recruiting process may eliminate a large percentage of interested schools. It is not uncommon, if they have kept in close touch with the athlete's coach during these discussions, for the family and athlete to have the coach screen all the interested schools and their recruiters. The coach can determine which schools satisfy the criteria developed in earlier discussions. Probably no more than a half-dozen schools will be of real interest to even the most-sought-after high school star.

The Rules in Brief

No recruiting is allowed during the active sport season in high school. The athlete is restricted in the number of colleges he or she can be invited to visit, and the number of visits is also regulated. The number of home contacts is limited as well. Visits by recruiters are followed by visits to a limited number of campuses. These visits, of course, are highly structured sales pitches carefully orchestrated to impress the



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student athlete. He or she will have no problem getting to see that part of university or college life that is thought to appeal most. Students are shown the athletic facilities and they visit with the athletes-perhaps staying in the dorms or apartments and eating with the athletes-but they can spend no more than forty-eight hours at each campus visit.

Experienced coaches often gain a good deal of insight into the personality and maturity of the athlete during the on-campus visit. This social glimpse is an important part of the recruiting process for both parties. Is this big, quick athlete going to be a coachable team player? More than one young athlete has found a school's interest cooled or terminated after the on-campus visit.

The NCAA has legislation concerning high school academic performance standards required for admission to varsity athletic programs in member colleges and universities. They are more stringent than in the past and are a sharp reminder to the talented high school athlete not to neglect high school scholastic responsibilities.