

College Recruiting: Never Call A Coach Dude

by Mel Stewart

Getting recruited is a once in a life-time opportunity. You will never go through a process like this for the rest of your life. It is a privilege and an honor. If you treat it as such then you will come across to the college coaches with respect and maturity.

College coaches are allowed to start making phone calls to recruits on July 1 for D-I and June 15 for D-II after the completion of grade 11. D-I coaches are only allowed to call once a week. You are allowed to call them at any time and any number of times. D-III and NAIA schools don't have any restrictions on phone calls.

Your objectives:

- Leave a great impression by presenting yourself with respect and maturity
- Engage the coach with good in depth questions about the school, the swim program and something from their bio. Make the conversation fun so that the coach looks forward to calling you back next week
- Ask questions that are important to you and that help you get to know the coach
- Write it down. Take notes on every conversation you have with a coach and keep it by the phone.
- Exude self-confidence, but don't be cocky. You want to help the coach see your potential. Let them know what your goals are and what you intend to do differently in training to accomplish them. Goals that sound good, but don't have a plan to reach them are just dreams. Coaches aren't that interested in just dreams.

Recruit: My coach and I had a goal setting meeting and I am excited about this season. I will be :57.9 or faster in the 100 fly at sectionals in March. I will be improving my kicking in practice, I am going to discipline myself to take 5 kicks off each wall and I am adding an extra day of core strengthening.

Get your act together before coaches start calling.

- Talk with your family about what to expect
- Make sure they take messages for you if you are not available
- Keep a pad and pen next to the phone at all times
- Set up a quiet place to take calls. For a coach it gets annoying to try to talk with a recruit with the TV blaring in the background or having your brother and sister yelling at each other.
- Determine a schedule for when you will be available and make sure your family lets the coach know when to call back.
- Make sure you have a list of questions that are most important to you. Ask about academics first then swimming.

Treat every coach with RESPECT. You should feel honored when any college coach calls you. Even if you are certain that you are not interested in a school, a coach deserves your respect. Politely listen to what they have to say then you can let them know that you are not interested. Do it with "class."

Do your homework

If you have some idea of the coaches who will be calling you go to the schools' website and get to know some things about the program and the coach. Write it down. Look at the archived news articles at the end of the season to read what the coach considered the highlights of the season. Take a look at the coach's bio to get some personal info about the coach.

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Home or cell?

You want coaches calling you on your home number so you can get away from distractions and have your notes in front of you. There is nothing more annoying for a coach than to call a recruit on their cell phone when they are in the car with all of their buddies.

Cell phone greeting.

It is OK to give out your cell to some coaches, but make sure your voice message represents you well. If your voice message says something like: “Hey dude, too bad you missed me. Leave a message and I might call you back if I feel like it” CHANGE IT!!!

Be available.

For a coach, there is nothing more frustrating than to call a recruit a half a dozen times and not catch them. They will gravitate toward the recruits who are easier to reach. You don't have to take calls 24 hours a day, so make sure you and your family have a game plan to have them take calls when you are not available. They need to write down the coach's name, the exact school and any message the coach wants to leave. Establish specific days and times when you will be home and available to take calls and make sure your parents and siblings let the coaches know when you can be reached.....and BE THERE!

What and what not to talk about on the first call.

Don't ask about scholarship in the first call. The first call is a “get to know you” call. The coach is trying to determine if they will offer you a recruiting visit in the fall. You should be honored if a coach wants you to come for a visit, but don't commit on the first call. Take down any dates the coach gives you and let them know that you have to check with your parents and your coach to make sure you will be available. Don't commit to a trip until you get an idea of whether or not your parents can afford the school.

One the second or third call here is the conversation you need to have with the coach;

Coach: We really want you to come a visit us on the weekend of September 25. That's our big recruiting weekend and you are one of our top recruits.

Recruit: Coach thank you. I am honored and excited to come see the school, meet you and the other coaches and the swimmers, but I have to be honest with you, finances will be a concern for my family and my parents want to be sure they can afford for me to attend a school before I commit to a visit. They would like to get an idea of how much you think it might cost for me to attend. Can you give me an idea so I can let them know?

You may or may not get a straight answer from the coach, but at least you have let them know that finances will be an issue and that you won't be able to walk-on.

How to engage the coach:

“Coach Smith I read that you were named conference coach of the year last season. That must have been exciting.” (Let the coach talk about the year they had and their success).

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“Coach Smith I read on your bio that you and your wife have a 10 year daughter. Does she swim?” (Let the coach talk about his/her kids and family).

“Coach Smith I read that you are a serious tri-athlete. How much do you train a week?” (Let the coach talk about something that is fun and important to them other than swimming)

Ask the coach’s advice. “Coach Smith do you have any suggestions for a pre workout meal in the morning. I drive myself to practice every morning and I fix my own breakfast. What do you recommend for your swimmers to eat before practice? What you have accomplished by asking the question in addition to receiving nutritional information is to show the coach how responsible you are by getting yourself up and to practice in the morning.

Ask yourself: “How does it feel to have a college coach wanting you to come and swim for them?” You should be proud of yourself and allow your self-confidence to build as a result.

Every coach deserves your respect and undivided attention when they call and**never call a coach “Dude.”**