

Recruiting: What Coaches Want

Traits most coaches look for in a swimmer

To improve chances as a college applicant, it is important to consider the recruiting process from a coach's perspective. In doing so, potential recruits are able to understand a coach's desires and make themselves more attractive candidates. While not all coaches seek the same swimmers, talents, and characteristics, they do share common needs. The following is a list of traits (in no particular order) that NCAA swimming coaches might find desirable. Assess yourself in each of these categories and attempt to improve in weaker areas to enhance your appeal and attractiveness.

Success

Obviously, coaches pay close attention to a swimmer's past results. Certain coaches only recruit swimmers at the Senior National level; meanwhile, other programs seek swimmers of varied success. Past results are indicative of a recruit's talent and ability to compete and contribute in the NCAA atmosphere. In studying meet results, each coach attempts to fill the needs of his or her team and will certainly look to fill team weaknesses first. A team lacking a breaststroker might overlook a strong freestyler, hoping to build a strong and solid program overall.

Potential

Many coaches are attracted more to a swimmer's potential than his or her achievements. In addition to looking at a recruit's best times, coaches also track yearly progress in an attempt to assess a swimmer's development and potential. Coaches want to see that in the course of four collegiate years his or her recruits will improve and remain enthused and dedicated swimmers.

Versatility

Swimmers capable competing and contributing in several events and strokes are more attractive than one or two event specialists. Versatility is highly rewarded in the NCAA dual meet format where athletes are allowed to swim numerous events and relays (depending upon the meet's format). Additionally, versatility is more highly prized by smaller teams that struggle to fill lanes during dual meets. Larger teams are able to be more selective and recruit stroke specialists with greater ease.

Leadership

Coaches seek talented swimmers and leaders. Leaders are not necessarily the fastest swimmers; they are, however, important ingredients to a team's success. Team captains,

for instance, are highly regarded for their leadership, dedication, and ability to motivate. Coaches recruit swimmers who exude such traits.

Work Ethic and Dedication

Similarly, coaches desire swimmers with strong, consistent work ethics. A dedicated swimmer is not only bound to improve and contribute, he or she will motivate others to train and compete with more intensity. Dedication and hard work are necessary ingredients for swimming success, particularly for distance and middle-distance swimmers.

Academics

Coaches seek recruits that are motivated both in the pool and in the classroom. Recruits must meet the academic requirements of a particular college or university. Furthermore, a coach wants to be sure that each recruit will remain academically eligible throughout his college-career. Thus, coaches desire recruits who can succeed both in and out of the pool.