

Recruiting Information and Athletic Scholarships

Being realistic as you venture into the process of athletic scholarships and recruitment is one of the most important things you can do for your student athlete and yourself. On the average, only 5-6% of high school athletes will go on to play at the collegiate level. Of those, and even smaller percentage (approximately 2%) will be awarded an athletic scholarship to play at the collegiate level. "Full ride" scholarships are rare and most often, scholarships of smaller amounts, combined with academic scholarships, if the student qualifies, are more common. Athletic scholarships for incoming freshman are often smaller amounts with the opportunity for the athlete to get more in following years, based on their participation, follow through, and development on their college team.

As your athlete begins the recruitment process, most often in their junior and/or senior year of high school play, it will be important to have an open and honest conversation with them regarding their abilities, being realistic, and the commitment that they will be entering, if they are given the opportunity to receive a college athletic scholarship. Being a college athlete, receiving a scholarship, is time and energy consuming. For example, college football players put in up to 40 hours per week, equivalent to a full time job, for their commitment to play.

The following are a quick summary of 8 tips from Lynn O'Shaughnessy, CBS MoneyWatch. These tips have been edited, however, you can find the entire article at the following website: <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/8-things-you-should-know-about-sports-scholarships/>

- 1. **The odds of winning a NCAA sports scholarship are miniscule.** Only about 2 percent of high school athletes win sports scholarships every year at NCAA colleges and universities.*
- 2. **Full-ride sports scholarships are scarce.** There are only six sports where all the **scholarships are full ride**. These so-called head-count sports are football, men and women's basketball, and women's gymnastics, volleyball, and tennis. In these Division I sports, athletes receive a full ride or no ride.*
- 3. **Scholarships can be dinky.** Coaches can slice and dice these awards as they choose, which can lead to awfully small scholarships.*
- 4. **Take flattery with a grain of salt.** Coaches may tell teenagers that they have lots of scholarship money to divvy out, but prospects shouldn't assume that they will be the recipients... What really matters is the scholarship amount contained in the school's official athletic grant-in-aid form.*
- 5. **A verbal commitment is meaningless.** Weaver has heard of coaches telling athletes as young as seventh-graders that they want them for their team. There is no guarantee that a child who verbally commits to a team will end up on it. A coach can change his mind about a prospect.*

6. Playing high-level college sports will be a full-time job. Division I athletes may as well be called full-time employees of their schools because of the long hours they work. Because of the huge time commitment, as well as time away from campus, Division I athletes will often not be able to major in rigorous disciplines, such as the sciences and engineering.

7. Skip hiring an athletic recruiter. Coaches don't want recruiters to get in the middle; they prefer direct dealings with the student athletes.

8. Forget about slick videos. Coaches don't want athletes to send lengthy videos. Two or three minutes will usually suffice... And you absolutely don't need to hire a professional to do the filming. Post your action video on YouTube and send coaches the link.

Make sure your child has considered what they wish to pursue academically after high school. This will be an important factor when they begin to think about colleges and universities and athletic programs. It needs to be a good fit for them academically if they are to graduate with the opportunities that they are interested in. Many colleges and universities will combine academic scholarships with athletic scholarships, when possible to increase the amount of money they can offer to your student. This also benefits them, as it will allow them to make their available athletic scholarship money go further. Academic scholarships will often require a specific GPA and ACT or SAT score to be eligible. Don't let your student let their academics in high school slide, thinking that their athletic ability will cover them.

It is important that your child take the lead in the process. Reaching out to college coaches and recruiters, to let them know they are interested in that school, is important. If a college coach or recruiter contacts them, they need to respond, even if it is just to let them know they are not interested. If your student athletic, ignores the contacts, forgets to "get back to them", or waits an extended amount of time to respond, they may lose an opportunity. It is your students, responsibility to communicate with the college coach or recruiter and work for their possible scholarship. It is not the high school coaches job to "find the scholarship" for your child. Your high school coach will be able to respond to coaches and recruiters regarding your child's skills, leadership abilities, and at times, academic success. It is not their responsibility to search out opportunities for your child.

College and University coaches and recruiters want to get to know your son or daughter. As a parent it is important to stay involved and communicate with your child about the contacts they are having from college coaches or recruiters, and be prepared to "guide" them through the process. The coach or recruiter will want to hear from your student, not you for the most part. If the college or university is actively pursuing your athlete, they will get to know you, as a parent and family also.

Help your student athlete by keeping them organized, mapping out their options, assisting them with understanding the scholarship / recruiting process, and helping them see the financial outcomes of the options / decisions. Help them be ready to respond to the questions that will be asked, such as what they are interested in pursuing for academics / future careers; expectations of the coaching staff that will be working with them; what the coaching staff and academic staff can

expect from them. Coaches are building a team looking for specific positions and skill level needed but also for students who “fit” into the type of team that they are trying to build.

“Game day” visits, can help your student get a “feel” for a campus, athletic program, and the coaching staff. Being invited to this type of visit does not mean that your student will receive a scholarship, but it means that they have been noticed by that schools recruiting staff. An “official visit” from a college or university, holds more weight in the recruitment process. This is an opportunity for your student and yourself to spend some time on the campus, get to know the coaching staff, athletic program, academic teaching staff, and the community. Typically, these visits are 24 to 48 hours in length and expenses are paid by the college or university. Keep in mind that your student can only participate in 5 of these visits if any one of them is Division I or II.

College coaches and recruiters, if following your student, will often communicate by text, phone, email, and in writing on a frequent basis during the recruiting process. This is exciting for a student athlete. It may at times, also be misleading. It is difficult to stay objective, and not be emotional when your child or you have a college or university that stands out as number one. The bottom line in the recruiting process, if an athletic scholarship is the intended outcome, is the official offer in writing, and the Letter of Intent. College coaches can and often do change direction with their recruiting efforts based on the athletes they have been able to secure for commitments and their current team needs.