

The College Athletic Recruiting Process

THE FACTORS AND RESPONSIBILITIES INVOLVED IN THE RECRUITING OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT/ATHLETES

There is a school and a sports program for everyone! It just takes a little effort on YOUR part to find the right match for you!

COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES CONSIDERATIONS

- Standards for admission & majors offered.
- Size
- Location
- Cost
- Facilities
- Social

SPORTS PROGRAM CONSIDERATIONS

- Division I, Division II, Division III, NAIA, JUCO
- Scholarship or non-scholarship offerings
- If a scholarship program – fully or partially funded
- Competitive level within their division or conference
- Status of the Softball program at school
- Influence of coach in admissions process
- Personality and/or philosophy of the Head Coach and their staff
- Style of play and/or training methods of the Head Coach and their staff

ROLE OF THE STUDENT/ATHLETE

1. Determine how your sport will impact your goals for attending college.
2. Decide level of commitment to the sport (level of program).
3. Decide which colleges best meet your criteria and goals (academic, athletic and other).
4. Send an athletic resume and a video to the schools that meet your criteria.
5. Regarding VIDEOS:
 - Do not send full games unless a coach requests it.
 - Do not spend crazy amounts of money on a “jazzy” video. College coaches don’t need the bells and whistles, the background music, etc.
 - Send a 2-3 minute or less video of highlights of your play...offensive, and defensive game clips, maybe some skill drills, etc. You want your video to highlight your skills, speed, athleticism, game sense, and hustle.
 - Video some of your high school games, travel team games, camp play, etc., and put together the best clips.
6. Remember to write **what number you are, your jersey color, and the team you are playing for**, so the college coach can easily identify you.
7. Consult with your high school/travel team coach for information, input and advice on all aspects of the recruiting process, including the sending of your athletic resume and a coach’s evaluation.
8. Obtain and submit all documents necessary for certification to the NCAA Clearinghouse via your high school guidance office (www.ncaaclearinghouse.net)

IMPORTANT!

Be certain to consult with your school guidance counselor or college advisor about:

1. Your eligibility status (core courses, GPA, SAT requirements, ACT requirements) etc.

2. The academic appropriateness of your college choices, and the status of your transcripts & Clearinghouse release forms.

- ✓ Make sure transcripts (official or unofficial) with PSAT, SAT or ACT scores are sent to any college that is actively recruiting you and/or makes an offer of an official visit.
- ✓ Take advantage of opportunities for exposure (camps, off-season leagues, tournaments, etc.) and work to improve your fitness & strength level.
- ✓ Fill out and return questionnaires to appropriate schools.
- ✓ Decide which schools to visit.
- ✓ Consult with parents on the financing available for college. Submit financial aid documents, “pre-reads.”
- ✓ Complete the application process for all viable college choices.
- ✓ Keep grades up to maximize options for school choice.
- ✓ As soon as possible after you have made your final decision on where you will attend college, let all coaches recruiting you know what you have decided.

ROLE OF THE PARENT

1. Be involved at every stage of the student’s decision-making.
2. Become knowledgeable about the **NCAA Clearinghouse** procedures (www.ncaaclearinghouse.net) and the NCAA recruiting rules and regulations (found online at www.ncaa.org).
3. Work closely with the high school/travel team coach and the school’s guidance office.
4. Meet with or talk to the college coaches that are recruiting your daughter in order to keep fully informed about her status in the recruiting process and to get all of your questions answered.

ROLE OF THE HIGH SCHOOL/TRAVEL TEAM COACH

1. Provide information on and encourage participation in camps, clinics, off-season leagues, travel team teams, meets, tournaments, etc.
2. If possible, meet with parents and /or players before the process starts, or certainly early on, to explain how it works and what your role will be.
3. Send: letters, resumes, evaluations or video s and /or help players do same.
4. If possible and/or appropriate, make arrangements to video all competitions.
5. Return questionnaires to colleges.
6. If possible, make phone calls to college coaches (both introductory & follow-up).
7. Consult with the player’s guidance counselor about: NCAA eligibility and the appropriateness of his/her college choices, academically and otherwise.
8. Become knowledgeable about the NCAA Clearinghouse procedures (www.ncaaclearinghouse.net).
9. Become knowledgeable about the NCAA recruiting rules and regulations (www.ncaa.org).
10. Become knowledgeable about the level of competition in college divisions (I, II, III, NAIA, JUCO), the various athletic conferences (SEC, PAC-12, Big 10, ACC, etc.) and ideally individual institutions within these divisions or conferences.
11. Make an honest appraisal of players’ ability &/or what level they might play or be competitive in college.
12. If knowledgeable enough, advise as to which schools or which type of schools are an appropriate match for the academic and athletic ability of the player.

ROLE OF THE GUIDANCE COUNSELOR/HIGH SCHOOL

1. Advise on whether a college is a good match – academically or otherwise.

2. Provide & process the NCAA release forms with the student's high school transcript for initial and final certification.
3. Provide GPA, class rank and unofficial transcripts as needed.
4. Assist with the college application process – transcripts, secondary school report and recommendations.
5. Make students aware of the core course, GPA, and SAT or ACT educational requirements to play in the NCAA at their specific program of interest (Div I, II, III, NAIA, JUCO).
6. Assist students with achieving academic excellence and preservation of their Academic GPA.

ROLE OF THE COLLEGE COACH

1. Observe and evaluate information on prospective players.
2. Contact athletes they decide to recruit.
3. Make offers of official (expense paid) visits.
4. Make arrangements for official and unofficial visits for recruits.
5. Answer any and all questions about the institution and Softball program.
6. If possible, let the recruit know where he/she stands in the admissions process.
7. Let the athlete know where they stand in the recruiting process.
8. Make scholarship offers.
9. Follow all NCAA rules in the recruiting process.
10. Make the recruit and parents aware of the rules and how the whole process works, especially the two signing periods.

ROLE OF THE NCAA and THE CLEARINGHOUSE

Websites - www.ncaa.org and www.ncaaclearinghouse.net respectively

1. Provides release forms, information on NCAA rules for academic eligibility and rules for recruiting to all secondary schools (in brochure sent to guidance offices and in downloadable forms on their web site).
2. Initial certification necessary to be able to take official visits to institutions based on HS transcript that includes test scores (ACT or SAT).
3. Final certification for eligibility to participate in college athletics based on official final HS transcript and SAT or ACT scores.

ACTION PLAN FOR COLLEGE BOUND

1. Compile a tentative list of colleges. You can start this as early as the 2nd half of the sophomore year and should make every effort to have something together before **Fall** of your junior year.
2. Make initial contact with schools (send cover letter, resume and schedule of upcoming Softball activities).
3. You can start this as early as the 2nd half of the sophomore year and should make every effort to complete no later than **Spring** of your junior year. If at all possible do this prior to the summer tournament and/or recruiting camp season.
4. During **end** of sophomore and through the junior year, make unofficial visits to some of the schools that you are interested in. Do your best to contact and set-up a meeting with the coach on these visits.
5. Send updated academic and sport related information, including a schedule of your upcoming summer participation in tournaments and camps.
6. Take every opportunity to participate in your sport to maximize your exposure and increase your skills in the summers **before** your junior and senior year.
7. Fulfill NCAA Clearinghouse obligations in **mid-summer to early fall** of your senior year if you are considering a Division I or II program. www.ncaaclearinghouse.net
8. Schedule and make college visits (official and unofficial). Take unofficial visits at **end of sophomore year, throughout the following summer, and throughout junior year**. Official visits can only be taken after the first day of classes of your

senior year – schedule them in the early fall. Remember – you must be invited by the college coach to take an official visit.

9. Study and consider information about Early Decision or maybe Early Action admission to a college and Early Signing (of the National Letter of Intent) for athletic participation and/or a scholarship in early fall of the senior year. The Early Signing time frame is generally the third week in November.

10. Decide which colleges to apply to and when to apply. The time frame is usually early to late fall of the senior year.

11. Send completed applications and high school transcripts to colleges, usually before the winter holiday break.

12. Decide when to verbally commit to a school and/or sign with a school for a scholarship. When you have made your decision be sure to notify all schools recruiting you and thank them for their interest. The time frame for these decisions is now mid-summer to early fall to mid-fall of your senior year. The time frame for this is getting earlier each year!

BASIC INFORMATION TO INCLUDE IN A PLAYER PROFILE SHEET

1. Academic and Athletic Goals: academic major and/or program of study, if you know. Also include information about the level of competition you are seeking in your sport. Only include information about your interest in pursuing an athletic scholarship and/or your interest in seeking assistance in gaining admission, if you have already had some contact with the school.

2. Personal Data: name, phone number, address, E-mail address if you have one, birth date, year in school, name of school, height, weight and parent's name(s).

3. Sport Background and Data: position, event(s), years of experience, where you have played, to include – Schools (HS), travel teams, tournaments, recent camps and out of season leagues. Also include a copy of your high school or travel team schedule and pertinent stats if you have them. If you have the information, a schedule of your summer and/or off season play should be included. If you have video s available let them know. If appropriate, also include information about your involvement in other sports.

4. Academic Information: current GPA, class rank (estimate if not available), current SAT or PSAT scores if available, type of high school curriculum, i.e. college prep, Honors, GT/AP, etc.

5. Recognition Received: Any significant honors or recognition received, i.e. all-league, all-American, all-metro, selection to all-star teams, etc. Also include information about your team's accomplishments.

6. References: The names and contact information of coaches and/or other individuals who could serve as references or sources of information about your ability and/or level of play in the sport.

DO'S & DON'TS

DO NOT

- Have parents overly involved in the recruiting process (ie; constantly phoning and e-mailing coaches to promote their daughter, asking numerous questions, etc.).
- Think a school is not interested just because they don't call you each week.
- Bad mouth or disparage another program or coach.

DO

- Pursue the schools you are interested in aggressively!
- Figure out what your goals are. (ie. getting a scholarship, using Softball as a means to help gain admittance to a top academic school, playing on a top ten team that has a chance to win a national championship, etc.)
- Articulate these goals to the coaches who are recruiting you
- Have a tentative list of schools where you would like to make official visits before the July 1st calling period starts
- Behave in an upfront and honest manner
- Tell a coach early on that you are NOT interested in their school (if that is the case) so they won't waste their time. Be sure to thank them for their interest.

- Check your weekend fall schedule (for SAT or ACT testing dates, homecoming, fall team sports tournaments, etc.) to see when you can best make official or unofficial recruiting visits to colleges.
- Try to schedule them as early as possible, but definitely before the Early Signing Period in November
- Get an unofficial copy or copies of your high school transcript (preferably with SAT, ACT or PSAT scores on it) during the summer before your senior year to send to college coaches who are recruiting you.
- Get the Clearinghouse forms in Mid-to-late summer from your high school guidance office or off the NCAA Clearinghouse web site at: www.ncaaclearinghouse.net. Register on line or send-in your part. The yellow and pink forms (Copy 1 & 2 if you download) should be taken to your high school guidance office to process.
- Read all the valuable information in the brochure (NCAA Guide for the College-Bound Student Athlete) that contains the Clearinghouse eligibility forms or get the same information off the Clearinghouse web site.

SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK COLLEGE COACHES

- Can I get into your school on my own? If not, can you help me gain admission to your school?
- If you can help me gain admission, exactly what do I have to do to make this happen? (ie., at least 1800 on the SAT, or 23 on the ACT, at least a 3.0 in academic subjects 1st semester, two solid letters of recommendation from academic teachers, etc.)
- Where am I, as far as rank order, on your recruiting list? You said you are recruiting a catcher/pitcher this year? If you can tell me, where do I rank now among the other prospects you are recruiting?
- How many players are you recruiting this year?
- Do classes and practices sometimes conflict? What happens in this case?
- What kind of Academic Support is available for your players?
- Why do you think your Softball program would be a good fit for me? (some areas that should be covered would be coaching style, physical demands, offensive/defensive philosophy, chance to play)
- Would your school be a good fit for me (would I like it) if I was not a Softball player? Why or Why not?
- What are my chances of getting any scholarship money?
- Will my status change any if I decide to sign early or decide not to sign early?

SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK THEIR PLAYERS

- What are your practices like?
- What are the coaches like when things are going well? Going badly?
- Are the coaches, and is the school helpful if I am struggling in a class?
- What is the social life like?
- How do the seniors treat the freshmen?

SOFTBALL RECRUITING GUIDELINES: CONTACTING COACHES

Unofficial Visits: A prospect may visit an institution at the prospect's own expense any number of times, and may visit a particular institution unofficially as often as they like.

Official Visits: A prospect may accept an offer from a coach to make an official (paid) visit to their institution. The visit is limited to 48 hours in length, must occur after the opening day of classes of their senior year, and all meals and entertainment must be comparable to that of normal student life.

Division I and II: A prospect can make a maximum of five (5) official visits, but not more than one to a particular institution.

Division III: A prospect may make an unlimited number of visits, but not more than one to a particular institution. Official visits to Division III schools do not count against the maximum number of visits in Division I and II.

Signing a National Letter of Intent (NLI): An institution may indicate to a prospect in writing that an athletics grant-in-aid (scholarship) will be offered by the institution, however the prospect cannot sign a form indicating acceptance of

such an award before the initial signing date for the NLI (National Letter of Intent). Exact dates can be found by accessing www.nationalletter.org.

Division I/II: An NLI can only be issued in conjunction with an athletics grant-in-aid offer. Failure to honor the NLI can result in a loss of up to two years of eligibility. Subsequent to the prospect signing an NLI that institution is unlimited in the number of phone calls, contacts, and evaluations for that prospect. All other institutions should cease recruiting the prospect once they are made aware of the prospect's signing of an NLI.

Division III: Does **NOT** offer an NLI program for athletics.

OFFICIAL VISITS

WHAT IS AN OFFICIAL VISIT? Any visit that is financed in whole or in part by an institution or in Division III by a representative of athletics interests (booster) is an official visit.

WHEN CAN A PROSPECT MAKE AN OFFICIAL VISIT? An expense-paid visit may not be provided until the opening day of classes of the prospect's senior year in high school.

HOW MANY OFFICIAL VISITS MAY A PROSPECT TAKE? An institution may finance one visit to its campus for a prospect. A prospect may take five total official visits.

WHO ELSE CAN FINANCE AN OFFICIAL VISIT? In Division III, any person may transport or pay the transportation costs of a prospect to visit the institution's campus provided that person accompanies the prospect on the visit.

WHAT ARE THE REGULATIONS FOR TRANSPORTATION? An institution may pay the prospect's actual round-trip transportation costs provided a direct route between the prospect's home and the institution's campus is used. It is permissible to pay a prospect's actual costs for reasonable expenses (e.g., meals, lodging) incurred while traveling to and from campus. Also, any member of an institution's athletics department staff may provide transportation for a prospect between the campus and the bus or train station or the nearest major airport.

WHO MAY RECEIVE TRANSPORTATION EXPENSES? A prospect's friends or relatives may receive cost-free transportation to visit an institution's campus only by accompanying the prospect at the time the prospect travels in an automobile to visit the campus. However, the trip shall count as an official paid visit for each recruited student-athlete in the automobile.

HOW LONG CAN AN OFFICIAL VISIT BE? An official visit shall not exceed 48 hours and begins when the prospect arrives on campus. At the completion of the 48 hour period, the prospect must depart the campus immediately; otherwise, the institution may not pay any expenses incurred by the prospect upon departure.

WHERE CAN A PROSPECT STAY? A prospect can be provided lodging as regular students would. Local commercial facilities may be used but at a scale comparable to that of normal student life. Additional persons may stay in the same room of a prospect, but the institution may not pay the costs resulting from the additional occupants.

WHAT TYPE OF ENTERTAINMENT CAN BE PROVIDED? An institution may provide entertainment, which may not be excessive, for a prospect and a prospect's parents or spouse and only within a 30-mile radius of the institution's main campus. It is not permissible to entertain other relatives or friends of a prospect at any time at any side.

CAN A PROSPECT RECEIVE CASH FOR ENTERTAINMENT PURPOSES? An institution or a booster may not provide cash to a prospect. However, the institution may provide \$30 for each day of the visit to a student-host. These funds are to cover all actual costs of entertainment, excluding meals and admission to athletics events.

WHAT ELSE CAN A STUDENT-HOST RECEIVE? It is permissible to provide the student-host with an additional \$20 per day for each additional prospect the host entertains. Also, the host may receive a complimentary meal and a complimentary ticket provided the host is accompanied by the prospect.

TIME LINE

FRESHMAN AND SOPHOMORE YEAR

1. Play on the High School teams (JV, Varsity, etc.)
2. Stay focused academically. NCAA eligibility standards keep getting tougher. The grades you earn now will determine admission to college, initial NCAA eligibility, and your future success.
3. Attend camps and play travel softball, but not to the exclusion of everything else. Coaches and admissions counselors look for well-rounded student-athletes.

4. Find summer sports camps/clinics located in areas that might be of interest to you when selecting a college.
5. Remember - all four years of your high school grades count!
6. Keep track of your personal stats for all teams and any athletic honors you receive.
7. Let your school and travel team coach know of your desire to play sports in college.
8. Start researching colleges. Consider what each level of college Softball entails (Division I, II, and III).
9. Begin thinking about academics — what are your career goals, and what types of things might you study to achieve them? Talk to your parents, guidance counselors, teachers, coaches, siblings, and older teammates to get information.
10. Sophomore year - request academic and admissions information from college admissions offices. Some NCAA programs cannot provide athletic recruiting information other than a questionnaire and camp information until September 1 of your junior year in high school.

SOPHOMORE YEAR

1. Develop a relationship with your high school guidance counselor and let them know you want to play sports in college.
2. At the middle to the end of your sophomore year, and the summer following your sophomore year, take as many UNOFFICIAL VISITS as possible to get a feeling for campuses, Softball programs, coaches, players, locations, size of the school, etc.
3. When going on unofficial visits – call the coach ahead of time to set up an opportunity to introduce yourself and express your interest in their school. DO NOT just show up at a college coach's office unannounced!
4. Video your sophomore spring season games and your early summer (following sophomore year) camps and tournaments. If possible, send a highlight and a letter of introduction to the colleges you are interested in by the end of that summer.

JUNIOR YEAR [EARLY FALL]

1. Start a detailed sports resume/personal profile. Make sure to proof read for any mistakes!
2. Compile a list of college choices. Try not to have more than 10 schools on this list....more than that is overwhelming.
3. Send a second letter to coaches – including sports resume/personal profile, list of summer tournaments and camps and spring schedule. Make sure you verify the coach's name and address before you send it!
4. Return immediately any questionnaires you receive from coaches.
5. Until July 1st following your junior year, e-mail is the best way to correspond with college coaches.
6. Let coaches of schools you are NOT interested in know ASAP! Thank them for their interest, and let them know you are concentrating on other schools at this time.
7. Talk to your high school guidance counselor about the NCAA Clearinghouse.
8. Take advantage of any Junior Day's you are invited to....where college coach's bring their junior recruits on campus to learn about the school and their Softball program.

REMEMBER – you must be invited by the college coach to attend their Junior Day – it is not something you invite yourself to!

MID-YEAR

1. Organize and file all correspondence.
2. Send e-mail or letter updates to the schools you are interested in regarding classes taken, grades, fall tournaments, etc.

END OF JUNIOR YEAR

1. Continue to work hard in school. Keep your grades up! Send another letter with updated academic (unofficial transcript with PSAT or SAT scores,) and related sports information. Include updated schedule of summer sports participation.

JUNIOR-SENIOR - EARLY SUMMER

1. Review letters received from coaches. Check to make sure you have responded to all schools that have written to you.
2. Look over your college list. Begin to narrow it down to 4-5 schools (if you haven't already). Do you want to add to that list? If so, send introductory letter now.
3. Some factors to consider when narrowing your list: Academic profile, level of Softball, type of school, distance from home, and cost of attendance. Be realistic when focusing your list — include “sure things,” “reaches,” and a “long shot” on your list.
4. Contact the coaches at the top five schools you are considering — let them know they are one of your top choices.
5. Participate in your sport and maximize your exposure! Attend camps where you have the best possibility to increase your skills and to be seen by those coaches from colleges in which you are interested.
6. Send a letter including summer camp dates, team schedule, and possible plans to visit the college if you have not done so already.
7. Have copies of your transcript, SAT/ACT scores, and senior class schedule available to send to coaches, particularly those you intend to visit.
8. Tentatively plan “unofficial visits” to your top schools during the late spring and summer.
9. Be proactive — if you are very interested in a particular school, make sure they know it.

LATE SUMMER

1. Student-Athlete should call coach to talk about college visits.
2. If necessary – send updated highlight video from junior year and recent summer camps and tournaments.
3. Fulfill NCAA Clearinghouse requirements. **KNOW THE RULES!**
4. Start requesting college applications.

SENIOR YEAR [EARLY-LATE FALL]

1. Review your college list. Focus on those schools that seriously interest you.
2. Send another letter that includes updated information, your team's schedule, and possible plans for campus visits.
3. Study and consider information about Early Decision or Early Action admission to college and Early Signing for a scholarship.
4. Have your school coach write a letter of recommendation and send it to the coaches.
5. While you are waiting for feedback on your video and/or letters, prepare for your SAT's.
6. Decide when to apply to college(s), and when to commit to a school and/or sign with a school for a scholarship.
7. Schedule College visits including an interview with the coach.
8. Keep in contact with coaches that have expressed an interest in you. Arrange an overnight campus visit so you can stay with a team member and become more familiar with their program.
9. Keep studying! All colleges want transcripts of first semester grades.
10. Don't forget to apply to schools and tell coaches you have submitted an application to their school.

FINALLY

When you have made a choice, write all coaches you have been working with, thank them, and inform them of your decision.

RECRUITING REALITY CHECK

If you have been as proactive as possible with a specific school and they have never responded to you or given you any indication that they are interested in you – **MOVE ON!**

The reality of the situation is that they are focusing on other recruits. There are plenty of other schools out there!

Good Luck!