

From the NCAA Guide to College Bound Student Athletes:

REGULATIONS AND IMPORTANT RULES ABOUT RECRUITING

It is very important that you are aware of the regulations concerning how the college athletic coach can recruit you. If rules are broken, it may not only cause the coach and university problems, but may also affect your athletic eligibility to play. A complete guide on these rules called the *NCAA Guide for the College Bound Student Athlete* can be obtained at most collegiate athletic departments or by writing to the NCAA, PO Box 6222, Indianapolis, IN 46206, telephone (317) 917-6222.

THE NCAA CLEARINGHOUSE

In order to play at the NCAA Division I or II level, you must complete and submit a form to the NCAA Clearinghouse. This organization's job is to determine the initial athletic eligibility of the prospective student-athlete, and it is very important that this form is carefully submitted as a mistake here could prevent further participation. When this form is submitted, you must also have your high school send in your grades, SAT scores, etc. Information can be found at www.ncaaclearinghouse.net, telephone is (877) 262-1492.

Make sure that you start checking on your likely status with the Clearinghouse prior to your senior year in high school. This will give you enough time to make any adjustments in your academic schedule to ensure your eligibility upon graduation from high school. You should ask for a copy of the NCAA Clearinghouse booklet from your guidance counselor, or from the NCAA, so that you can compare your grades on the recognized course list with the specific requirements of the Clearinghouse. If you find that you are deficient in some courses that the Clearinghouse requires, you could possibly retake courses or add additional courses during your last year in high school.

Make sure that your high school sends your final academic records and transcripts to the Clearinghouse. You must also ensure that your SAT or ACT scores are sent to and received by the Clearinghouse. If they do not receive all of the information, your athletic participation may be delayed or prevented completely. Remember, the Clearinghouse must deal with hundreds of thousands of prospective student-athletes, and its specific requirements must be met exactly.

If the Clearinghouse does declare you ineligible, you can either try to correct the deficiencies or you may apply to a college that is not governed by the Clearinghouse and have generally less stringent requirements for participation.

THE GAME PLAN ON HOW TO BE RECRUITED

Every year millions of dollars are awarded in athletic scholarships by colleges and universities. In order to maximize your potential for receiving an athletic scholarship, the following steps should be followed:

I) Ask Yourself: What are you Looking for in a College?

You should find a comprehensive listing of where the sport is being played. The NCAA has a listing of the schools, which sponsor men's and women's fall, winter and spring sports.

A. Academic Level Offerings

The most important reason for attending college is to receive an education and graduate with qualifications which will enhance your career prospects. It is also important to note that the athletic level of competition at a college has nothing to do with its academic level. Based upon your high school grades, Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores and American College Testing Services (ACT) scores and other academic qualifications, determine what level of academic challenge you feel most comfortable with. There are numerous guides available to colleges and their various academic challenges and reputations. High school guidance counselors, family and friends should be consulted as your short list colleges is determined.

B. Location

In what part of the country would you like to spend 4 years? Knowledge of the city or town and how that relates to future plans of employment, etc. is important.

C. Size of College.....Public or Private

Are you comfortable in a very large setting of 20,000 or more students, or do you prefer 3,000? Each school has its own characteristics, and a visit to the campus is of great benefit. If a coach is seriously interested in you, it is possible that the school will pay for an "official visit" to the campus. Unofficial visits can also be very beneficial.

D. Cost

How much can you and your family afford? Each college varies in cost. There are basically 4 types of financial costs to consider: tuition, room, board (food) and fees. Make sure you get accurate information from the admissions department at each college. Do not rely upon unofficial cost estimates from coaches.

Also, request details on any increases in costs that are under consideration by the college so that you are not surprised in years 2, 3 and 4 by any unexpected increases.

E. Merit Scholarships and Need-Based Aid

Depending upon your academic background and family financial background, you may qualify for academic merit-based scholarships and/or need-based aid. You should inquire at each financial aid office as to what merit scholarships and financial aid are available.

F. Level of Play/Chances of Making the Team

At what level can you play, or to what level can you develop? Your coaches and advisors can assist you with this. Try to play at the highest level that you can as this will inevitably advance your game the most in the long run. Try and see the team play at your final 5 schools under consideration.

G. The Coach

What type of coach are you most comfortable with? The coach will be a very important factor in determining your athletic success in college. You should research his background well and ask some of his/her past and current players about their opinion of him/her. Often, the coaches' contacts and involvement in other outside soccer activities will determine how well you become known and how far you progress with your game after college.

You should try to ask yourself the preceding questions and persevere until you get answers. It may not be easy to answer these questions at first but keep trying. It may be beneficial to write down what things are important to you and then rank them in order of importance. This process will eventually lead to success.

2) LEARN ABOUT SCHOLARSHIPS AND FINANCIAL AID

The NCAA allows Division I and II colleges to award full and partial scholarships. An athletic scholarship is awarded for only one year at a time but usually covers 4 years, provided the student maintains satisfactory academic performance and meets all of the team's practice and game schedule requirements. A full scholarship consists of all tuition and fees, room, board and books. Division III schools cannot award athletic scholarships, only need-based aid.

Each college and coach has a slightly different definition of the word “scholarship.” It could include any one or a combination of other terms like financial aid, academic grants, loans, work study and other aid from private or government sources.

When the scholarship is offered, it is important that the exact type of scholarship is clearly explained and how the scholarship relates to the overall cost. Like any important agreement, the obligations, terms, conditions and length of agreement should also be explained.

The correct definition of an athletic scholarship according to the NCAA is money given to athletes through the school’s registration system for college expenses consisting of tuition and fees, room and board and books. A school may not award more funds than the actual total cost of attending college.

Coaches may award partial scholarships for any of the costs mentioned above. This allows the coach to award scholarships to more players as the coach has a limited number of scholarships that can be awarded each year.

Financial aid is money given to a college student who cannot afford to go to college without some financial assistance. This help is given to students based upon their and their family’s ability to provide funds. The student should complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the school’s financial aid application and any other forms for potential aid available at the college’s financial aid office. The student’s and/or family’s federal income tax forms will be needed to complete the financial aid forms.

FINANCIAL AID CAN COME IN THE FOLLOWING FORMS

A. Grants

These are monies that are given to the student and are not required to be paid back. Having good grades and test scores, applying early, being persistent and lots of research will greatly increase your chances of receiving grants.

B. Loans

There are many different types of loans available, and each school may have different loans that can be obtained. The loans will have to be paid back, usually after graduation; and each loan will have certain interest rates and loan qualification requirements.

C. Work Study

The student may be able to work on campus and earn work study funds. Usually, a student will be able to earn up to a certain amount for the year in work study, and this amount will be determined by the overall financial aid package. Jobs in the library, gym and cafeteria are typical types of work study employment.

3) PRESENT YOURSELF PROPERLY

Remember that you are competing against many other prospective student-athletes for the places in colleges, scholarships and financial aid. You and your family should plan and prepare your overall personal presentation with great care.

Some Useful Tools for Presenting Yourself are:

A. Athletic Resume

A well put together athletic resume detailing all of your sporting accomplishments and activities. List as references some of your coaches who know you and would be glad to recommend you. Be sure to check with the coaches first so that they are prepared for any contacts that they may receive from interested college coaches. The more distinguished the background of the coach the better.

B. Newspaper Clippings

Newspaper clippings are often an impressive thing and can be copied for distribution.

C. Video Tapes/DVD/Youtube

Video can be used, but make sure that they are of reasonable quality and that it is easy to determine who you are on the video. Let the coach know what number, color jersey you are wearing.

D. Online Registration

You can register online at such sites as Gotsoccer.com and Soccerincollege.com.

E. Essay

An essay written by you detailing your academic background, high school activities, jobs and volunteer work, hobbies and interests, personal characteristics and significant events in your life is of interest to the coach as he tries to determine how you would fit into his team and college.

MAKE IT EASY FOR COACHES TO FIND YOU AND LEARN OF YOUR ABILITY

A. Olympic Development Teams- Academy Teams

Trying out for and making the Olympic Development Program is beneficial for younger players and will enable you to travel and be seen by good coaches. The advent of Academy Teams (U15-U18) age groups has added another dimension to college preparation.

B. Tournaments and Camps

Attending quality soccer tournaments and camps will also allow you to be seen and noticed, as well as improve your game. Inform schools well in advance of tournaments you will be attending.

C. Visits

Making a visit to the campus and interviewing with the coach is an excellent way to determine almost instantly whether you like what you see and allow the coach to meet you and learn of your background. Make sure that you follow up with phone calls and a letter thanking the coach for his time after the visit. You can take an unlimited number of unofficial visits.

FOLLOW A GOOD PLAN DURING HIGH SCHOOL

Take an academic course load that ensures that you will meet the NCAA requirements before graduation: For the class of 2008 you will need 16 core courses, 4 years of English, 3 years of Math, 2 years of Science, and 1 extra year of English, Math or Natural Science, 2 years of social studies and 4 years of extra core courses from any category above or a Foreign Language. In these 16 courses, you must

maintain a minimum grade point average as well as a 2.0 cumulative GPA for all courses taken during high school. The NCAA has established a sliding scale (see attached sheet).

A. Freshman/Sophomore Year

During your sophomore year, it is a good idea to take the PSAT which will give you an idea of your strengths and weaknesses and an early look at the format of the SAT which you will take in your senior year.

ATHLETIC PLAN

Start to create your list of athletic accomplishments and participate in select programs for advanced coaching and high level of play.

B. Junior Year

Academic Plan:

Create a list of schools that you might want to attend and register for the SAT and/or ACT. Attend any meetings relating to college such as college fairs and collect school catalogs. Start to visit college campuses and develop a list of your extracurricular activities. It is also a good idea to attend a prep course for the SAT and/or ACT if available.

ATHLETIC PLAN

Arrange for your coach to give you a thorough evaluation of your ability and recommend the appropriate level of competition. Be sure to keep your newspaper clipping and videos and keep up with your record of athletic accomplishments and extracurricular activities.

Read and understand the NCAA guide book mentioned above and attend some ODP tryouts and soccer camps. At this point, your coach should be working on your behalf to inform college coaches of your play and be distributing information on you.

Most college coaches attend youth tournaments to scout for good players. Being on a traveling club team that participates in top quality youth tournaments will give you great exposure. Many of the better tournaments actively organize the college coaches to come in and view the players. A player profile sheet should be made available to tournament organizers so that they can pass these on to the college coaches in attendance.

C. SENIOR YEAR

Academic Plan:

See your guidance counselor and register for the NCAA Clearinghouse. The phone number is (877) 262-1492. Request and complete college applications and prepare accurate, neat information, including a personal statement about yourself. Ask your guidance counselor to mail them for you and follow up to make sure that they were received. Take the SAT and/or the ACT **EARLY** in the year.

Schedule visits to any schools that seriously interest you, and complete the FAFSA form as soon after January 1 as possible and mail it. When visiting the campus, take the time to talk to an admissions representative, take an official tour of the campus, and meet some players on the team and other students. Don't be bashful. The only bad question is one that is not asked. If you have to fly to the college, or if you have considerable expense in getting there, the coach may be willing to pick up the costs as an "official visit." This will depend upon how interested the coach is in you.

ATHLETIC PLAN

Start sending your personal package of information to coaches from schools that you are interested in. Include a schedule of your high school season and also of any youth tournaments that you will be playing in. Follow up with a personal phone call. According to the NCAA, you are allowed to call the coach as often as you like, but the coach may call you only a limited number of times. Until July 1 after your Junior year, coaches cannot return your calls. Emails are a great way to communicate.

THE DECISION

If you have followed an organized plan through high school, and if you have covered most of the points in this information, you will be in a position to make an informed and educated decision

The final decision will probably not be easy, and you will go through some uncertainty and maybe some sleepless nights. Always remember that the primary reason for attending college is to receive a quality education and degree which will improve your long-term career prospects.

Finally, if you work hard, play hard, stay organized and HAVE FUN, your high school and college experience should be the best time of your life.