

Assisting Student-Athletes with the College Search Process

**Caryn Haskins
Haskins116@yahoo.com**

**Former Guidance Counselor- CCHS
Former Div. I Asst. Softball Coach-
Providence College, Boston College
Div. III Pitching coach- Tufts, Babson College**

Eligibility Requirements

Eligibility (Div. I or II)

- In order to be eligible to play at Div. I or II level (in any sport) you must register with the NCAA Eligibility Center
 - www.eligibilitycenter.org
- Create certification account,
 - Send transcript & test scores, request Amateurism certification, check for open tasks, update info
- NCAA ID- top right of eligibility account-
 - ALWAYS HAVE WHEN CONTACTING NCAA and COLLEGES

Eligibility Center (cont.)...

- Need to complete CORE COURSES
 - Summer school, VHS, previous high schools, etc.
 - Initial vs. final clearance
 - See guidance website for more information, and counselor with questions, to review transcript if necessary
- Send SAT/ACT Scores to Eligibility Center (code=9999)
- Minimum GPA requirements (different depending on division) - only core courses included

If Not Registered with Eligibility Center...

- Cannot go on official visit to colleges as a high school senior.
- Cannot practice or compete with the collegiate team upon arrival to campus as a college freshman.
- Want to have this all in place when you start communicating with college coaches

Eligibility (Div. III)

- Do not need to complete Core Courses, or meet GPA minimum
- Create a free Profile Page
 - Give you NCAA ID to include on resumes and recruiting questionnaires
- Can create anytime in high school

Searching for Schools/Programs

Consider These Questions:

- Do you really want to play sports in college?
What experience do you want?
- Do you understand the time commitment college athletics entail?
- Can you balance the academics and athletics?
- Do you understand how being a recruited athlete will affect your college process?
- Are you simply using your athletic ability as a “lever” or will you fully commit to the college team once you arrive on campus?

Also...

- What do you want to get out of your college experience (study abroad, clubs, etc.)?
- What type of role do you want on the team?
 - Want to start as freshman? Content to be a role player? Or just part of the team?
- Be realistic and honest with yourself (ability, what you can handle, etc.).
- The earlier you begin the process the better-
Give yourself the gift of time!

Division I, II, III

- Size of school
- Time commitment
- Scheduling requirements
- Number of sports
- Amount of scholarships
- Funding
 - Ivies = Div. 1 in most sports, but do not offer scholarships

Find the Right Match

- Academically, Socially, Athletically
- Don't settle based on athletics
- Career ending injury test!

ACADEMICS

- What majors/areas of study are you considering?
- What does your academic profile look like (GPA, SAT scores, etc.)
- What are you looking for in a school academically?
- Liberal arts, Math/Science/Tech, Research University, etc.

Admissions offices admit students, coaches do not

- Highly selective colleges often have admissions requirements far above the NCAA guidelines. Some of these schools are regulated by the league rules/ agreement:
 - The Ivy League Academic Index
 - The NESCAC banding system
 - Institutional Standards
- The more you have to offer in all realms (high GPA, test scores, intangibles, work ethic, coachability, athletic skills, etc.) the more coaches have to work with...

SOCIAL/ENVIRONMENT

- Consider both school and athletic program
 - Will be spending a great deal of time with your team
- What type of school are you looking for?
 - Size, culture, location, distance from home, diversity, religious affiliation student-body, setting (rural, suburban, urban, college campus)?

ATHLETICALLY

- Intensity of program (this may differ within a division)?
- Resources/support available to athletes
 - Academic
 - Medical
- Success of team, coach (if this is important to you)
- Potential open spots on team for your position
 - Check roster online, look for positions, region of country, graduating seniors, etc.

Scholarships

- Offered at the Div. I and II level.
- No Scholarships at the Div. III level or in the Ivy League
 - But the more you have to offer (academically and athletically) the more likely they can “help” you out, merit money, etc. .

Now what?

Determine “recruit-ability”

- Talk to people that know you as a player and whom you trust
 - High school coaches, club team coaches, private instructors, etc.
- Ask them
 - What is your “market value”?
 - Div. I, II, or III ability?
 - Walk-on vs. Scholarship athlete?

Coordinate lists of schools

- Talk with your coaches about schools that fit your ability/needs athletically.
- Then bring list to your counselor to discuss the academic fit of these schools.
- Make sure there are likelies on the list both for academics and athletics (and financially if necessary).

Things to Know

- Lots of NCAA rules around when a coach can evaluate and communicate with student-athlete
- Each sport has its own recruiting calendar
- Each sport/division/conference is different and these rules continue to evolve
- Club coaches are often the way around this - recruiting can start much earlier than the recruiting calendar, and in the early stages can be the primary contact with the college coach.

Establish Contact Early...and Often!

- You need to go to them; they are not going to come to you
- Initiate contact early
 - Start contacting the coach as soon as you are interested in their school and program.
- Be persistent
 - Coaches are busy
 - Typically assistant coaches are doing recruiting piece
- Coaches start compiling their data base early
- Club coaches may be willing to put calls in to coaches

Initiating Contact with Coaches

- Develop template email
 - Then personalize it for each school
- Emails should be direct, but professional
- Stay organized
 - Create spreadsheet of coach contact info
- Always indicate on everything
 - NCAA ID, Name, Year of Graduation, Club Team/Coach Contact Info, Uniform Number, position, Email, Twitter, etc.
 - Beware of your online footprint!!

What to Email/Send Coaches:

- Athletic Resume
- Link to skills video
- GPA, test scores
- Transcripts
 - If it's going to help your cause, send up front.
 - If it's not totally in line with a school's admissions requirements, let them get to know you and your level of play a bit first
- High school and club team info
 - Coach's contact info, schedule, and follow-up before important games and showcases.

Athletic Resume:

- Your Name and Contact Info
- Academics - Courses, GPA
- Standardized Test Scores
- Athletic achievements
- Times, splits, handicap, etc.
- High School, Team names
 - Contact info for high school/travel coaches and guidance counselor
- Google examples for your sport

Skills Video

- Look professional/put together/uniform tucked in
- Display your skills
 - Individual skills
 - Game footage- put your best stuff in the first 30 seconds
- Short and sweet
- Utilize internet to post- YouTube link is best
- Outsourcing not necessary

After the initial contact

- Return questionnaires promptly
- Follow-up- The squeaky wheel gets the grease!
- Coaches won't always respond- don't get offended- KEEP EMAILING!!
 - Division III sometimes kids are contacting coaches early on, but coaches may not start recruiting for that class until later- still reach out and stay on their radar, but know they may not respond

Visibility

- Get out and be seen...coaches aren't coming to you!
 - Showcases, tournaments, regattas, club teams, clinics, etc.
 - Before tournaments- let coach know team, number, schedule, times, fields, etc.
 - Any online/zoom sessions
- Be present on social media
 - X, Instagram, FB, Threads

Keep in Mind



- Coaches are always watching
 - Warmups, interactions with coaches, parents, teammates, online
- We want coachability and student athletes who are going to contribute positively to the culture of the team!
 - How do you support teammates, how do you pick yourself up after failure, positive attitude
- Stand out! Go the extra mile
 - Picking up the balls after BP,
- Note to parents...we are recruiting families too!

Visits

Visiting Schools

- Among many things, assess environment, location, academics, coach, players, athletic facilities, supports.
- Schedule appointment with coach
 - Have questions ready...student should be doing most of talking...ask timeline questions
- If unable to reach, stop by office to try to meet them and express your interest (but be respectful of their time)
- Ask the coach if you can speak with members of the team (if not now, via email, zoom, social media, etc.)

When talking to a coach

- Show you've done some research on their school
 - Coaches want kids who want to go to their school
- Ask personalized questions-
 - "What classes should I be taking senior year to help me align with your admissions standards?"
 - What is the team's style of play?
 - How much school do they miss for games?
- Always be ready to answer questions as well!
 - Should be the student athlete doing the talking not the parent. Be engaging!

Questions to ask

- How long has head coach been there?
- What is team's style of play?
- What have players majored in? Are there majors that are discouraged?
- What has the graduation rate been over the last five years?
- How much school does the team miss due to their travel schedule (different schools, conferences have different rules around this)?
- What types of Academic, Medical, Social-Emotional support is available?
 - ie., Tutoring, Sports Psychologist

It's OK to ask the coach...

- Where would you see my role on the team?
- What recruiting tier am I in?
- Given my transcript, am I within range for this school?
- How many other pitchers/goalies/forwards (kids in my position) are you recruiting for the upcoming class?
- What are the requirements to receive an academic scholarship?
 - Are there other options for financial assistance?
- What is the admissions policy for your school?
- Is it a fully funded program?
 - Means different things for different sports

Things to ask players

- How does the coach views academics?
- What life is like on the road with the team?
- What are their experiences like with professors in terms of their support for athletes?
- Get a sense for the chemistry of the team and a sense of how the team views/respects their coach.
- Do they have a chance to make other social connections outside of the team?
- What is a typical day like in the off-season, in season?
- What other schools did they look at and why did they ultimately choose X?

To consider after

- How do players speak about coach, experience, academic value, team morale?
- Does what coach says align with what players say?
- What value does the coach place on academics?

Official Visits (Div. I and II)

- Occur senior year
- Must have initial clearance through Eligibility Center
- Expenses paid by institution
- 48 hours maximum
- One per institution
- Maximum of 5 per prospect
- Test Scores & Transcripts
- Pre-read of application done beforehand
- Recent Trend - Decrease Official and Increase Unofficial
- Remember- always being evaluated!

Official Visits (Division III)

- Can still happen at these institutions, but only at schools with athletic dept. who have the money to do so.
- Often done on a smaller scale-includes overnight with the team, but may not be able to pay for transportation/flights/parents, etc.
- Occur senior year
- One per school
- Pre-read is often done beforehand

Unofficial Visits (Division I, II, III)

- Visit to campus
- Some more formal than others
- Expenses paid by PSA
- Occur anytime
- Unlimited

*With recruiting timeline and college deadlines starting earlier, these are becoming increasingly popular

Finding the Match!

Preread...

- Div. I, II, or III
- Coaches may ask for your application packet so they can “walk it over” to admissions for a preread
- Typically done in the late spring of 11th grade
- Be prepared!
 - Have things together in the spring of junior year (application, transcript, letters of rec, test scores, etc.)
- Likely letter?

Early Verbal Commitments

Senior Year:

- Sign NLI if offered athletic scholarship
- Less formal version offered at Div. III schools (Celebrating Letter)
- Often expect top recruits to apply Early Decision or Action, and sometimes verbal even earlier
- Official Visits as a formality



Other Options

- Walk-On opportunities may be available at schools in all divisions - Still start process early!
- Questions to ask: Do they offer walk-on opportunities, what is the tryout process, what would the role be?
- Intramurals /Club - often still competitive, may travel a bit

Remember:

- So much of recruiting is out of your control and often times involves being in the right place at the right time.
- Therefore, focus on what you CAN control and do all that you can to make yourself as attractive to coaches as possible
 - Strong academics, versatility in your athletic abilities, looking at appropriate schools, continuing to improve athletic skill, coach-ability, work ethic, attitude, effort, commitment, demeanor, etc.