

# ATHLETES AND THE COLLEGE RECRUITING PROCESS

## A HANDBOOK FOR THE STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES



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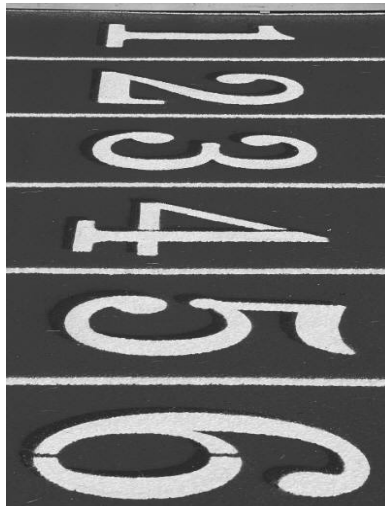
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## INTRODUCTION

Dear Student Athlete and Parent(s),

You have spent countless hours participating in your sport. You work tirelessly on becoming the best athlete that you can be. You give 110% each day at practice and at each competition. Athletics has been a part of your life for as long as you can remember. Now, it is time to go to college. And, you have decided that you would like to continue to be a student athlete in college. In fact, you have decided that you would like to see if there are collegiate teams that would be willing to offer you a scholarship to play for them. This guide is intended to help you successfully navigate the college choice process while pursuing this athletic scholarship.

The athletic college choice process is in many ways the same as the college choice process for any student. Yet, it is also different in many ways. They are alike in that academics and your college education should be first and foremost in your mind as you create your list of potential schools. They are different in that there will be more complexities and more considerations for you as you go through the process.

This guide was put together with information gathered from a number of sources including:

- Lewis University “The Student – Athlete” Handout, Frank DuBois
- *Advising Student Athletes Through the College Recruitment Process*, Michael D. Koehler
- *Student Athlete Guide to College*, Princeton Review
- National Collegiate Athletic Association website

While this guide is a good introduction, we recommend that you consult the sources listed above as well as in the “Useful Resources” section of this guide for additional information. And, we recommend that you contact your counselor and coach to discuss your specific interests and concerns as soon as possible.

## PLANNING CALENDAR

### JUNIOR YEAR

1. Meet with your college consultant about your career goals, academic interests, and NCAA requirements.
2. Take the PSAT (in October) and the ACT (in February)/SAT I (in January). Now is the time to see how you score and to work on improving those scores.
3. Attend college fairs and workshops on college admission.
4. Starting in December, work with your college counselor to create a list of appropriate colleges for you to explore.
5. VISIT college campuses. This is critical. You may meet with the coaches while you visit a campus but if you are considering becoming a Division I or Division II NCAA Athlete, you may not accept any free item from the coach or admission staff UNLESS everyone who visits the campus receives that item. If the coach provides you with any support of your visit costs, then it is an "Official Visit." You may only have five official visits while you are being recruited. These are done during your senior year.
6. Create your Athletic Resume. And, begin to compile video of your athletic performances.
7. Write emails to the coaches at each of the schools you are interested in attending. Include your Athletic Resume. The coaches may only have very limited contact with you prior to July 1 of the summer after your junior year. But, you should put yourself on their radar – the earlier you do this the better. So, a good guideline would be to write now, send another at the end of the school year, and then one at the beginning of July.
8. Begin to gather recommendations from your coaches. This is particularly important to do from coaches that have worked with you outside of the school – like at sports camps and on select teams.
9. At the end of your junior year (after you receive your final grades for the junior year), enter yourself on the NCAA Clearinghouse. ([www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org))
10. Attend sports camps.

### SENIOR YEAR

1. Make sure you are registered with the NCAA Clearinghouse.
2. Write to the coaches at the schools you are interested in again with your senior sports schedule and with an update on any awards you may have received as well as an update on your summer athletic activities.
3. Finalize your college list.
4. Become informed of and aware of the "signing dates" for your sport.
5. File your applications for admission.
6. Be 100% certain of your final choice before signing with any team.
7. Before committing to a school, sit down with your parents, your college counselor, and your Priority coach to evaluate the pros and cons of each choice.
8. Once you make your final choice, write a thank you note to the other coaches you have been speaking with to let them know of your choice and to let them know you appreciated their time and assistance.
9. Make your final decision based on a meaningful college education, excellent career preparation, and a satisfying athletic experience (in that order)!



## “Working Together”

### Checklist for the Student Athlete

Use the following checklist to remind yourself throughout your junior year of the tasks you need to perform to find the “right” college experience.

#### **GENERAL TO DO’S THROUGHOUT THE YEAR:**

DID I:

- Meet with my college counselor to discuss the college search process?
- Assure that I registered to take both the SAT and the ACT?
- Review my transcript to make sure that everything is correct and that I understand what my academic record is going to look like to a college admission office?
- Begin to visit college campuses?

#### **IN-SEASON TO DO’S:**

DID I:

- Make note of any awards or honors received for athletics or academics? Did I keep copies of any time I was mentioned in the paper?
- Make note of my statistics for this season and previous seasons?

## POST-SEASONS TO DO'S:

DID I:

\_\_\_ Assure that I met with my coaches to assess my performance and my potential to play in college? Did I get recommendations on colleges that I might be a good athletic fit at?

\_\_\_ Assure that I put together my Athletic Resume?

\_\_\_ Assure that I sent letters to coaches at all of the schools that I am interested in pursuing?

\_\_\_ Review the NCAA rules regarding recruiting and eligibility?

\_\_\_ Plan on attending an appropriate "showcase" program?

This form is adapted from Mike Koehler's Football Coach's Survival Guide, Prentice Hall.

## WHAT EXACTLY ARE THE NCAA, THE NAIA, AND THE NJCAA?

College athletics are governed by one of three organizations. These organizations are the:

- National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)
- National Association for Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA)
- National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA)

These governing bodies decide the rules and regulations that keep the various college sports and teams in line with what the organizations and their members determine are appropriate standards.

The NCAA is the largest and best known of the three organizations. Regardless of which of the three organizations governs the school you decide to attend and play a sport at, it is critical that you understand and abide by the eligibility requirements for that organization. In general, if you meet the eligibility requirements to be a NCAA Division I athlete, you will be eligible for the other organizations as well. However, you should check with each organization to be certain.

Websites:

- NCAA: [www.eligibilitycenter.org](http://www.eligibilitycenter.org)
- NAIA: [www.playnaia.org](http://www.playnaia.org)
- NJCAA: [www.njcaa.org](http://www.njcaa.org)

## THOUGHTS ABOUT NAIA AND DIVISION III SCHOOLS

NAIA AND DIVISION III SCHOOLS:

High school athletes who are interested in playing a sport in college need to know a little bit about the NCAA's Division III schools. These generally are the smaller schools that don't receive national coverage by the media but that have every bit as much tradition and history as the major colleges – sometimes more. They are not allowed to award athletic scholarships, but more young athletes play in Division III schools than any other, and they generally receive among the finest educations in the country.

The NAIA is an alternative organizing body to the NCAA. NAIA schools may award scholarships. They range in terms of size of school and types of programs offered. They offer programs that are competitive and carry as much tradition as many NCAA programs.

Think about these facts:

- Division III and NAIA colleges and universities constitute some of the best schools in the country. They are among the most prestigious and provide some of the best educational programs.
- Division III and NAIA schools provide some of the best placement opportunities in the nation after graduation – for both jobs and graduate schools.
- Most Division III and NAIA schools provide informal and personalized educations. Students usually get to know their professors quite well.

- Division III and NAIA schools provide increased contact with professors and fewer contacts with graduate assistants.
- Student athletes who are not being recruited by major college programs may still have the chance to play their sports in Division III and NAIA colleges.
- Division III and NAIA schools tend to be extremely competitive both academically and athletically. They have some of the finest athletes in the nation.
- Student athletes often receive preferential treatment regarding admission. *If you are competitive academically*, maybe not quite as competitive as other applicants, your involvement in sports will help you get into Division III and NAIA schools.



## WHAT THE SCOUTS LOOK FOR IN PROSPECTS

*NOTE: This page was adapted from an article by Joe Butler specifically addressing what basketball coaches and scouts are looking for in a player.*

What do college coaches and scouts look for in a high school prospect? There are many items so let's categorize them but in no specific order.

- A. Physical presence. Whatever the requirements of your sport, coaches and scouts will consider how you physically resemble the best of players in the sport. So for instance, in basketball, how tall you are is a key factor.
- B. Athleticism. Speed, quickness, jumping ability, strength, etc. The basic physical attributes that will indicate you have the ability to develop into a top-flight athlete in your sport.
- C. Intelligence. Many athletes think that because they are physically good that they do not need to worry about the intellectual side of the game or of life. This is a mistake on the athlete's part. More and more college coaches are looking for high school players that make great decisions both during the game and in life.
- D. Intensity. College coaches are looking for players who play hard each and every day. Players that give it all during practice, in the classroom and on the playing field.
- E. Attitude. An athlete's attitude can be a key factor for a college coach. Do you accept responsibility for your actions? Are you willing to accept direction from your coach? Will you take a backseat to other teammates when it is in the best interests of the team?
- F. Fundamentals and Hard Work. Last but not least, nothing is more pleasing for a scout or coach than to see an athlete who really knows the fundamental skills necessary for their sport. Too often athletes focus on their strengths and ignore their weaknesses. Players who continually work hard on improving all aspects of their sport are the ones most likely to be noticed.



## WHEN TO DO WHAT

Everything really begins for a student athlete that is looking to be recruited in the junior year. When to begin this process in your junior year depends upon your sport and what works for you timing wise. However, you should definitely begin this process before the end of your junior year.

### Blue Chip Athletes:

Every once in a while an athlete comes along of exceptional ability. This student will be highly touted in the local media and highly recruited by colleges and universities throughout the United States. This is the RARE exception. This athlete and his family should spend time defining what is important to them in terms of academics, geography, support programs and athletic environment. This athlete will have to be able to clearly articulate these priorities and determine whether or not a particular school can meet these priorities. The athlete and his family should make certain that his coaches and his college counselor have a clear understanding of these priorities. Often the issue for this athlete is not can I get a scholarship but rather how do I make the right choice from among these offers. Again, it should be reiterated... this is the rare exception.

### Most Athletes:

Most athletes will need to initiate contact with coaches and colleges in order to get noticed. This does not mean that these athletes are not talented or do not have the potential to play scholarship-based intercollegiate athletics in college. It just means that there are many, many high school athletes in the country and you have to do something to make yourself visible.

### Checklist of Activities for Most Athletes:

1. Assemble an Athletic Resume.
2. Write to the coaches you are interested in playing for:
  - a. Go on-line to each of the major organizing units for collegiate athletics and get a list of schools that offer your sport.
  - b. Go on-line to each college that offers your sport and get the coach's name.

- c. Make your email personalized to the coach – show that you are a go-getter and that you are seriously considering this school versus just writing to everyone.
3. Start to gather athletic references.
4. Plot a campaign of contact:
  - a. Initial Contact
  - b. Contact at the end of your season or beginning of your select team season.
  - c. Contact at the beginning of your senior year.
  - d. References from coach(es).
  - e. Video.
  - f. Visit.
5. Respond promptly to all requests from coaches – even if you decide you are no longer interested in a program. Be polite and let them know. Don't waste your time or theirs.
6. Be aware of recruiting rules and signing dates. Get the dates for your sport from the NCAA website. If you don't get signed by one of these dates, re-contact coaches and let them know you are still available and interested. This is particularly true for Division II and Division III as well as for NAIA schools. They'll be waiting to see who is left after the signing dates and will be ready to pursue you more aggressively then.

## SAMPLE LETTERS/EMAILS

Most athletes will be taking on the task of “marketing” themselves to a college coach. This can be done through a series of activities. One of those activities is through letters or emails. Generally speaking, students should write to coaches at schools they are interested in at the following times:

1. In the latter part of their junior year season
2. After the end of any select team or summer league season with an update
3. At the beginning of their senior year season with your schedule
4. After a visit with the coach either on campus or here in St. Louis – this should be a thank you note.
5. When you have reached a final college choice, you should let all coaches to whom you have been writing know that you are no longer interested.

### SAMPLE JUNIOR ATHLETE INTRODUCTION TO COACH

Date

Coach’s Name

Address

City, State, Zip

Dear Coach (last name):

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to you. I am currently a junior at Saint Louis Priory School and, with the completion of this current season, have played baseball for three years, starting at shortstop for the last two. I am 5’ 9” and weigh 145 pounds and can also play first base and catcher. I have been All-Conference for the past two years and was recently selected to the All-Area team.

Regarding my statistics, I committed only two errors this season and batted .425, with 23 triples and 19 home runs. My complete statistics can be found on the enclosed Athletic Resume. I currently have a 3.4 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. My career goals are as yet undefined, but I am interested in math and science, so I probably will want to go into engineering.

I would appreciate hearing from you and am available in the event you are interested in additional information. I enclosed my summer legion ball schedule in case you are going to be in the Saint Louis area any time in the near future. Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Address

Phone

Email

## THE ATHLETIC RESUME

While all athletes hope that recruiters will be lined up waiting for you, the reality is that most athletes find the coaches before the coaches find them. What this means is that if you are interested in playing a sport as a scholarship athlete in college you will most likely spend time marketing yourself. One of the best ways you can do this is to prepare an effective Athletic Resume.

The specific format you choose to use is up to you. This handout is designed to give you insights into the elements that you should include in your resume regardless of how you set it up.

### ELEMENTS TO INCLUDE:

- Name, full mailing address, phone and e-mail
- Picture – coaches like to put a face with the stats
- Physical Statistics that are relevant to your sport
- Athletic Activities (what positions, events, teams, summer camps, etc.) Be sure to include team awards as well as individual awards, i.e. did your team win district or state?
- Athletic Honors/Awards
- Academic Statistics and Awards (your grade point average, SAT/ACT scores, honors, etc.)
- Other Activities (what have you participated in outside of athletics) In this category you will want to include the organization/event name, years participated, offices held, and hours per week you committed
- Community Service (include the same information as for activities)
- Employment

### POINTS TO CONSIDER:

- Make sure that you define your activities – individuals not associated with Priory might not know what The Guild is for instance.
- Do not use initials for organizations – spell it out
- Be thorough!!!
- Make sure you have the name of the organization, award or event correct!!
- All of your activities listed should be those you participated in while in high school.

**SAMPLE ATHLETIC RESUME**

**STUDENT NAME '06**

**POSITION/EVENT/SPORT**

**VITAL STATISTICS** (*info that is key to your sport*)

Date of Birth:

Height / Weight:

Position/Event Times/Etc.

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

Home Street Address

City, State, Zip

Phone

E-mail

Parents' Names

Parent E-mail

**ATHLETIC PROFILE**

**Teams**

**High School:**

**Select Teams:**

Your Picture – a good shot of your face. Does not have to be an athletic picture

**Athletic Awards**

**Team Accomplishments**

**ACADEMIC PROFILE**

Grade Point Average:

**ACT**

English

Math

Reading

Science Reasoning

Composite

Writing

**SAT I Scores: (best scores by section)**

Critical Reading

Math

Writing

Senior Schedule and/or # of honors and AP Courses throughout high school:

Other Activities:

**REFERENCES**

**Coaches**

**High School Counselor**

## QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING A CAMPUS VISIT

Before you decide to make your first visit, it's a good idea to think carefully about the kind of information you are going to need to eventually make a decision. Once you do, you will be able to ask the right kinds of questions. Here are some good questions to help you get started:

For the Coach/Recruiter:

1. What position (event) do you want me to play (perform), and how many others are you recruiting for the same position (event)?
2. What is your coaching philosophy? Are you considering any changes to this philosophy? How did you develop this philosophy?
3. Will I be red-shirted?
4. If I need a fifth year, will you finance it?
5. What happens to my scholarship if I am injured or ineligible?
6. What kind of academic support do you have available for athletes? What are your academic expectations of me?
7. Has drug use been an issue at your school? Athletic program?
8. Are all injuries handled by a team insurance policy?
9. If injured, may I use my family doctor? Who determines my fitness to compete after an injury?
10. What is expected of players during the season? During the off-season?

For the Current Players at the School:

1. What does your typical daily schedule look like? In season? Off-season?
2. Approximately how many hours a night do you study?
3. What generally are the attitudes of professors toward athletes? How about in my specific area of study?
4. How do you like the living arrangements?
5. Do you have an academic advisor? Is this the same system that all students use or is it different for athletes? What does your advisor do for you?
6. Are the coaches available to help if you have academic problems?
7. What was the biggest adjustment for you in going from high school to college athletics?

For the Non-Athletes at the School:

1. How do you perceive the athletes and the athletic program at the school?
2. If you had to do it all over again, would you choose to attend this school? Why or why not?

For the Admissions Officer/Faculty Members:

1. What are the graduation rates for the general student population? For athletes in general? For athletes in my sport?
2. How long does it take someone in my area of academic interest to graduate?
3. What special attributes does your school offer students in my academic area of interest?
4. What is the placement rate and average starting salary for graduates in my field of study?
5. Aside from athletic scholarship, are there other forms of scholarships/financial aid I may be eligible for? How would receiving an athletic scholarship affect my eligibility for these other monies?

## WHAT TO ASK AFTER YOUR CAMPUS VISIT

You will have to ask yourself several important questions after you have visited your schools in order to decide ultimately on the right school. These questions will provide a good start. Take the time to think about your answers, and be sure to talk to your coach, your college counselor, and your parents about answers that may be difficult for you. Remember, you want the right athletic AND academic experience, so all these questions are important.

1. Did any of the recruiters have bad things to say about the other schools that are recruiting me?
2. Did any of the recruiters promise that I would compete right away, even be a starter? (If they did, they may have been less than honest.)
3. Would I attend this school if I had no intention of competing in my sport?
4. Do the coaches and players seem to care genuinely about each other?
5. Will I be successful academically in this school? Athletically? How do I measure up to everyone else?
6. Were the coaches and players I met honest, available to others and me, friendly, and genuinely interested in me?
7. Were the coaches interested in academics? Did they ask about my educational and career interests? Were they knowledgeable about my intended program of study? If not, did they introduce me to someone who might answer my questions?
8. Will I fit in with the rest of the student body at this particular school? Will I be comfortable associating with them for four or more years?
9. How will I feel if one or more of the coaches leave? Will I still be happy with the school? My sports participation?
10. Does the school satisfy all the requirements that I identified earlier with my parents and college counselor? *This is probably the most important question.* Give it a lot of thought, and be sure to talk it over with your coach, your counselor, and your parents.



## USEFUL RESOURCES FOR ATHLETES

### WEBSITES:

- [www.ncaa.org](http://www.ncaa.org)
- [www.ncaaclearinghouse.net](http://www.ncaaclearinghouse.net)
- [www.naia.org](http://www.naia.org)
- [www.njcaa.org](http://www.njcaa.org)

### BOOKS:

- Advising Student Athletes Through the College Recruitment Process, Michael D. Koehler
- Student Athlete Guide to College, Princeton Review
- The Athlete's Game Plan for College and Career, Stephen and Howard Figler

## WHAT I WISH SOMEONE WOULD HAVE TOLD ME ABOUT BEING A COLLEGE ATHLETE

- The importance of high school grades starting as a freshman.
- The importance of preparing for SAT's and ACT's.
- Applying for regular admissions as well as athletic admissions. In other words, don't forget to file your application for admission when you are being athletically recruited.
- Set long-range goals for ten years after high school.
- Be sure that the colleges you look at meet your academic needs as well as your athletic needs.
- Talk to several college coaches from different schools.
- Visit all of the college campuses that you are considering.
- Learn time management skills before starting college.
- Develop communication skills as a team member as a student.