

7 MISTAKES STUDENT-ATHLETES MAKE DURING THE RECRUITING PROCESS



The reality in the recruiting world is that coaches have limited time and limited resources. They have strict rules to follow, and they are striving to field the best team with the athletes that are the best fit for their programs. Your job as a student-athlete is not only to hone your athletic skills, academics, and your character, but it is also to learn the rules of the recruiting game and to rise above the competition to find the best college match for you.

BE IN THE KNOW

Have you heard of the “recruiting funnel”? It shows you that college athletic recruiting is a numbers game. It starts at the top with many student-athletes seeing coaches at their games and tournaments. When the legal recruiting period opens, some athletes will receive coach contacts via a letter or email, or maybe some get a brochure in the mail. A select few will have their videos evaluated by coaches, and fewer still will receive a phone call, an invitation for a campus visit, or better yet, a chance to sign on the dotted line!

INCREASE YOUR ODDS

Throughout it all it is vital to avoid some of the common mistakes student-athletes make during the recruiting process. Getting recruited is much like a job search. You must market yourself well, while finding the program that will be the right fit for both parties. Avoid these 7 common mistakes, and you will increase your odds and greatly expand your options.



THE 7 MISTAKES

1. BEING OK WITH BEING A SPECTATOR

Be an active participant! Don't wait for the coaches to come to you. Reach out and connect with coaches through phone calls and email if you haven't heard from the school(s) you are interested in yet. Taking the initiative to learn something about the coach or the school can help make conversations a little easier, giving you more to talk about during your conversations. College recruiting is an active process, and when you are content to remain on the sidelines, it can be a costly mistake.

2. NOT NURTURING THE RELATIONSHIP

Once you've made contact with a coach and have received a reply, find some way to separate yourself from the crowd on a more personal level. Think of it kind of like dating. As you try to get that "second date", you put your best self forward, but are also attentive to the other person. Be yourself, but be likable and memorable. Of course, your athletic skills will speak for themselves, but it never hurts to establish a good relationship with the coach(es) during the process. Many recruits who are good at this remain friends long after the recruiting is over – even if they chose another school.

3. TAKING SOCIAL MEDIA LIGHTLY

Virtually every athletic program in the country is on social media. Following their Facebook, Instagram, and/or Twitter feeds can tell you a lot about the coaching, the players, the school, and their athletic program in general. In a nutshell, it helps you become engaged in the overall atmosphere that surrounds the program. And since we're on the topic of social media, know that YOU will be scrutinized, as well. Not cleaning up your own social media profile can be a very costly mistake. Just as with a job application, you want to portray yourself as who you truly are, but in a way that shows good taste and character. This even includes your highlight video music! Rule of thumb: If you wouldn't want your grandma to see it or hear it, you should probably think twice about posting it.

4. IGNORING ACADEMICS

As you explore the possibilities for a college athletic program that may be a good fit for you, ignoring the importance of your high school academic profile is a mistake. The reality is, a higher GPA and SAT/ACT score will open more doors for you, period, and this including supplemental merit-based scholarships. Remember, your sport is an avenue to get into college. You ultimately need that acceptance letter before you see time on the court. So keep up your grades and keep all options in play so you have more control over shaping your own destiny.



5. NOT DOING ENOUGH RESEARCH

Your high school guidance counselor and your parents should be able to help you identify characteristics of a college that are important to you. Some items that might be on your list are school size, student to teacher ratio, degrees offered, location, cost, demographics, and extra-curricular activities. When you begin speaking with prospective coaches, knowing something ahead of time about the school will help keep you from getting lost in the “glamour” of being recruited. Knowing which school will be a good fit applies not only to the athletic possibilities. Gauge how you would feel about coming to class day after day if you were suddenly no longer on the team, for example, with a career-ending injury. Would you still have chosen that school? If yes, and the school has many other items on your list, you’re on the right track.

6. HAVING A “D1 OR BUST” MENTALITY

Following the crowd isn’t always the best strategy if you are trying to secure a spot on a team. There may be several students from your high school who apply and get accepted to school “X”, and you may be tempted to follow in their footsteps. Realize though, that all of those kids aren’t necessarily athletes trying to get recruited. There are plenty of D2 and D3 schools at great universities with solid programs, where you may have the potential to be a standout athlete. If a non-D1 is more suitable for you as a student-athlete, don’t allow yourself to lose an opportunity by being a “D1 or Bust” holdout.

7. SHUNNING THE ADVICE FROM MOM AND DAD

As early as possible, you and your parents should get on the same page about college. As annoying as you think they are sometimes, believe it or not, they have your best interest at heart. Talk honestly with them about what you want in a school and listen to them when they voice their views, as well. Your parents have years of experience and knowledge, they have probably done their own research just as you have, and might even be considering factors you haven’t thought of. Know that it is you who has to live with the ultimate choice (and they should allow you to lead the decision-making), but be open to working together with your parents. The best college in America is one where you will be happy, learn a lot, have fun, make new friends, and hopefully play the sport you love!

