

# Explaining College Athletic Recruiting Process to Parents

By Dr. David Hoch, CMAA

**P**arents of high school athletes often have questions about the college athletic recruiting process and commonly look to athletic administrators for answers. While it might be helpful if one had college coaching experience to draw upon, you can still provide the basics with a little work and preparation.

A good place to start is to describe the different levels of athletic competition involving colleges and universities. In the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), there are three distinct groups.

1. **NCAA Division I** schools can offer full athletic scholarships. The total varies according to the sport and it would commonly cover tuition, room and board.
2. On the **Division II** level, athletic scholarships can also be awarded. There would be fewer, however, than on the Division I level.
3. **Division III** NCAA member schools cannot award athletic scholarships. Colleges in this division can grant academic, leadership and other scholarships. It is possible, therefore, that a great deal of the cost of an education can be covered; however, there are no specific athletic scholarships.

In addition to the NCAA, the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) also exists as a governing body for college athletics. In terms of member schools, it is much smaller and some of the institutions offer scholarships, commonly partial ones. Other NAIA colleges may function much like NCAA Division III schools. Lastly, junior colleges also offer athletic competition and some may provide financial assistance for athletes.

Considering that NCAA Divisions I and II institutions can offer athletic scholarships, only approximately three to five percent of high school athletes will receive one. If parents consider the total cost of travel teams, summer camps, outside coaches and personal trainers, they would be better served putting this money aside to help cover the cost of a college education instead of pursuing the elusive college athletic scholarship. If their child is talented enough to earn one, great; however, 95 percent won't and this needs to be clearly presented to parents.

On the Divisions I and II levels, coaches recruit to fill specific positional needs. For example, a coach may need a point guard in basketball, a cornerback in football or a goalie in soccer. While Di-

vision III teams could also use this approach, some may instead use the "shotgun" method. This is where they will actively try to bring several candidates for one position on campus and actually conduct tryouts similar to high school programs. It is necessary, therefore, that parents and athletes understand this possibility.

Athletic administrators should introduce their parents to the NFHS Learning Center and its NCAA Eligibility Course which presents what is necessary for athletes to participate at member schools. This offering is free, it only takes 20-30 minutes to complete and it is a good starting point for parents and athletes.



In addition to the NFHS Eligibility Course for parents and athletes, it is a good idea to also make parents aware of the NCAA website. This is an excellent source in order to get answers about the recruiting process for all sports. Specifically, parents can find the following items critical to the process:

- Under About Us on the main navigational bar, there is an overview of the three divisions.
- When you click on Student-Athletes, one of the postings is the Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete and this is a valuable resource.
- Athletes who want or think that they will participate on the Division I or II levels should click on the NCAA Eligibility Center. They will need to create an account and register.
- Each of the three divisions have their own headings on the navigational bar. It is here that you will find the recruiting calendars for Divisions I and II sports which delineate when college coaches can contact athletes, evaluate them and when dead periods exist.

Overall, the NCAA site is well-organized and very user-friendly. Parents will not be intimidated using this site and it should be an important resource for all families with children hopeful of playing college athletics.

With this basic information, you now have to decide how to disseminate it to your parents and athletes. One alternative is to host a special evening meeting to deal with the topic of college athletic recruiting. By using a PowerPoint presentation and having handouts available, an athletic administrator can easily and adequately handle the essentials.

If you have a college in your area, you might also consider inviting a college coach to be part of the evening. After you present the basics, this individual can answer questions about the process in a general fashion that would be applicable to all sports and not to any one specifically. If it is not possible to include a college coach, you can also try to involve a former high school athlete who went on to play in college. This would be especially helpful if both a Division I and Division III athlete were available in order to contrast the two levels. The combination of these elements would be extremely beneficial for the parents in attendance.

To fully explain the process, you should at least mention that recruiting services do exist. Some may state, "We're only concerned with helping young people," and this could partially be true. It is, however, vital that parents also understand that they could basically do exactly what these services offer and that they also make a profit. There are salaries to pay, rent for office space and, therefore,

if they don't make money on their efforts they would cease to exist. This means that the family either pays a fee or the college covers the cost of a subscription – one or the other entities are paying.

Also, many Division I athletes are well-known and really don't need a recruiting service. Therefore, these operations basically focus on the 95 percent of high school athletes who will never earn an athletic scholarship. Every family has to determine if it wants to pay a service or essentially do its own work. In the Ideas That Work article on page 44, there are four steps that parents can undertake themselves and avoid using a recruiting service.

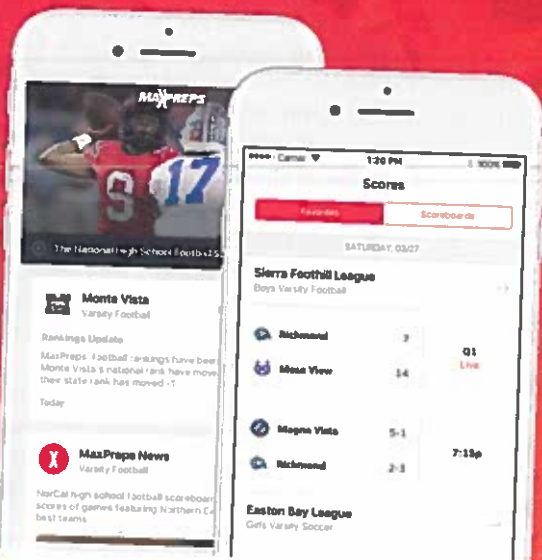
With a little work, most athletic administrators should be able to help parents understand and get started with the college athletic recruiting process. **HST**

Access current/archive articles online at [www.nfhs.org/resources/high-school-today](http://www.nfhs.org/resources/high-school-today).

Dr. David Hoch is a former athletic director at Loch Raven High School in Towson, Maryland (Baltimore County). He assumed this position in 2003 after nine years as director of athletics at Eastern Technological High School in Baltimore County. He has 24 years experience coaching basketball, including 14 years on the collegiate level. Hoch, who has a doctorate in sports management from Temple (Pennsylvania) University, is past president of the Maryland State Athletic Directors Association, and he formerly was president of the Maryland State Coaches Association. He has had more than 700 articles published in professional magazines and journals, as well as four textbook chapters. He is the author of a book entitled Blueprint for Better Coaching. Hoch is a member of the NFHS High School Today Publications Committee.

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