

Steps for Parents to Help Child with College Athletic Recruiting

By Dr. David Hoch, CMAA on April 14, 2020

hst

If athletes have the ability to play on the NCAA Division I or II levels, they will be found. There are no secrets. However, for any athlete who may be better suited for the NCAA Division III or NAIA levels, there are some steps that a parent can take to help with the recruiting process. An athletic administrator can easily explain the steps and details to the family.

There are four actual steps that parents can do to help their child with the athletic recruiting experience. This would include helping their child prepare an athlete profile, composing a letter of introduction, sending a game film/video and researching the institution with respect to cost, majors and specifics about the head coach and team.

An athlete's profile is similar to a person's resume that is used in applying for positions in the business world. This document includes basic background information, strengths, skills, statistics and accomplishments. The following items, for example, should typically be included for a basketball player. In other sports, the details would be very similar and would also include things that are sport-specific.

1. Start with the athlete's name, age, high school class – whether it be senior, junior or sophomore, address, phone number, email address, and the name and contact information for the high school head coach.
2. Include the grade-point average and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) results for the athlete. This information is important to establish if the athlete would be admitted to the college or university.
3. Provide the player's height, weight (which may not be included for female athletes) and playing position.
4. Include any applicable statistics such as scoring average, assists, rebounds, shooting percentage – anything that highlights an athlete's ability.
5. Mention the honors won, which would normally include captain, all-league, all-state and so forth.

The letter of introduction would be comparable to the cover letter that an individual sends with a resume as part of the application process for a professional position. There are a couple of basic things that should be included, and the following hints will increase the effectiveness of this step.

1. Make sure that the head coach's name is spelled correctly. A mistake of this nature does not create a favorable first impression.
2. Get the correct address for the coach's office.
3. Mention in the introductory paragraph the athlete's position on the team, the school's name, how many years playing on the varsity, if he or she is a starter – just basic background information.
4. Indicate why the athlete is interested in the particular college. This should include his or her intended major, perhaps that its location would be easy for family to attend games or that the athlete would be comfortable and eager to be a part of the college setting.
5. Close with an offer to send more information and references upon request. Also, always thank the coach for his or her time and consideration.

In addition to the letter of introduction and an athlete's profile, it is common to send a selected college coach a game or highlight tape. Even though the technology would probably now be a DVD, this term is still commonly used. However, there is a difference between a highlight and game tape, and many college coaches have a preference.

Sticking with a basketball example, a parent or high school coach could send a highlight tape featuring a player sinking a series of three-point shots. While the DVD will show numerous made baskets, it doesn't go far enough. You don't know how many shots the player actually took before making those in the DVD. Did he take bad shots? Did he hustle back and play defense? Was he a supportive teammate? Did he listen to the coach during time-outs? The college coach only saw the made baskets that the parent or high school coach wanted him to see.

A game tape, on the other hand, provides a much better overall picture and allows a coach to make a good, complete evaluation. Of course, the parent will naturally send a tape of one of the athlete's best games. Why not? However, many college coaches would prefer a game tape.

It is also important that the parent does not send the original tape or DVD. Even though many college coaches will try to return the materials, parents shouldn't take this chance. They should only send a copy.

In order to research the school, team and coaching staff, the athlete should start with a visit to the guidance department and meet with his or her counselor. To gain insight into the team and college coach, the Internet and networking with high school coaches should do the trick.

With these four items – cover letter, profile, game tapes and research – a parent can help facilitate the right fit athletically for his or her child on the college level. If the college coach also shows interest after receiving these materials, a college visit should be scheduled and taken. But make no mistake, a parent can take definitive steps to help, and an athletic administrator plays an important role by educating the family.