

INFORMATION and STRATEGIES for COLLEGEBOUND STUDENT ATHLETES

(compiled from presentations at NACAC conferences and Naviance member networks)

So you want to be a college athlete? That's great! Now, you have to learn the process to actually be a college athlete.

Keep two priorities in mind: college first, sports second. Here are some things to consider about college athletics:

- **Careers in sports can end abruptly**
- **Starting spots can evaporate after only one year**
- **Practice schedules are hard on grades; college athletes may have problems with eligibility**
- **Some players spend more than four years trying to graduate and eventually their eligibility expires.**

While athletics may open doors to colleges that might otherwise be just out of reach, the realities above indicate that the college-bound athlete must think ahead to when the cheering stops.

THE COLLEGE SEARCH

As a college-bound student athlete, you have additional criteria to consider when you begin your college search. After considering the college environment, size, and location, as well as the majors and selectivity among other factors to determine if a college fits you academically and socially, you also need to investigate the college's participation in athletic governing organizations (NCAA or NAIA) and these organizations' rules, eligibility criteria, conferences and divisions, as well as the college's athletic programs,

resources for athletes, coaching staff and so on to determine the athletic fit. The trick is in finding colleges that fit you in both ways.

With your high school or club coach, discuss your desire to participate at the college level. Ask for an assessment of your athletic ability and a recommendation about what level of competition might be most appropriate, a place where you have the chance to play. Be open-minded during this meeting; remember that your coach has your best interests in mind.

Naviance is a one good resource for researching the academic fit; this document is intended as a starting place for researching a college's athletic fit. After this research, you'll need to see which colleges overlap to help you build your college application list. The *Viking Guide to College and Career Planning* (available on www.paly.net/guidance) is a great overview of the application process.



ADMISSIONS ELIGIBILITY VS. ATHLETIC ELIGIBILITY

You need to keep in mind that in addition to the minimum academic requirements a college requires for admission, student athletes also need to have at least the minimum academic requirements for athletic eligibility (sometimes very specific coursework is required!). Colleges are members of athletic governing

organizations (NCAA or NAIA) which monitor athletic eligibility certification. Admissions requirements are specific to each college campus while athletic eligibility requirements are set by the rules and regulations of the governing organizations that grant athletic eligibility certification. ***Each entity (college or organization) has its own set of supporting documents and may have slightly different requirements with regard to coursework, grade point averages (and from which years in school) and college-entrance test score minimums, and passing grades.*** To learn more:

NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION (NCAA): www.ncaa.org

- Comprised of over 1000 U.S. institutions, organizations and individuals committed to the best interests, education, and athletics participation of student athletes.
- Divided into 100 conferences. Has three divisions, each with a specified minimum number of teams, competitions, and squad sizes and maximum scholarship amounts that can be awarded. Rules differ for each division.
- *Prospective DI and DII student athletes must register with the Eligibility Center (including requesting a transcript and sending official SAT/ACT scores and paying \$60), preferably at the beginning of junior year: www.ncaaclearinghouse.net*

BEYOND ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA, WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DIVISIONS I, II, & III?

D1

- Division I schools must meet minimum financial aid awards for their athletics program, and there are maximum financial aid awards for each sport that a Div. I school cannot exceed.
- Playing at this most competitive level is a big commitment. Expect to practice approximately 20 hours a week during the season and 6 hours a week in the off-season, plus weight training. Practice may conflict with course offerings.

D2

- There are maximum financial aid awards for each sport that a Div. II school must not exceed. Division II teams usually feature a number of local or in-state student-athletes.
- Many Division II student-athletes pay for school through a combination of scholarship money, grants, student loans and employment earnings. Division II athletics programs are financed in the institution's budget like other academic departments on campus.
- Traditional rivalries with regional institutions dominate schedules of many Division II athletics programs.

D3

- *Division III athletics features student-athletes who receive no financial aid related to their athletic ability* and athletic departments are staffed and funded like any other department in the university.
- Division III athletics departments place special importance on the impact of athletics on the participants rather than on the spectators. The student-athlete's experience is of paramount concern.
- Division III athletics encourages participation by maximizing the number and variety of athletics opportunities available to students, placing primary emphasis on regional in-season and conference competition.
- Division III athletes are often also being recruited by Division I colleges so don't underestimate the competitiveness of a D3 team.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS (NAIA):

<http://naia.cstv.com>

- Comprised of nearly 300 member institutions (small colleges) in the U.S. and Canada dedicated to developing character and respect in both athletics and academics.
- Divided into 25 conferences.
- Regulated by fewer recruiting restrictions.
- Flexibility to transfer to another college within the organization without missing a season of eligibility.

WHERE TO FIND INFORMATION ABOUT COLLEGE ATHLETIC PROGRAMS

In addition to high school and club coaches, you will want to research information about college athletic programs. The college profiles on the College Board, www.collegeboard.com, features summary information about the college's sports offerings. For more detailed information, a good database for looking up sports teams by college and state is: Link Athletics, www.linkathletics.com/sports/college.php. From there you can link to the team's website to check their

athletic record, see which geographic areas students are recruited from, and find the coach's contact information. If you happen to know the conferences of the sport you play, you might also find helpful information on their websites (e.g. <http://www.pac-10.org/>).

HOW TO GET NOTICED BY COLLEGE COACHES

- Participate in school and club sports teams, summer training camps (often on college campuses), or regional tournaments or showcases; these are excellent opportunities to:
 - Build skills
 - Network
 - Explore and evaluate colleges and their teams
 - See the breadth of other players (your competition)
 - Be evaluated by coaches
- Complete colleges' Prospective Student Athlete interest forms.
- Prepare an athletic resume/portfolio to email to college coaches with a letter of inquiry in junior year; include (*consult the NCAA and NAIA rules for contacting coaches first*):
 - Name, contact information, school, grade in school
 - Un-weighted GPA and PSAT/SAT/ACT scores

- Height, weight, other relevant physical attributes (e.g. vertical leap)
- Team name, position played, jersey number, team and individual stats and/or rank
- Coaches' comments or reference to an article
- Game/tournament schedule
- Offer to send a skills or game tape, upon request

RECRUITING

Just because you don't hear from a coach, don't assume he's not interested. It is appropriate for you to initiate conversation by sending an email with your athletic resume (*consult the NCAA and NAIA rules for contacting coaches first*). A good website to use to learn more about college athletic recruiting is www.cbound.com. When communicating with coaches:

- DON'T barrage coaches with information but instead seek to establish a connection.
 - DON'T lie or exaggerate (e.g. GPA, weight, times, etc.); give accurate information.
 - DON'T delay in responding to communications (e.g. athletic questionnaire); check your email regularly
- If you don't have consistency in your contact with coaches, inquire as to the level of their interest.

Some other things to keep in mind:

- Remember that for each spot on a roster, the coach is recruiting 4-6 students. Don't read too much into form letters.
- Some coaches only recruit from certain regions or certain high schools.
- At Div. I, commitment timetables are early. At the Ivys, October 1st is often the day where Admissions reviews athletes' credentials and let the coaches know who they can admit; 50% are recruited for Early Decision (ED) or Early Action (EA).
- DON'T underestimate the college admissions process; avoid sloppiness and/or arrogance in your college application.
- Avoid situations that might leave you without a team to play on or even a spot at college:
 - The student athlete with strong academics does not need to apply early; the student athlete who is an average or marginal student should apply early—especially if he has financial need to pay for college.
 - Student athletes should be wary about committing to a college over the summer; there is still time for the college to find other athletes—especially for Winter sports.
 - If you apply ED or EA to a school, you still need to complete other applications by their deadlines; if you wait until the results of your early application to start the others, you might miss Paly deadlines and not have time to do a quality job.
- If you use athletics to get admitted to a college and then drop off the team, this reflects poorly on your high school and might affect future recruits.

WHAT SCOUTS ARE LOOKING FOR

by Joe Butler and Frank DuBois

What do college coaches and scouts look for in a high school prospect? Following are the major categories (in no particular order):

- **Size**
Everybody loves size in sports. Big people will be more heavily recruited even though they may be weaker or have fewer skills than a smaller player; college coaches hope big players can develop skills during their college careers.
- **Athletic-type Players**
Speed, quickness, jumping ability, and strength have become prominent in sports (much more so than in sports 20 years ago).
- **Attitude**
At the college level, coaches cannot justify recruiting players that have poor attitudes because the athletic program reflects directly on the university itself. A coach wants to see how composed you are when things go wrong and how you behave when you are losing.
- **Intelligence**
Players that can make intelligent decisions under pressure will come out ahead the majority of the time. Coaches are looking for players who can "out-think" their opponents.

- **Intensity**
Coaches are looking for the player who works hard whether they are in practice, the weight room, or in a game.
- **Fundamentals and Hard Work**
Being an athlete at the college level requires discipline, dedication, and sacrifice. Players who work hard, have sound fundamental skills, and strive to become complete players have a better chance of playing in college.

QUESTIONS TO ASK COACHES/RECRUITERS, OTHER PLAYERS, & ADMISSIONS

Recruiter:

- What is the recruiter's relationship to the school? Is he the head coach, assistant coach, an alumnus, or admissions representative? Assurances carry different weight depending on who they come from.
- Keep your education foremost in your mind by asking about academic programs that interest you. A good recruiter is as informed about programs as an admissions person.
- What is the college's graduation rate for athletes? Because of heavy demands on their time, some college athletes take five years to graduate; by their final year, they are usually ineligible to play.
- Is special advising, tutoring, or counseling available to athletes? What will happen if you are placed on academic probation?
- What does the coach expect of his players: time commitment, behaviors, appearance, etc.? What is expected during the off-season?
- Has drug use been an issue at your college or in your athletic program?

Other Players:

- What is your typical daily schedule like? In-season? Off-season?
- How rigorous is your travel schedule?
- Approximately how many hours a night do you study?
- How do you like the living arrangements?
- What assistance is available if you have academic problems?
- Were changes made to any promises once you committed/enrolled? Is the program what you expected based on your recruiting experience?

School Officials/Admissions:

- What are the different graduation rates for athletes? In your sport?
- How long does it take someone in your sport to earn a degree from this college?
- What financial aid is available?

Ask yourself: would this college be right for you even if you weren't competing in athletics?



SCHOLARSHIPS

Only 2% of high school athletes receive college scholarships. A small percentage of athletes are offered major scholarship money. A larger percentage of athletes are offered an opportunity to play their sport for little or no athletic scholarships. But, academic scholarships or other awards for leadership and service may be offered to athletes because they are outstanding individuals.

Ask for details about athletic scholarships—any strings?

Typically, athletic scholarships are for one year, renewable at the coach's discretion. If you get benched, does the scholarship disappear? Ask how many athletes were kept on scholarship after their eligibility expired.

Typically, nearly every recruited player offered a scholarship will sign a Letter of Intent; the signing days vary depending on the sport. Most players will have verbally committed to a school prior to this day; however, verbal commitments are non-binding.

WALK-ON ATHLETES

A high school athlete who has not received a scholarship but wants to play a sport in college may be given the opportunity to “walk on” at one or more colleges. “Walking on” means that he becomes an un-scholarshipped member of the team, is allowed to try to earn a position on the team, and is given the opportunity to earn a scholarship at some time in the future. Walking on can be an excellent opportunity for a good athlete who is serious about his or her sport but is not being recruited. Athletic eligibility rules apply to walk-on athletes too.

GOING PRO

Thousands of young men and women dream that college will be the springboard to fortune and the big leagues. However the professionals for any major sport are usually drawn from big institutions which are treasure troves of first-rate athletes playing on outstanding teams.

- Only two out of every 100 college basketball players make it to the pros
- The average pro football career lasts only three years

SUGGESTED READING

Antonoff, Steven R. and Friedemann, Marie, *College Match*, Alexandria, Virginia: Octameron Associates
Britz, Patrick and Alexandra Powe Alfred, *Athletic Scholarships for Dummies*, Hoboken, New Jersey, Wiley Publishing
Hastings, Penny and Todd Caven, *How to Win a Sport Scholarship*, Santa Rosa, California, Redwood Creek Publishing
Hastings, Penny, *Sports for Her, A Reference Guide for Teenage Girls*, Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press
Kilpatrick, Frances and James, *The Winning Edge: The Athlete's Guide to College Sports*, Alexandria, Virginia, Octameron Associates
Lincoln, Chris, *Playing the Game: Inside Athletic Recruiting in the Ivy League*, White River Junction, Vermont, Nomad Press
Mazzoni, Wayne, *The Athletic Recruiting and Scholarship Guide*, Black Rock, Connecticut, Mazz Marketing, Inc.
The High School Athlete's Guide to College Sports, Lanham, Maryland, Taylor Trade Publishing
Wire, Rick, *The Student Athlete and College Recruiting*, Flagler Beach, Florida, Athletic Guide Publishing

RECRUITING RESOURCES ON THE WEB

Fall Sports

Cross Country (M&W): www.trackshark.com
Field Hockey (W): www.usfieldhockey.com
Football (M): www.ncaa.org; www.naia.org
Soccer (M&W): www.brucecrowleee.org
Volleyball (W): www.cvu.com
Water Polo (M): www.collegiatewaterpolo.org

Winter Sports

Basketball (M&W): www.ncaa.org
Bowling (W): www.collegebowling.com
Fencing (M&W): www.usfencing.org
Gymnastics (M&W): www.collegegymnast.com
Ice Hockey (M&W): www.uscho.com
Skiing (M&W): www.uscsa.com
Swimming & Diving (M&W): www.collegeswimming.com
Indoor Track & Field (M&W): www.trackshark.com; www.usatf.org
Wrestling (M): www.ncwa.net

Spring Sports

Baseball (M): www.baseballnews.com
Golf (M&W): www.collegiategolf.com
Lacrosse (M&W): www.laxpower.com
Rowing (W): www.row2k.com; www.usrowing.org
Softball (W): www.ultimatecollegesoftball.com; www.usasoftball.com
Tennis (M&W): www.collegiatetennisonline.com
Volleyball (M): www.cvu.com
Water Polo (W): www.collegiatewaterpolo.org

“Club” Sports

Equestrian: www.uset.org
Men's Rowing: www.row2k.com
Rugby: www.usacollegerugby.com
Sailing: www.collegesailing.org
Squash: www.squashtalk.com

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NCAA ELIGIBILITY CENTER QUICK REFERENCE SHEET



Core Courses

- **NCAA Division I requires 16 core courses.** See the chart below for the breakdown of this 16 core-course requirement.
- **NCAA Division II currently requires 14 core courses.** Division II will require 16 core courses for students enrolling on or after August 1, 2013. See the breakdown of core-course requirements below.

Test Scores

- **Division I** uses a sliding scale to match test scores and core grade-point averages. The sliding scale for those requirements is shown on page two of this sheet.
- **Division II** requires a minimum SAT score of 820 or an ACT sum score of 68.
- The SAT score used for NCAA purposes includes **only** the critical reading and math sections. The writing section of the SAT is not used.
- The ACT score used for NCAA purposes is a **sum** of the following four sections: English, mathematics, reading and science.
- **When you register for the SAT or ACT, use the NCAA Eligibility Center code of 9999 to ensure all SAT and ACT scores are reported directly to the NCAA Eligibility Center from the testing agency. Test scores that appear on transcripts will not be used.**

Grade-Point Average

- **Be sure** to look at your high school's List of NCAA Courses on the NCAA Eligibility Center's website (www.eligibilitycenter.org). Use the list as a guide.
- Only courses that appear on your school's List of NCAA Courses will be used in the calculation of the core grade-point average. Use the list as a guide.
- **Division I** core grade-point-average requirements are listed on the sliding scale on Page No. 2 of this sheet.
- **The Division II** core grade-point-average requirement is a minimum of 2.000.
- Remember, the NCAA grade-point average is calculated using NCAA core courses only.

DIVISION I 16 Core Courses

- 4 years of English.
- 3 years of mathematics (Algebra I or higher).
- 2 years of natural/physical science (1 year of lab if offered by high school).
- 1 year of additional English, mathematics or natural/physical science.
- 2 years of social science.
- 4 years of additional courses (from any area above, foreign language or comparative religion/philosophy).

DIVISION II 14 Core Courses

- 3 years of English.
- 2 years of mathematics (Algebra I or higher).
- 2 years of natural/physical science (1 year of lab if offered by high school).
- 2 years of additional English, mathematics or natural/physical science.
- 2 years of social science.
- 3 years of additional courses (from any area above, foreign language or comparative religion/philosophy).

DIVISION II 16 Core Courses (2013 and After)

- 3 years of English.
- 2 years of mathematics (Algebra I or higher).
- 2 years of natural/physical science (1 year of lab if offered by high school).
- 3 years of additional English, mathematics or natural/physical science.
- 2 years of social science.
- 4 years of additional courses (from any area above, foreign language or comparative religion/philosophy).

**NCAA DIVISION I SLIDING SCALE
CORE GRADE-POINT AVERAGE/
TEST-SCORE**

| Core GPA | SAT Verbal and Math ONLY | ACT |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|------------|
| 3.550 & above | 400 | 37 |
| 3.525 | 410 | 38 |
| 3.500 | 420 | 39 |
| 3.475 | 430 | 40 |
| 3.450 | 440 | 41 |
| 3.425 | 450 | 41 |
| 3.400 | 460 | 42 |
| 3.375 | 470 | 42 |
| 3.350 | 480 | 43 |
| 3.325 | 490 | 44 |
| 3.300 | 500 | 44 |
| 3.275 | 510 | 45 |
| 3.250 | 520 | 46 |
| 3.225 | 530 | 46 |
| 3.200 | 540 | 47 |
| 3.175 | 550 | 47 |
| 3.150 | 560 | 48 |
| 3.125 | 570 | 49 |
| 3.100 | 580 | 49 |
| 3.075 | 590 | 50 |
| 3.050 | 600 | 50 |
| 3.025 | 610 | 51 |
| 3.000 | 620 | 52 |
| 2.975 | 630 | 52 |
| 2.950 | 640 | 53 |
| 2.925 | 650 | 53 |
| 2.900 | 660 | 54 |
| 2.875 | 670 | 55 |
| 2.850 | 680 | 56 |
| 2.825 | 690 | 56 |
| 2.800 | 700 | 57 |
| 2.775 | 710 | 58 |
| 2.750 | 720 | 59 |
| 2.725 | 730 | 59 |
| 2.700 | 730 | 60 |
| 2.675 | 740-750 | 61 |
| 2.650 | 760 | 62 |
| 2.625 | 770 | 63 |
| 2.600 | 780 | 64 |
| 2.575 | 790 | 65 |
| 2.550 | 800 | 66 |
| 2.525 | 810 | 67 |
| 2.500 | 820 | 68 |
| 2.475 | 830 | 69 |
| 2.450 | 840-850 | 70 |
| 2.425 | 860 | 70 |
| 2.400 | 860 | 71 |
| 2.375 | 870 | 72 |
| 2.350 | 880 | 73 |
| 2.325 | 890 | 74 |
| 2.300 | 900 | 75 |
| 2.275 | 910 | 76 |
| 2.250 | 920 | 77 |
| 2.225 | 930 | 78 |
| 2.200 | 940 | 79 |
| 2.175 | 950 | 80 |
| 2.150 | 960 | 80 |
| 2.125 | 960 | 81 |
| 2.100 | 970 | 82 |
| 2.075 | 980 | 83 |
| 2.050 | 990 | 84 |
| 2.025 | 1000 | 85 |
| 2.000 | 1010 | 86 |

For more information, visit the NCAA Eligibility Center website at www.eligibilitycenter.org.