

PERSONAL AGREEMENT

I MARCELO ALMEIDA on this, the 10th day in MARCH, 2010, acknowledge and agree to take responsibility for my future and will commit the time, energy and resources necessary to find a college or university that will fit my academic, athletic, financial and geographic needs.

I understand that the task involved will enable me to obtain a college education and pursue my athletic endeavors.

The Sport Source®: The Official Athletic College Guides

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INTRODUCTION

Choosing the best college or university to meet your needs may seem like an enormous and intimidating task. The prospect of moving from one school to another may produce intense feelings of anxiety, panic, and even fear of making the wrong choice. But fear and panic are products of the unknown. There is no reason for this process to be overwhelming. By being informed and diligent, and surrounding yourself with the right resources and materials, you will be able to make an informed decision - a decision that you can truly feel good about.

People travel from the known to the unknown. The known is that you are a junior or senior in high school with a GPA and test scores. The unknown is, "Where am I going to college?" The task is not impossible. You will simply identify a school that offers the academic programs that best suit your needs, and an athletic program that is consistent with your athletic ability. You may have as many as 20 schools on your initial list, but only target those schools whose minimum test scores and required GPA fit your own.

Use the *College Guide* and *Workbook* extensively, but don't make it your only resource. Consult other reference materials. Consult the opinions of your parents, guidance counselors, coaches and other administrators at the colleges that interest you. Research your information carefully; then examine your options. With regard to your own athletic and academic career, this is the single biggest decision you will make to this point in your life. While it requires careful consideration, the process should never be a stumbling block, but rather a fun and exciting time to share with your parents in planning your future. It does require a focused and concerted effort, however, a lack of follow-through may create roadblocks that lead to making unnecessary compromises in the type of school or sports program you may be seeking.

The process of identifying your interests and selecting the appropriate colleges should begin early. Your freshman year in high school is not too soon to begin the process. Those especially talented players will have less to worry about - the colleges will pursue them. However, it is the greater majority of student-athletes who need to be prepared. As a prospective college player, it is critical that you do your research, and are identified by college coaches as early as possible. Your high school varsity athletic program and summer leagues are the best vehicles for college coaches to spot prospective recruits. Olympic Development Programs, All-Star, and college showcase events are also effective vehicles for personal recognition and identification by college coaches. Those student-athletes who make a conscious effort to evaluate college programs, and narrow those choices as they progress through their high school career, will have two to three solid choices by December of their senior year.

College coaches begin to identify student-athletes as high school juniors - your year to shine as both a player and a leader. But even if you have delayed the process of selecting a college until your senior year, all hope is not lost. High school coaches who are well-connected will be able to pinpoint tournaments or showcase events where college coaches are present. You must take the initiative to contact the coach at the school or schools that interest you by sending them a letter. Preface it with a personalized cover letter and be sure to mention your game schedule and the dates of any tournaments or events where you might be playing. In this situation, time is very critical - you will need to be seen quickly by college coaches in order for them to fairly evaluate your abilities before they make commitments to other players. (This is discussed further in the section titled *The Student Athlete's Role in Choosing a College*.)

During the evaluation process, be advised that college coaches are selling their programs. They are going to tell you all the good things about their school and their team. Remember also, that college coaches are not just promoting their program to you, but to 25 or more other players as well. It is important to make sure the information you hear is accurate. Do your homework, you won't overestimate your ability, or underestimate the competition for the position you wish to play. There may also be weaknesses and shortcomings in the program that you will be forced to identify on your own. If you make a mistake in your quest to join a high-profile program, you may end up riding the bench for four years or being transferred to another school. This is the reason it is so very important to take an analytical approach to this process. Do your homework and be sure to do a thorough job.

As previously mentioned, one of the most critical steps in the recruitment process is your direct correspondence with the college coach. Because there are often coaching changes, it is highly recommended that you contact the college athletic director to verify the current coach and the correct spelling of the name before mailing any correspondence. Compose a letter and address a personalized cover letter directly to the coach. Be sure to include specific information about your background - information contained in the academic and athletic profiles listed in the ***Official Athletic College Guide***.

The more than 1,400 profiles will also include information on the number of regional and national players, and the number of players participating in the program. If a team indicates that out of 20 players, they have 7 regional players, and 13 national players, you can assume this to be a very strong program. Other colleges may list 7 or 8 "walk-ons" on their roster. Assess your interests and ability accordingly.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO PLAY IN COLLEGE?

G. Guerrieri Head Soccer Coach - Texas A&M University

The question of "what does it takes for a player to compete as a college student-athlete?" is constantly brought before me in my travels across the nation. The answer may be as broad and vague as the question.

In the Official Athletic College Guide you will find hundreds of athletic programs. Is there a program for you? **Yes.** Can you walk into any program and compete immediately? **No.**

To compete as a college soccer player, a student-athlete must be focused, dedicated, and opportunistic. However, to play college athletics you don't have to do it at the Division I level.

NCAA Division I is the most recognized level of college sports. There is also NCAA Division II, Division III, NAIA and NJCAA. At all levels, players and coaches put in long hours all year to insure success and development. These hours (12 - 20 per week, depending on the team) are in addition to college classes, individual study, and social activities. The time commitment of a college soccer player is likened to a full-time job which thousands of players line up for every year.

Speed is a primary component that distinguishes a Division I player from Division II, Division III, and NAIA. The technical speed of a player is the ability to take control of the ball and do it in as few touches as possible and this is what separates the top Division I player from all others. The tactical speed is the ability to read and anticipate the flow of the game rather than just reacting to events as they happen. . The physical speed of a player is the most obvious. This is the ability of the player to get from one area of the field to another faster than his/her opponent. Depending on your relative speed in all of three of these areas, you should look for an appropriate level of play where you can compete with success.

College coaches receive letters and phone calls every week from high school players, coaches, and parents claiming that they have a player that can play at that school. The college coach's first question is always, "**Have you ever seen my team play?**" and "**Do you know what our level of play is like?**" Too often they don't. They have only seen youth and high school games and are not aware of the speed of play at the college level. The same could be said of college coaches pushing their players to the pro or international level; they don't always get a chance to truly see that game and naturally think that their most talented players can excel at that level without truly understanding what that level demands.

A quality college soccer player typically has a clear repertoire of attributes to bring to a college team. Here are examples of the capabilities of a typical Division I player.

FORWARDS

- * Possess the physical speed necessary to break away from strong tenacious markers
- * Able to hold and shield the ball with the head up while teammates move into support roles
- * Show confidence and talent to take on 1, 2, 3 players en route to goal
- * Comfortable and successful with both feet while under pressure
- * Have superior physical fitness

GOALKEEPERS

- * Have the stature and physique that brings confidence to their teammates
- * Have the strength and ability to win 50/50 balls and avoid injury
- * Display the technical ability to make 100% of the saves in the middle two-thirds of goal and many of the bigger saves in the corner
- * Possess the leadership and social skills to get along with players and lead his/hers defense
- * Ability to distribute the ball safely in their own half of the field and penetrate the other team's half with long punts, throws, or drop kicks
- * Willingness to work as hard in training as he/she does in games
- * Display the tactical ability to play within the flow of the game

MIDFIELDERS

- * Have superior physical fitness level
- * Physically strong and quick to avoid injury due to collision and physical play
- * Possess the tactical ability to read and play within the tempo of the game
- * Show the technical ability to play a controlled 1 and 2 touch game
- * Able to play the ball from side to side as well as back to front of the team
- * Can and will defend anytime the ball is lost
- * Have the personality to play under pressure

DEFENDERS

- * Possess the physical speed and strength to keep up with the nation's top strikers
- * Have the grit and determination to play within a team's defensive system
- * Show the technical ability to accurately play 40 yard passes to teammates and to control long passes from opponents
- * Display the ability to win 50/50 challenges consistently
- * Have the composure to play and create (not just destroy)

What does it take to play college soccer? The answer is "What do you want from your college experience?" If you have the technical, tactical, and physical tools to play at the Division I level, do you have the time and dedication? If you would sit the bench for a Division I team, wouldn't you be happier playing for a Division II, III, or NAIA program?

The college choice questions can be researched in the pages of this book. The answers to the questions ultimately lie in your abilities & aspirations.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO PLAY IN COLLEGE?

Anson Dorrance

Head Coach- Women's Soccer - University of North Carolina

I'm asked this question all the time: "What do you look for in a player?" It is almost an impossible question to answer. If I answer it in one way, I would be eliminating a whole group of players interested in me.

The way I answer the question is by telling the story about a Supreme Court Judge in Southern California who was asked to define pornography. He had to write a statute and he took twelve months trying to sort out an appropriated definition to pornography. After a whole year, this very intelligent man could not write the statute. So they asked him, "How do you know what pornography is? He said, "I know when I see it."

It's basically the same with players. I can tell you a player needs certain technical, tactical, physical and psychological levels, and yet I can find a player who has won either a world championship or gold medal who doesn't have a dimension that I'm saying you require. What you need is some kind of balance.

But rest assured, it is critical to be extraordinary in at least one area. Then you will have an impact. If you have world-class speed, you can have an impact. If you can out-head everybody in the world but can trap a ball farther than you kick it, you can have an impact. If you are a psychological rock, but have no tactical awareness, you can have an impact.

The great players, obviously, are extraordinary in more than one area, and the greatest players are extraordinary in all areas. It's based on a mix of all these different qualities. I would say the most important of all these qualities is your psychological strength, because the quality that separates winners is the ability to constantly reach down to find something deep inside them to make the commitment other people are not willing to make. With that in mind, here are the four dimensions that I believe are necessary.

PSYCHOLOGICAL

This is the capacity to be able to deal with all kinds of adversity. It is also the capacity to be so hard that in your duels with opposing players, you are not intimidated. In great duels, there are defining moments. There is the moment when you get a sense of the other person's hardness. It may be a physical risk issue or a fitness issue.

When you are competing, you measure your capacity to take physical risks, your capacity to push through pain threshold, and your capacity to not back down psychologically from someone. Those defining moments are constant in contact sports. If two players are running for the same destination, the one with the weaker psychological dimension is going to time it so he/she gets to the defined point late. In other words, he/she is going to time it so he/she misses the confrontation with the other player. That's the defining moment of that duel - who is going to slow down and who isn't.

PHYSICAL

A lot of this is inherited - your quickness, your speed, your agility, and your strength. But some of it can be developed. You can improve your quickness, your endurance and, to a certain extent, you can develop speed. The person who fills the physical dimension is the one who has an intelligent and consistent work ethic to improve all the physical qualities. Most people don't have the understanding that all these things work against each other.

For instance, the process of developing speed actually retards agility. If you are developing a good cardiovascular base, it actually hurts your speed development. If you are running 20 or 30 minutes over miles and miles, it actually detracts from your capacity to sprint. You need to develop a balance of all these qualities.

TECHNICAL

Speed of play is the critical element in a player's technical and eventually, tactical development. Speed of play is your ability to do things quickly with seamless effort. As you go from one level to the next technically, you are required to be able to do things so much faster - under pressure, do things with without time and space more efficiently. That's the ascension of your tactical growth.

TACTICAL

The tactical requirement actually has two parts. The first is being able to recognize what is happening on the field. The second is being able to make a decision that will help your team the most and hurt the other team the most. So your tactical requirements are having the awareness as to what is going on in the game by seeing it, then having the decision-making process to sort out what's best. And what is best is going to be determined by a lot of different factors - the field you are on, your match-up, time and space, etc.

What does it take to play college athletics? The answer is "What do you want from your college experience?" If you have the technical, tactical, and physical tools to play at the Division I level, do you have the time and dedication? If you would sit the bench for a Division I team, wouldn't you be happier playing for a Division II, III, or NAIA program?

The college choice questions can be researched in the pages of this book. The answers to questions ultimately lie in your abilities and aspirations.

SELECTING A COLLEGE

**YOUR FIRST CONSIDERATION
MUST BE ACADEMIC**

FIELDS OF STUDY

- Identify your general and specific interest
- Do you prefer a research institute or one committed to undergraduate studies?
- Do you prefer innovative programs or traditional, structured programs?

COLLEGE SIZE

- Do you want a broad range of activities? (i.e., larger schools offer more)
- Do you require a broad range of courses or specialized training?
- Are graduate students acceptable as instructors in lower level courses?
- Do you prefer a big name program?

LOCATION

- Would you like to be close to home?
- Do you prefer a rural or urban campus?
- Do you prefer a specific climate?
- Do you wish to play in a particular conference?

COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT

- Do you prefer a particular religious affiliation?
- Conservative or liberal environment?
- Coed or single-sex institution?
- Private or State University?
- Are sororities and fraternities important?

Identify up to 10 colleges that meet your individual needs

NOW CONSIDER THE ATHLETIC PROGRAM

IDENTIFY YOUR SKILLS

- What are your strengths? (speed, quickness, strength, etc.)
- Is your style compatible with the program you are interested in?
- What is your potential to contribute to the program and when?

IDENTIFY POTENTIAL COLLEGES

- Can you be competitive at the college's level of play?
- Competitiveness of schedule?
- Chance of making the team?
- Potential playing time in first year?
- Competence and personality of coach?

Identify 7-10 schools that meet your academic and athletic requirements

CONTACT SCHOOLS

COVER LETTER

Handwritten or typed

RESUME

Neatly typed and concise

CAMPUS VISIT:

Be prepared

Dress appropriately

Ask the right questions

KNOW THE RECRUITING RULES!

THE COLLEGE IDENTIFICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

There are many possible choices for college. However, if you are methodical, organized, and willing to spend the necessary time reviewing the available data, then you will discover that only a handful of schools offer exactly what you want. Therefore, your first job is to determine the type of colleges you wish to attend. By doing this you should be able to eliminate a large number of choices while you better define your own wants, needs, and goals.

Academic Life

As an athlete with proven skills, you are probably more interested in quality athletic programs than any other aspect of university life. However, your chances of making a career out of your athletic ability is limited. Even those who eventually find a place on a professional roster often find their careers can be very short-lived. Even though this may seem like a bleak future to someone whose life revolves around sports, it is realistic. So, your search for the right university should focus on education first and athletics second. While your athletic skills will deteriorate with age, an education and a degree can continually open the door to new opportunities.

If you are reasonably sure that you know what you want to study (for example: engineering), thoroughly research those institutions that offer the best programs. Compile a list of colleges that have quality engineering departments and compare their strengths and weaknesses. Remember, that most students change majors at least once - some change many times - before finding the right field. So, be mindful not to lock yourself into a system that inhibits your ability to change and grow.

There are many different types of programs. Some programs stress traditional curriculum based on a liberal arts foundation where other programs are trade based where courses are offered in diverse studies such as finance and horticulture. To decide which is right for you, ask yourself a series of questions:

- **What are your main interests?** Systematically, list those subjects that most interest you. If you have several interests, look for schools with a diverse selection of programs. This will allow you to change majors freely without having to transfer to different colleges or universities.
- **Do you have one specific interest or skill?** If so, look for schools that specialize in that area. Keep in mind that if you do change majors, you might be forced to transfer.
- **Do you prefer a faculty that is dedicated to teaching undergraduate courses?** Institutions with large graduate populations are sometimes more committed to research than to teaching. While professors at those institutions generally have less time to spend on undergraduates outside the classroom, the ideas they do bring to the classroom represent current research.
- **Do you prefer more innovative programs?** These programs offer unique opportunities such as overseas studies, cooperative work-study programs and individually created majors stressing independent study.
- **Do you prefer a more structured traditional program?** These programs are generally built around certain university core of requirements which must be satisfied before a student embarks on a single major.

University Size

You can eliminate many colleges and universities by determining the size of the environment in which you feel most comfortable. In other words, do you prosper in larger classes or in smaller classes? To pick a school based primarily on its size, you will undoubtedly make some trade-offs. Large institutions generally have large classes with limited personal interaction among students and professors, but offer more extracurricular activities and broader educational possibilities. Small institutions generally have smaller classes that allow students to more readily exchange ideas with professors and other students during class discussions, but do not have the resources necessary to offer a wide array of career options. If you are unsure of what you want to study, a small school might not be right for you. Ask yourself the following questions when determining the university size most appropriate for you:

- **What kind of environment exists at your high school?** Are you more comfortable in large or small classes? Do you want to experience a different kind of environment or do you prefer to stick to what you already know?
- **Do you want to meet and interact with many of your classmates personally?** This is more likely at a small school.
- **Is a wide range of activities outside the classroom important?** If you answer yes, then a larger university may better suit your needs.

THE COLLEGE IDENTIFICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

- **Would you like an academic program which offers specialized training in many fields, or one that focuses on a limited curriculum?** Large universities obviously offer a wider range of courses; however, that does not automatically ensure a better institution. Small universities can sometimes compensate for the lack of career fields with more one-on-one instruction and better access to resources.
- **Are you concerned with the expertise of the faculty?** Often at large universities, graduate students some times teach lower level courses. Though generally well-qualified, they do not have the experience or knowledge most professors possess.
- **Do you want to play your sport at a big-name university?** Or would you do better to target a smaller school where your chances to play might be better?

University Location

Another way to narrow your prospective list of schools is to determine geographically where you may want to spend the next four years. Some questions you should try to answer include:

- **Do you want to stay close to home or do you want the challenge of living far from your family?**
- **Would you rather experience a rural or an urban campus?** If you grew up in a small town, it may be beneficial for you to experience life in a big city for several years. On the other hand, if you grew up a large city, it may be beneficial for you to get out of the city for a while?
- **Do you prefer a particular climate?** If you dislike cold weather, you might eliminate universities in the North and Northeast. On the other hand, you might want to consider those areas if you also enjoy winter recreational sports.
- **As an athlete, do you prefer the competition a particular conference offers?** Do the West Coast universities play a style more compatible with your skills? East Coast? North?

University Environment

Each university or college offers a unique environment. Though hard to grasp from brochures and handbooks, each institution has distinct social, religious, and political attitudes. In order to better assess the information provided in printed materials, be sure to ask specific questions when speaking with college representatives.

- **Do you want to attend an institution with a particular religious affiliation?**
- **Are you more comfortable in a conservative or liberal environment?** You can gather insights about predominant political trends by reading campus newspapers, talking to university representatives, finding documentation written by faculty members, and asking questions of students when making campus visits.
- **Do you want to attend a university that considers fraternities and sororities important aspects of social life?** Many Athletes consider their team an adequate substitute for organized social activities. Others might want a social life apart from their team.
- **Do you prefer a coed or single sex institution?**
- **Would you like to attend a private school or a public institution?** Though private schools are generally more expensive, cost alone should not deter you from pursuing the university of your choice. Financial aid is available for qualified applicants.

Athletic Life

If you have followed the guidelines presented, you can now compile a preliminary list of schools based on academic criteria - social, philosophical, geographical and other prerequisites. Now you can start looking at college athletic programs by asking yourself these questions:

- **Does the school have special academic counseling for athletes?** Academic counselors can help you select the right courses and the best professors to allow you the flexibility you will need for training, games, and travel. Does the college have tutors available for athletes? If so, are they free or do you pay for their services. Are there required study sessions for athletes? These study sessions can be helpful in making sure you are devoting enough time to your studies. Many freshmen simply do not know how to budget their time.

THE COLLEGE IDENTIFICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

- **How many players from the program have graduated and earned degrees in the last five years?** This may give you an indication of the amount of emphasis a school puts on academics. Check to see what percentage of athletes graduate, and then weigh that against the percentage who graduate from the entire student body. Keep in mind that not all schools are alike, so strict comparisons of these numbers may sometimes be misleading.
- **What is the total number of players on athletic scholarship?** Consider what effect this will have on your chances for a scholarship and on your playing time. There are other important questions to ask with regard to scholarships. What will the complete financial aid package include? Depending on how much need-based aid for which you will qualify, you may find a variety of sources comprising your total financial aid package. Grants-in-aid, loans, work study and other aid programs can be combined with scholarship money to meet your needs. You will need to know how to renew the scholarship each year because there is no such thing as a four-year scholarship. Be sure you understand the entire renewal process clearly. Ask questions now because you won't want to deal with surprises later. Finally, you should determine what happens if you get injured and can't play for all, or part of a season.
- **How many games does a team play each year?** You have to balance your desire to play as much as possible with the realization that you can't get overwhelmed academically. An off season is a good way to get into shape and determine how much playing time you might see during your freshman and sophomore years.
- **How successful has the school's program been in recent years?** Obviously, everybody wants to play for a winner. But the more successful a program is, the stronger the competition will be for playing time. The school's conference and playoff record can give yet another indication of its success. Is there a current upswing that indicates the program has turned the corner, or a down trend, indicating a turn for the worse.
- **Are you being recruited for a specific position?** If so, find out who is ahead of you at that position. This can help determine your chances for playing time. If there are two sophomores ahead of you, then the chance that you will sit the bench increases. You may be asked to switch positions. Ask yourself honestly if you'll be happy moving to another position.
- **What kind of athletic facilities does the school have?** Your physical development will play a major role in your success as a college player. With proper training facilities and a professional coaching staff, your game can be elevated to the next level. Other things you should ask: Do they have an indoor training facility, weight room, strength coach, and in-season and off season conditioning program? Poor facilities may contribute to injuries, stifle development or adversely affect your mental approach to the game. Whereas brand new facilities could cloud your judgment if you are not comfortable with the coaching staff.
- **Does the school offer a junior varsity program?** If so, how many players are on the junior varsity and varsity teams? If a junior varsity program is offered, find out if it is used as a feeder for the varsity, and if there is any movement to and from each program.
- **Who comprises the coaching staff?** It is important to know who you will be "working for" during your college career.

Now that you have identified some of the things you want out of an athletic program, look at the list of schools you have already compiled for academic and other considerations. Try to find those schools among the university profiles listed in this guide. Are their athletic programs also compatible? If so, these are the schools you definitely want to pursue. If not, you might have to make some trade-offs. For example, can you adapt to a new position if a particular coach says you may have to switch? If you are flexible, you can expand the list of schools that interest you. Remember, there are many quality schools with good athletic programs. Everyone should be able to find a number of match-ups that qualify for their final list.

At this point, attempt to identify up to ten colleges or universities that really interest you. Focus most of your energy on these schools. Economic factors generally prohibit visiting all the campuses. Nevertheless, if you can afford the cost, visit as many schools and talk to as many academic counselors and coaches as you can.

Summary

It is important to remember that your final selection of a college or university should be based primarily on your educational needs. For additional academic information, consult other handbooks devoted to that purpose, evaluate an individual college's brochures, and consult with parents, guidance counselors, current and former players, and college officials. Compile your list of schools from those resources. The athletic profiles in the College Guide should assist you in reducing the number of universities on your list to a more manageable size. Together with the school's complete academic profile you will be able to determine the right college to meet both your academic and athletic needs.

THE STUDENT ATHLETE'S ROLE IN CHOOSING A COLLEGE

The diversity and abundance of opportunities for participation in a college athletics programs are overwhelming if you consider full range of classifications: NCAA Division I, II, III, NAIA, and NJCAA at more than 2,000 colleges across the country. Each school is unique in three key areas: academic programs, social and environmental factors, and athletic standards. The result of a comprehensive search is a positive match for the prepared and well-informed student-athlete.

The recommended process involves a focused effort in three areas. These are simply referred to as **THE THREE P's**.

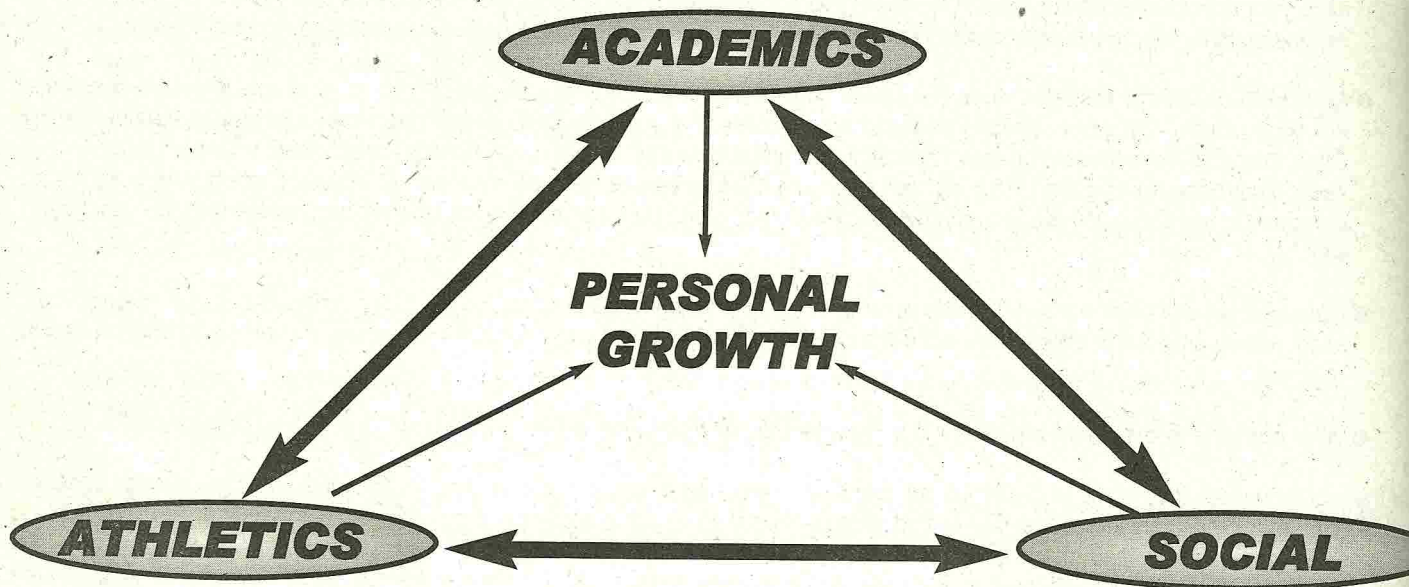
I.) BE PROACTIVE: Take a proactive approach to gathering information beginning with your sophomore year. This should involve a system for prioritizing choices and a continuous evaluation of personal athletic and academic goals.

II.) BE PERSISTENT: Once prioritized, be persistent in communicating your goals and personal interests to the program(s) of choice.

III.) BE PREPARED: Prepare both athletically and academically to meet necessary eligibility and admission requirements.

The Well-Informed Student-Athlete

What are the variables to consider in selecting a college? The most frequent questions and discussion topics encountered may be generally categorized as academic, social and athletic related. Essentially, the student-athlete should be attempting to set a variety of immediate and long-term goals for their own personal growth in each of these key areas. Matching a college opportunity to these goals is a vital step in achieving them.



Essential Questions to Consider

Academically - Will I have the desire, support, and ability to succeed here?

Socially - Will I be comfortable with my surroundings and able to grow as a person?

Athletically - Will I contribute and become a better player?

THE STUDENT ATHLETE'S ROLE IN CHOOSING A COLLEGE

Academic Eligibility & Admission Requirements

Each Division (I, II, III) of the NCAA has some variability in eligibility requirements. The NAIA and NJCAA are significantly different from the NCAA. As well, the admissions requirements for various colleges and universities may be unique and vary greatly from one to another. However, it is possible to generally view the following items as essential elements for admission criteria to most colleges.

Know the Recruiting Rules

A recruit should know a few basic NCAA rules:

- 1.) A college coach may call /contact players until July 1st after the completion of the junior year in high school.
- 2.) A recruit may not practice with an NCAA Division I college team on a campus visit.
- 3.) A player may not accept payments for playing for any club team.
- 4.) A recruit should not accept any financial rewards for attending an institution outside the formal scholarship opportunities.
- 5.) Recruitment must be by members of the institution's academic and athletic staff only.

Rules for NAIA and junior college associations are different. Therefore, the recruit should always seek advice directly from the associations governing body if something seems unusual. Also, NCAA Division III rules vary from NCAA rules at other levels. If a recruit has questions, he or she should obtain a current copy of the *NCAA Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete* which is published annually by the NCAA.

Choosing a college is a big decision and should not be taken lightly. As a student-athlete you need to enhance your opportunities for recruitment by helping in the process. The more knowledgeable and organized you are, the better your chances will be. Obviously, this process doesn't take the place of pure athletic ability and hard work, but if you have the talent and dedication to play at the collegiate level you need to freely communicate this to the coaches.

Admission Steps

Standardized Test Results: (SAT or ACT) These standardized tests represent a common admission criteria. It is recommended that you take the preliminary (PSAT or PACT) exam for two important reasons. First, the exam is a prerequisite to an official campus visit to NCAA Division I and Division II schools. Second, students have a tendency to improve their scores by repeated attempts at the exam.

Photocopies of Unofficial High School Transcripts: Once you have established an open dialogue with a coaching staff, provide them a copy of your academic history. Many athletic departments have access to qualified people who will analyze these transcripts and assess the probability of admission to the school before the official notification.

The Admissions Application: This step must be completed during the first few months of your senior year. The final decision for admission lies with a college official who works outside of the athletic department. Because of this, the coaching staff is typically delighted when notified that a student-athlete has been responsible for completing the admission process on his or her own. Please note that in some cases an application may be "coded" by the athletic department in order to speed or aid in the admission process. You should ask the coaching staff this specific question prior to making application to the college.

COLLEGE ADMISSIONS

APPLYING TO SELECTIVE COLLEGES: The Admissions Committee

Applying to selective colleges and universities is more challenging because they are selective. With a large number of applicants they college established selection criteria to determine worthy candidates. Students are not chosen solely based on academic credentials, rather they are chosen by what the college needs to fill academic and athletic programs. As an athlete, you will not be evaluated like other candidates. Your ability, as well as the needs of the team, will be taken into careful consideration. Although the coach will have input, he will not have the authority to make the final decision regarding your admission request.

The approach to college admissions requires two steps: getting a realistic view of what is available and an accurate assessment of your abilities. The number of selective colleges is small and can be easily identified by reading any of the readily available guidebooks. Although definitions of "selective" may vary, most knowledgeable sources would say there are perhaps two hundred such institutions in the country. Of these schools, not all offer an athletic program that features your sport, compete in NCAA Division I, offer scholarships or have strong winning traditions.

You can, and should, undertake a similar evaluation for yourself both academically and athletically by looking at your academic achievements and standardized test scores, and compare them with your athletic abilities. **As an example**, assign values for your SAT scores with a ranking from a high of 2400 = 10, to 1000 = 4 or a top 20% class ranking being worth an 8. Create similar values for playing on district or state level teams, all league and MVP honors, invitational opportunities, and so on through your senior year. You can then roughly determine where you stand. Keep in mind that there are few institutions or individuals that score high in all areas. Just as it is very difficult to find institutions that have high academic standards and offer competitive sports with a strong winning tradition, it is very difficult to find "blue chip" athletes that are similarly "blue chip" scholars. In fact, college administrators concede that there are only a limited number of gifted athletes with superb academic credentials to fill the needs of their institutions. The resulting compromise is to balance academic standards with athletic abilities in order to find qualified student-athletes to fill college rosters.

Once you have identified compatible colleges and universities, you can begin to eliminate schools from your list based on standard evaluation criteria - academic programs offered, distance from home, cost, and so on. This will further narrow your choices and give you an idea of where you might want to make initial contacts. While you are looking at colleges, coaches may be trying to contact you, which may continue to expand the number of colleges on your list.

Further elimination will occur by looking at particulars of your given situation - how much a college may want you to enroll and how much your academic credentials meet their preestablished criteria. In other words, are you as qualified as other applicants? If not, how far might an admissions committee be willing to compromise to get a talented athlete?

First, try to gauge your value to the athletic program. Keep in mind that not all institutions apply the same admission standards to their athletes as other students. Look at your position. What is the depth of the team at that position and graduation year of the starters? Does the team need need help, and do they need it right away? If the answer is yes, an admissions committee may be likely to compromise on the academic criteria. However, there is a limit to how far they will go, even for a marquee player.

This "flexibility" can only be estimated. The only truly reliable way to know is to ask the players. The coach should be willing to give you their contact information. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact them about their background and success academically on campus. Of course, be sure to ask how many hours they commit to their studies, so that you can fairly assess both their ability and willingness to work. If your credentials are well below key players, then your chances are not good. If they are the same as average players, then your chances are good. And if they are better than average players, then your chances are excellent.

This should give you a pretty clear picture of your chances allowing you to direct your inquiries accordingly. Your chances for success will magnify where your academic credentials are close to current players, and your athletic ability is within two years of making a contribution at your position. Be wary of long shots because they are just that and rarely pan out. Be aware that any time you show a college both athletic and academic promise, you not only assure your chances of admission, but greatly increase your chances for a merit scholarship.

PRESENTING YOURSELF: The Application and Interview

By presenting yourself well, you improve your chances at a selective institution. You have about three opportunities to do this. First is the application itself. Second is a campus interview or visit that you initiate. Third is the campus visit that may be initiated by the athletic department. For some selective schools, a fourth opportunity may be an interview with a review board.

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For each opportunity you will want to create the most positive impression that you can without giving up spontaneity or genuineness. If you fake or falsify yourself, you will be found out. Guaranteed.

First, the application should be organized, neat, complete, and returned early. The appearance cannot be over-emphasized. Admissions officers and committees will form an impression of you based on the application. Never send in anything that is not first rate in every respect with words spelled correctly, forms signed, educational grammar -- no coffee stains or grease spots. Be sure to type it. Think of it as a professional resume.

Second, personal meetings or interviews should be conducted in a professional manner. Dress appropriately - be neat and clean and do not forget your hair, face, and fingernails. Over-dressed is always better than under-dressed. Take into account the season and region of the country you will be visiting. Make your appointment well in advance and be on time if not early. If you are unavoidably detained, be sure to call and let the person you are meeting with know that you will be late. A good rule of thumb is to prepare yourself as though your interview is with a potential employer. Do your homework on the school you are visiting and master the basic information to minimize dialogue about programs the institution does not have. Different institutions will conduct interviews differently. However, most selective institutions are interested in some basic things: What interests you? How do you invest your time? With what results? What have you gained from this? Have you pursued any outside interests in depth? Have you been recognized by others for this effort? Can you ask intelligent questions? Can you respond intelligently to intuitive questions? The outcome will be to discern excellence, dedication, motivation and enthusiasm.

Above all, spend some time collecting your thoughts before the interview. Why are you interested in this particular college or university? What is important for your own personal growth? You should write down any questions you may have and take them with you to the interview. Try to word them in a way that will reveal useful information. For example, ask how many of the classes during your freshman year will have less than 25 students. Ask whether specific classes are taught by tenured senior faculty. Ask how many athletes graduated in the top third of their class and what the grade point average is for the team. Be as particular and specific as possible. The more thorough you are, the more likely it is that you will be remembered in a positive way. And of course, keep in mind that although the interview will rarely get you crossed off the list, if done well, it will most certainly put you at or near the top.

DIFFERENCES AMONG SELECTIVE INSTITUTIONS: The Six Categories

It is worthwhile to identify the various types of colleges and universities, and to learn more about their admissions criteria. The six types of institutions are **private colleges and universities** (including the Ivy League), **state or public universities**, **the U.S. Service Academies**, **state and private military academies** and **junior colleges**. Despite the differences between the members of each type of college, there are common characteristics which aid in understanding the admissions process.

Private Colleges and Universities

As a group, the private selective colleges, including the Ivy League, have the most freedom in pursuing any type of mission that they choose, and almost total freedom in choosing whatever students they wish to admit to achieve that mission. This freedom is occasionally curbed by athletic league affiliations, but more generally is curbed by faculty review of the admissions activities, usually by setting higher academic standards as a part of the admission policy. Although it is extremely rare for faculty to be involved in selecting candidates, it does happen in some instances, and you need to be aware of this in researching schools.

Faculty members generally put more weight on academic indicators and objective test scores than admissions officers. Most admissions officers are very reluctant to admit athletes who are significantly less qualified academically than other candidates because of the negative opinion of the college that will be formed. Be sure as well that your references include faculty members from your high school who can vouch for your character, integrity, and academic accomplishments.

The Ivy League is an association of private colleges comprising a specific athletic conference. It is the only athletic association founded on the premise that athletes should not be given scholarships. While this may be important if you are looking for an athletic scholarship, it has even more important ramifications for admissions. As an athletic conference, each member institution is required to report the academic qualifications of recruited athletes to other member institutions such that all athletes are within certain guidelines for the general population of admitted and enrolled students.

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State or Public Colleges and Universities

Of all selective institutions, state or public colleges and universities will typically lower academic admission standards for in-state or residential applicants and raise standards for out-of-state applicants. When applying to out-of-state college, either public or private, carefully evaluate the admission standards and available financial aid. Often private colleges may be more generous with their admission parameters.

One way to determine the likelihood of gaining a spot with an out-of-state athletic program is to evaluate the geographic composition of the members of the team. If several players are from out-of-state, then it is likely that the admission committee will be able to give you reasonable consideration. However, if there are very few players from out-of-state, you may want to reevaluate your choices and find a school that would be willing to accommodate you.

Also, remember that the number of public selective institutions is rather small. This is due to the fact that, by their public nature, tuition and admission requirements must be affordable for residents, yet still attractive to qualified out-of-state applicants. For this reason, your residence may be as much a factor in determining your chance for admission as your credentials.

United States Service Academies

The U.S. Service Academies differ from the other groups in several important respects. First, they are free to those student-athletes who gain appointment into their branch of service. While the Ivy League offers no merit scholarships, although they are very generous with those demonstrating need, the service academies offer all appointees a merit scholarship. Second, applicants must be sure they want the discipline and lifestyle that these institutions offer, and are willing to accept military service requirements after graduation.

Third, these institutions conduct their admissions business differently. Almost everyone who is admitted to the Academy attends. As a result, the number of students admitted is very small compared to other institutions, where generally fewer than half of the admitted students will choose to enroll. Contact the Academies to further understand the singular nature of these institutions, their unique environment and curriculum, and the difficulty of transferring to another college or university at a later date.

State and Private Military Academies

State and Private Military Academies have the same admission standards and available financial aid characteristics as state and private colleges and universities, but offer similar discipline and lifestyle as the U.S. Service Academies without the mandatory military service requirements after graduation.

Junior Colleges

A junior college is often a viable alternative to beginning your college education at a four-year school. A student-athlete may make a more comfortable transition to campus life in a smaller, friendlier and more familiar setting. Junior colleges also offer an Associate Degree and program certifications for those who are seeking to gain employment after only two years of study.

Most junior colleges build a solid academic foundation for students who wish to move on to a four-year degree program and for those who have not fully applied themselves in previous settings. They allow students to acclimate themselves more slowly to the rigors of college life relieving some of the academic pressure by adding a personal touch that may not be found at large universities. This does not mean, however, that they are less demanding than four-year institutions.

Junior colleges almost always offer a smaller student-instructor ratio than that of a larger state school. And, because building an academic foundation is paramount, the junior college normally excels in support services. Resource rooms, tutoring, lab mentoring programs, and academic counseling are staples of a junior college education.

When selecting a college, money may be a primary concern. Junior colleges offer a very affordable tuition and by attending a local community college and continuing living at home for the first year or two can significantly cut the cost of a four-year degree. Moving away from home to attend a junior college offers the advantage of lower tuition; however, housing, food and miscellaneous living expenses may match the costs for room and board associated with attending an in-state, public university.

Many junior college programs are serious about athletics, recognizing that they are valuable in the overall education of an individual. It is also widely recognized that through athletics an individual can increase his or her market value as a prospective student-athlete to a four-year school. Junior college athletics are geared towards the continuation of skill development for an individual in

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a particular sport. Some athletes do not reach their full potential in high school. As in the academic areas, the junior college athletics program is geared to improving the student's physical abilities. NJCAA intercollegiate athletic competition is very keen, with the various conference, district, regional and national play-offs and tournaments providing a great proving ground and barometer for student-athletes who want to pursue their sport at the NCAA Division I, II, and III levels, or in the NAIA.

Many student-athletes fall through the cracks of the recruiting process, while others are simply unable to make a decision about their future in education and athletics. For some, the financial situation is appealing; for others, the need to develop academically is a priority. These are all reasons that may best describe the cross section of student-athletes found in many junior colleges. Junior college affords them the opportunity to play at the collegiate level. For the most part, these student-athletes continue their education and playing careers at four-year schools. Many are recruited from the junior college setting, and many receive

scholarships. These are success stories that cannot be ignored or discounted. Finally, while some families will rely on a "recruiting service" to get their son or daughter placed, the truth is the majority if not all collegiate coaches would rather hear from the student-athlete than anyone else. Often the player profile is package with several others thus wasting the time of the coach and valuable time and money of the family.

Summary

Evaluate yourself and selective institutions on two parameters: athletics and academics. Apply early and try your best to leave a good first impression both on the application and during visits or interviews. Understand the differences that exist in the general grouping of selective institutions. Use this information to your advantage as you attempt to choose the best match possible.

For a more detailed and helpful resource to assist you and your family with the college selection process you might want to utilize our Official College Planning Workbook. The work book covers all aspects of the college admission and selection process starting your freshman year in high school and concluding with your senior year.

The following topics are covered in the Official College Planning Workbook:

The Student Athletes Role In Choosing A College or University

Collegiate Eligibility Requirement

Admissions Steps

College and University Admissions

Admissions Committee

Application and Interview

Institution Types

Paying For College

College Cost

Non-Need Based Assistance

Foreign Students

Other Resources

What Does It Take To Play At The Collegiate Level

Physical

Psychological

Technical

Tactical

The College Identification and Selection Process

Academic Life

University Size

University Location

University Environment

College Sports

MATCHFIT®

College Planning Checklist & Worksheets

College Evaluation Tables

Communicating With Prospective College and University Staff & Coaches

Written Communication - Bonus - Sample Player Profile & Cover Letter Included

Telephone Communication

Campus Visits

The World Wide Web & Your College Search