

# College Soccer and Recruiting Experience Workshop

The following information is excerpts from multiple sources, including other clubs from around the country, the NCAA and “The Sports Source” database and information system.

## Facts

1. The numbers competing in athletics beyond the high school level, according to the NCAA (2006), using student-athletes in men’s soccer data:

High school athletes	321,400
High school senior athletes	91,800
NCAA athletes	18,200
NCAA freshman roster spots	5,200
NCAA senior athletes	4,100
NCAA athletes drafted	76
Pct. NCAA athletes that play pro	1.9

2. College soccer programs in U.S (2006)

- Division I	198 male, 301 women	- NAIA	224 male, 219 women
- Division II	171 male, 199 women	- NJCAA	173 male, 125 women
- Division III	361 male, 378 women	- NCAA	45 male, 35 women

3. In the NCAA, women’s and men’s soccer is an “equivalent” based sport when it comes to scholarships. Coaches can divide scholarships as they wish and it is not an all or none event.

- A fully-funded Division I program has 9.9 (men) & 12 (women) total 100% scholarships available
- Division II has 9 (men) & 9.9 (women) total 100% scholarships available
- These total scholarships are over the entire roster, typically 25-40 players, and are divided up as the coach wishes among the roster.
- Division III schools do not offer athletic money
- NAIA schools offer athletic money and are governed by different rules. Typically, more athletic money may be available at these schools.
- Most schools will offer a combination of athletic and academic aid because academic money does NOT count against their athletic scholarship total. (there is a lot of academic money available for students with good grades).
- Athletic scholarship offers are technically good for only 1 year and players must re-sign annually.
- The NCAA permits a coach to increase or decrease the scholarship money each year, but it is fairly uncommon for a coach to decrease a player’s scholarship amount without prior notice or agreement
- A “verbal commitment” means that a player has verbally told a coach that they have decided to attend their school. Players cannot officially commit in writing to a school until the first Wed. in February of their senior year, but they can verbally commit anytime they wish which then puts an end to the recruiting process. This is NOT a binding agreement, but in soccer it is generally

frowned upon if a player (or school) does not honor this agreement and if other schools continue to recruit a player who has verbally committed to a certain school.

- “Signed with” or “written commitment” means a player has signed a National Letter of Intent (NLI) which is a binding written agreement between the player and the school saying they will be a part of their soccer program in return for athletic aid. The earliest opportunity a player can “sign” is the first Wed, of February of their senior year. Once this is signed, a player would have to go through an appeals process with the school and NCAA if the player changed her mind and wanted to go to another school or later wants to transfer schools.

### **Myths:**

***1. The number one most popular myth is that players just get recruited. The majority of students and parents believe talented high school age athletes are actively recruited and even offered “full-ride” sports scholarships by college coaches.***

### **Reality:**

- It is a two-way street, there are 10,000s of players – the players that are most successful with the college recruiting process are proactive in contacting schools to introduce themselves and notify them when and where they are playing.
- 2% of these athletes are “actively recruited” by leading college coaches, leaving the remaining 98% to “recruit themselves.” (The Sports Source)

***2. Soccer players are recruited from high school programs so playing in high school is critical to the process.***

**Reality:** Unlike in other college sports, the majority of college soccer coaches do not rely on high school programs as a recruiting source for potential student-athletes. The US youth club soccer system provides an easier and economically efficient opportunity for college coaches to scout and recruit. College soccer coaches rely on club soccer and ODP and showcase tournaments to watch and recruit student-athletes.

***3. Simply playing in showcase tournaments and playing on a “top level” team will get you recruited.***

**Reality:** While college coaches are constantly on the look-out for new prospects, you are one of hundreds of players at these tournaments. Standing out in a match to a neutral observer is not easy or noticeable. Getting seen by college coaches begins with you the player. Many coaches begin identifying potential prospects in players’ sophomore and junior year of high school (club soccer U16 and U17). Most college soccer players marketed themselves. **“You must let the coaches know you exist, so they can watch you play.”** Soccer is so big and so organized albeit under the college publicity radar that often college coaches won’t know how to look for you unless you let them know who you are and where you will be. ***The sophomore and junior years are the most critical years to the process.***

***4. Soccer programs offer “full rides” to the best players.***

**Reality:** Division I men's soccer programs have a maximum of 9.9 scholarships, Div. II 9.0. Division I women's soccer has a maximum of 12 scholarships, Div. II 9.9. Not all schools provide their soccer programs with the full allotment. Before disbanding, Vanderbilt University for example had less than 3 scholarships for its men's program. Scholarships are usually divided amongst 20 to 40 players. Most schools shy away from full scholarships, because it is a large investment in one player, and it often costs a team potential depth. As well, many schools choose to increase individual player scholarships year by year, based on performance.

*5. Most coaches will want to see video of the player.*

**Reality:** This is a coach's livelihood. Most will not leave that to a video of "greatest hits". College coaches have no desire to sit through hours of shaky footage on a hand held camera. It tells them nothing about the caliber of the team, the opposition or the game. **Coaches want to see players in matches to assess these factors for themselves.**

**Myths continued**

*6. Parents are effective as "player agents".*

**Reality:** A parent agent is considered a red flag, and often means an immature recruit, or an unenthusiastic recruit. **To put it simply, college coaches are weary of parents who are the initiators in the recruiting process. Coaches want to hear from the kids.** They want to know if kids are well spoken, mature, intelligent and enthusiastic about their university. In other words, coaches do not want to recruit the parent. Similarly some club coaches use the promise or lure of a college scholarship to bring players onto their team. Make sure you use due diligence when dissecting the motives behind these promises to you during their recruitment efforts.

*7. Some schools are simply too expensive to consider?*

**Reality:** Many schools have very extensive aid programs that can be coupled with athletic money to create overall packages.

*8. Division I is always the Best.*

**Reality:** "Some players don't have a good understanding of what Division I is," say some college coaches. They might say, "I want to play Division I, without a good understanding of the options and reality. There are Division I programs that are no better than Division II or III programs. A lot of people have a misconception about the level of play at various universities. **The top 20 division III teams will beat some division I teams. The best NAIA teams will beat all but the very top NCAA teams. Determining the division in which a college plays soccer has more to do with the size of the school, the money it offers (and how it is offered) and other factors away from the athletics field.**

*9. All perspective college soccer programs are the same.*

**Reality:** Often, players will contact a college coach about attending their school and know nothing about the soccer team, the players, the coach, or the style of play. If you are a left midfielder, and the team has three sophomore left midfielders, chances are good that is not the school for you. **If another school may have a graduating senior and a junior at your position, you're more likely to get playing time earlier.** If you are interested in a particular school, I recommend going and watching that team play. Watching one game will answer a lot of your questions. **It is recommended that student-athletes make a list of the top schools of interest to them and then find out as much as they can about each school.**

#### **10. *High school and club team stars automatically become college stars.***

**Reality:** If you are recruited by a major college, chances are you are one of the best players on your club team. You've been a "go-to player," the one who dictates the pace, the one everybody counts on. It's been a nice ride, but it's over in college. Some assume that since they were the star of their club team that they will also be the star in college. They don't fully understand the level of college soccer. They may think they do, and their parents think they do, but they don't. **The pace of college soccer is like nothing else they've seen before, and even players who come from some of the top club teams aren't ready for the demands and pace of college soccer.**

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### **Tips for Players**

1. Recruiting is a sales pitch and coaches are salespeople – they have to be. With that in mind, be aware that some have only their own interests in mind as it is their livelihood. Most are also looking out for the best interest of the players they recruit to make sure it is a good fit. **You need to be able make a judgment on the character of the coach.** This may be a player's first time going through the recruiting process, but you could be the 300th recruiting prospect in the career of a coach. Keep that in mind, and contact coaches !
2. Best way to get a feel for the school and coach:
  - a. Take a visit – are they interested in looking out for you beyond the soccer field?
  - b. Talk to current and former players
  - c. Talk to HS, club, and ODP coaches who have had players recruited by or attend that particular school.
3. As a high school soccer player you should be aware that the standard of play at the college level is very high. It is recommended that **you attend a few games to actual gauge the actual intensity and speed of the game.**
4. Remember, a college coach will have phone calls, emails with not only you, but at least 25 other prospects. Being prepared both academically,

athletically and organizationally will enhance your possibilities as a college player prospect.

5. The NCAA rules state that coaches cannot call or speak in person with players until July 1 prior to their senior year and not pay for the costs of coming to visit their campus until the fall of their Senior year. It USE TO BE the case that players committed in the early part of their senior year. This is not the case anymore.
  - a. The profile of college soccer has grown and the number of college programs has increased, in turn, there is a greater competition among schools to get players to come to their school. Therefore, the following has become the norm.
  - b. Coaches ask players to come in on unofficial visits during their junior and/or sophomore year so they can talk to them in person. (NCAA rules prohibit them from speaking in person till July 1 of Senior year **unless the player is on their campus**)
  - c. Coaches tend to ask (via club coaches or email) players to call them, so they can speak with them legally over the phone. (NCAA rules prohibit coaches from calling players until July 1 of senior year, but they can email Sept 1 of Junior year.)
6. Remember that NCAA Div. III does not offer athletic money but still has rules for contacts with players, etc. **The NAIA rules are significantly different and much more lenient.** NAIA coaches are permitted to have contacts with players and even make scholarship offers as early as a player's sophomore high school year.

You should make every effort to visit as many college campuses as possible beginning with your freshman year of high school. These visits will help guide you in deciding what kind of college best fit your needs – keeping in mind that your goals/needs may change over the course of your high school career. As you narrow your choices, plan on meeting and introducing yourself to college coaches. It is imperative you call and/or e-mail ahead of time to schedule an appointment. If the coaching staff takes the time to meet with you; then take this opportunity to ask questions that will help give you an idea if this is the type of program you could be a part of and that you could commit to should you receive this offer. See if you can meet a team member or two, coaching and support staff, and see the facilities, etc. This meeting also establishes a relationship between you and the coach; and helps the coach decide if you could be a good match for his/her team. It will also motivate the coach to come out to evaluate your playing ability if he/she has not seen you play. If it turns out that there is a good match, this initial contact will help the coach feel confident that you are serious about his/her program; and it will help you find a college that you want as well.

## QUESTIONS for College Coaches

*Listed below is a small list of questions you may want to think about asking . . .*

## **• About the School**

- o Is this a 4 or 2 year school?
- o Is the school public or private; church affiliated?
- o Where is the school located?
- o Is this in the country, small town, or an urban area?
- o What is the campus like?
- o How large is the school and what is the undergraduate enrolment?
- o What are the strongest degree programs offered and which are the best academic departments?
- o What degree programs are popular with current soccer players?
- o Do most of the students live on campus or off-campus apartments?
- o What is the housing like?
- o Do the members of the team room together?
- o What transportation is possible from my home to the campus?
- o What is the academic calendar – quarters, trimesters, semesters?
- o What computing resources and library services are available to students?
- o What do you do to help players with their schoolwork; is tutoring provided?
- About the Soccer Program and the Team
- o In what division does the school play in (NAIA, NCAA D1, 2, 3, NJCAA)?
- o In what conference is the team/school?
- o What important non-conference teams are scheduled?
- o Can you provide a schedule for next fall?
- o What was the team's conference and overall record this year?
- o How many players will there be on the roster next season?
- o How many will travel with the team?
- o What training happens between seasons?
- o What is the practice schedule after schools starts?
- o Including meetings, training, travel and matches, how much time is required?
- o What facilities and staff are available to take care if injuries and rehab?
- o What is the style of play you want to see?
- o What are your goals for the team?
- About the Coach's Needs
- o How many seniors are graduating next fall?
- o Are there red shirts returning?
- o Where would you see me playing?
- o How much playing time should I expect as a freshman?
- o How many other players are playing that position?
- o Are you recruiting other player for that position; have you committed to any?
- How to Go Forward
- o Where am I on your "board" now?
- o Have you seen me play?
- o Which tournaments will you attend?
- o Do you have our team's schedule for this fall?
- o Have you talked with my coaches?
- o Do you have a copy of my playing resume and references?

o What are the next steps; what should I do; do you see me as a serious possibility?