

SO, YOU WANT TO PLAY SPORTS IN COLLEGE?



A Guide for High School Student Athletes and Parents

This booklet was written by Weston High School parents who have experienced the ups and downs of the sports recruiting process. The guidance provided in this booklet is based on personal experiences as well as a variety of books and web sites. This booklet, however, is not designed to be an official pronouncement of Weston High School or the NCAA. It is important for potential student athletes and their parents to realize that NCAA rules frequently change and as such, we encourage you to recheck official sources for specifics.

Athletic Recruiting Tips

College athletics range from Club to Division level sports. Club sports are a separate entity from the NCAA and are overseen solely by the school. * **Division I and Division II** are governed by the NCAA. *Potential Student Athletes (PSA) considering these levels **must** register on the NCAA website; there is a fee to do so. ***Division III does not** require registration; however an abundant amount of information can be found on the NCAA website for this division. One of the differences among the three divisions is that colleges and universities in Division I and II may offer athletic scholarships, while Division III colleges and universities do not. Coaches recruit PSA's by considering their athletic skills as well as their academic achievements. Therefore, your recruiting mantra should be:

****The higher my academic record = the greater my recruiting opportunities.****

Overview

Sports recruiting can begin as early as freshman year with the outcome of a *verbal commitment as early as sophomore year during the *early signing period. So,

- Know the NCAA (NCAA.org) requirements for your sport.
- Get organized.
 - Plan your SAT/ACT testing and tutoring schedule with your sport's schedule in mind
 - Meet with your guidance counselor to ensure your high school course schedule meets NCAA requirements
 - Seek out the WHS athletic director and/or your coach for guidance
- Consider the use of a college sports consultant and/or signing up for an Internet based recruiting website for assistance.

*** Glossary of Recruiting Terms begins on Page 10**

- Approach your recruitment process in a realistic manner. Be honest with yourself with regards to your academic and athletic potential, as well as the time you are willing (or able to, given your intended major) to devote to your sport.
- Clean up your social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, email address, etc.). What you post on your pages speaks volumes about your character. Your perceived behavior can cause an Admission Officer or Coach to reconsider his/her choice.
- Understand that you are one of many potential recruits, so be sure to make yourself STAND OUT. Personalize all correspondence with coaches, and find a way to make yourself unique in a very large recruitment pool. Coaches will be recruiting you not only for your athletic skill and academic talent but also for your strength of character.
- Be aware that coaches (in the early stages) throw out their casting net to a large candidate pool based on athletic skill only. They have no idea if your academic abilities match their school's standards.

Freshman Year

GOAL: This is your academic and athletic skills development year

****The higher the academic record = the greater the recruiting opportunities.****

You are now officially a PSA until your first semester at college when you become a “student athlete.”

- Prepare your preliminary list of target schools for your sport based on generalized preferences, i.e.: geographic location, size of school, academic programs offered, level of athletics, etc. Use **www.NCAA.org** for reference help. Remember, this is a broad list which will be revised numerous times. Its sole purpose is to establish a template from which your choices will be narrowed down over time.
- For each of the schools on your target list, complete their recruiting questionnaire, which can be found on their athletic website. This is the first step to get you on the coaches’ radar.
- Consider creating a file system or spreadsheet for each potential school on your target list. Keep all correspondence and information for each school separate from the others. All email correspondence should be printed and a hard copy put into the appropriate school file.
- During your off-season, participate in the highest level league/camp/visibility program possible.
- Begin taking videos for your highlight reel. Collect stats for your recruiting resume (See sample resumes in the glossary).
- Take school work seriously and seek help when needed.

Sophomore Year

GOAL: This is the year to gain a firm understanding of the differences between Club and Division level requirements for your sport.

****The higher the academic record = the greater the recruiting opportunities.****

- You will take the PSAT this year; Plan SAT/ACT/classroom tutoring around your sport commitment.
- Continue to meet with your guidance counselor to ensure high school class selection meets with NCAA eligibility requirements (www.eligibilitycenter.org). Include in your guidance discussion a list of schools that are academically and financially appropriate.
- Register with the *NCAA. You will use your assigned number when you register for the SAT/ACT; Mrs. Osinski will also need this number.
- During your off-season, participate in the highest level league/camp/visibility program that you can.
- Continue to collect highlights of you in action – videos, stats for your recruiting resume.
- Sign up for your ACT/SAT tests this summer.
- Know the NCAA rules and restrictions about: evaluation periods, *contact periods, quiet periods, and dead periods.
- Initiate contact with potential coaches to become familiar with specific schools and their sports programs; visit school campuses in accordance with NCAA rules.
- Take school work seriously and seek help when needed.

Junior Year

GOAL: This is your year to go on *unofficial visits, build on relationships with potential coaches, and finalize your recruiting resume...Between academics and athletics, junior year is an intense year that requires your focus.

****The higher the academic record = the greater the recruiting opportunities.****

- Take the SAT/ACT test. Seek academic help, if needed. It is imperative that you keep your grades up.
- Visit as many schools as possible-preferably while school is in session to see the students, tour the campus, the athletic facilities, meet the coaching staff, and get a general sense of the fit. You can call ahead to schedule an appointment with a member of the coaching staff but understand these trips are unofficial visits. All costs (travel, food, lodging, souvenirs, etc.) associated with the trip are at your expense. There may be instances when you are invited by a coach to visit but **given the fact that you are a junior, this is still considered an unofficial visit.**
- At the end of your junior year, finalize your college list with the assistance of your guidance counselor and parents. Remember, your choices should reflect both an academic as well as an athletic fit. Division level sports have mandatory GPA requirements. Furthermore, there are significant differences in time and travel obligations between Club and Division level programs. Be truthful, don't overreach.
- Some PSA's will commit at the end of this year while others (due to the timing of the NCAA regulations of their sport) will still be finalizing their college list.

JULY 1st... According to NCAA regulations, coaches may now contact PSA's directly. If you're not a phone person, consider having a "cheat sheet" by the phone to help ensure you have a meaningful conversation and take notes. During your call, you will want to highlight your skills (without boasting), and let the coach know who you are as a person. Remember, you are being recruited for a combination of your athletic skills, academic record and character. Send a thank-you email to each coach you speak with.

Senior Year

GOAL: This is the year all of your hard work comes together! Your goal should be to choose the program that offers you the very best academic, athletic and overall fit. As a senior you can now go on a limited number (per NCAA rules) of *Official Visits.

****The higher the academic record = the greater the recruiting opportunities.****

NOTE: You should be in constant contact with your Guidance Counselor. Keep them in the loop as to what's going on so they can be of the most assistance to you sooner rather than later. Midterm grades are often requested by the Admission office and coach.

Hang in there, it's almost over and soon you'll be proudly wearing your college sweatshirt!

Official Visits

- **Preparing for your Official Visit.** The number of Official Visits a PSA is allowed to take is governed by NCAA regulations. They are an important and crucial opportunity to get an insight into what life would be like at a particular school and more importantly, as a member of their particular team. This is your chance to decide if the school/team is where you think you want to be. Don't overlook the distance and mode of transportation it took for you to get to the school as part of your decision making. This is your time to critically assess the whole school (not just the locker room), the surrounding area, the Coaching Staff, and your future teammates. Could you see yourself graduating from the school even if you were injured and/or cut from the team? Could you see yourself graduating from the school if your coach left?
- **When you meet with your prospective coach,** find out how the admission process works for athletes...Do you need to apply Early Decision? Some PSA's going DI will sign

a *NLI (National Letter of Intent), while other PSA's will have only a verbal commitment from the coach. **Understand that until you have a formal admission offer (from the Admission Office) you are not "in" yet; regardless of promises the coach may make or a signed NLI.** There have been nightmare stories (even at Weston High School) where PSA's have received a verbal commitment from a coach, but have been deferred or even denied by Admissions.

What to bring on your overnight Official Visit:

- 1) Identification (driver's license/ learner's permit), cash, towel, sleeping bag or blanket, pillow, (some schools provide air mattresses), clothes, toiletries, cell phone charger- stuff it all into one bag.
- 2) Your host might have mandatory study time so remember to bring your school work.
- 3) Be yourself. You are being evaluated by your host and his/her roommate for how well they think you might fit in with their team.
- 4) It's not just about you. You are representing your high school, your team, and your coach who has recommended you.
- 5) Be kind! Stay in touch with your parents (who might be back at the hotel freaking out)!
- 6) Send a thank you note to both the coach and your host.

Tips for Parents:

- 1) Be involved in your child's recruiting process! Make sure they are making sound decisions with regards to their selection based on the right reasons. Education first- sports second.
- 2) Help manage all of the information.
- 3) Remember that a verbal commitment from a coach is non-binding. No matter how convincing the coach may be that "everything is ok and on track" **your child is not admitted to the school until the acceptance letter comes directly from the Admission Office.**
- 4) Your child is being recruited, not you. Never call coaches! College coaches want to recruit mature individuals who show initiative. The only time you should be on the phone with the coach is at the end of the process to discuss any financial matters.
- 5) When committing to a DI or DII school it is not a given that a PSA will be awarded financial assistance. It is common for student athletes to be recruited without a scholarship offer.
- 6) Most importantly, do not push your child into a situation to feed your ego. Don't set your child up for a situation that all of you may regret. Overreaching (academically or athletically) for bragging rights may not have the results you dream of. Make sure you have honest conversations in order to understand what your child is truly capable of achieving, then work together to achieve that goal.
- 7) The result of overreaching may be; your child becoming academically ineligible to participate in their sport or being cut from the team for subpar athletic performance.
- 8) If your child does not receive a recruiting offer, discuss the viable options of becoming a walk-on* or playing at competitive Club level, or taking a Post Graduate (P.G.) year.
- 9) Understand that this is a very emotional and long process. Do not be tempted to confuse a generic letter of interest (that you receive in the mail) with a legitimate recruiting offer. Keep "highs" and "lows" in check.
- 10) Hang in there! Soon you'll be proudly wearing your child's new school colors and cheering loudly in the stands!

Glossary of Important Terms

Athletic Scholarships

Athletics scholarships are awarded by NCAA Divisions I and II colleges and universities. Scholarships are awarded in a variety of amounts. Colleges and universities are permitted to provide a student-athlete with tuition and fees, room, board and required course-related books. Division III colleges and universities do not award financial aid based on athletic ability, but your PSA may be eligible to receive academic scholarships or need-based financial aid.

Contact Period

This is the time period during the school year in which it is permissible for coaches to contact you. Contact is any face-to-face encounter between a PSA or the PSA's parents, relative, or legal guardian and an official representative of a college. An "encounter" is an exchange in excess of a greeting. There are several periods like this throughout the year, so it's important for you to know when to expect them, and when "blackout dates" are (the period of time when a coach is prohibited from contacting you). Knowing these dates will help alleviate stress when you are wondering why the coach has suddenly gone silent or cannot see you.

Division I

DI schools generally manage the largest athletics budgets and offer the most generous number of scholarships. Schools who are members of Division I commit to maintaining a high academic standard for student-athletes in addition to a wide range of opportunities for athletic participation. Participation in DI sports is a 12 month commitment: in season competition and off season conditioning. The NCAA regulates the number of hours spent per week a coach can hold practice, require his team to watch game film, hold off-season scrimmages and compete in in-season competitions. Because of the hours spent at practice and the travel time involved with games, limits are put on the student athlete's choice of classes and participation in other campus activities. Therefore, the student athlete's commitment to the sport is paramount.

Division II

DII is a collection of approximately 300 colleges and universities that provide thousands of student-athletes the opportunity to compete at a high level of scholarship athletics while excelling in the classroom and being fully engaged on campus. This balanced life is at the heart of the Division II philosophy.

Division III

DIII is the largest division in the NCAA, with more than 175,000 student-athletes and 439 member schools. Division III colleges and universities develop student-athlete potential through a holistic, comprehensive educational approach that includes rigorous academics, competitive athletics, and the opportunity to pursue other interests and passions on campus. Division III minimizes potential conflicts between athletics and academics, has shorter playing and practicing seasons, a lower number of contests, a ban on redshirting and out-of-season organized activities, and a focus on regional in-season and conference play. Division III college-bound student-athletes are not certified by the NCAA Eligibility Center because Division III colleges and universities each set their own admissions standards. College bound student-athletes should contact their Division III college or university of interest regarding policies on admission, financial aid and athletics eligibility.

Early Signing Period

Each sport has an early signing period in the beginning of the school year. This gives college coaches a chance to secure high school athletes early in their high school career. Be aware of dates associated with the Early Signing Period: make sure you don't sign a NLI prior to the start of the Early Signing Period, and be sure to return it to the coach prior to the expiration date of the offer.

NCAA

National Collegiate Athletic Association (www.NCAA.org) was established in 1906 and serves as the athletics governing body for more than 1,300 colleges, universities, conferences, and organizations. The member institutions develop the rules and guidelines for athletic eligibility and athletic competition for each of the three NCAA divisions.

National Letter of Intent- “NLI”

A National Letter of Intent- NLI- is signed by a college-bound student-athlete when the student-athlete agrees to attend a Division I or II college or university for one academic year.

Participating institutions agree to provide financial aid for one academic year to the student-athlete as long as the student-athlete is admitted to the school and is eligible for financial aid under NCAA rules. The National Letter of Intent is voluntary and not required for a student-athlete to receive financial aid or participate in sports.

Official Visits

Any visit to a college campus by a college-bound student-athlete or his or her parents which is paid for by the college is an Official Visit. During an official visit the college can pay for transportation to and from the college for the prospect, lodging and three meals per day for the prospect and the parent or guardian, as well as reasonable entertainment expenses including three tickets to a home sports event. Before a college may invite you on an official visit, you will have to provide the college with a copy of your high school transcript (Division I only) and ACT, SAT or PLAN score and register with the NCAA Eligibility Center.

PSA

This is an abbreviation for “Potential Student Athlete,” a term used to describe an athlete who has begun his/her 9th grade classes and who is interested in playing sports during college.

Signing Day

This day occurs during the Regular Signing Period. It is when the student athlete confirms their intent to attend a school. By signing the NLI, the student athlete is committing him/herself to attend and play sports at a specific college. The Signing Period varies for each sport, so be sure to visit the NCAA website to find the appropriate date for your sport.

Realize that when you sign a NLI you are signing to the school, not the coach; if the coach leaves the school prior to your arrival you are still bound to compete at that school. A student athlete who has signed a NLI may request a release from his or her contract with the school. If a student athlete signs a NLI with one school but then attends a different school, he/she will lose one full year of eligibility and must complete one full academic year at the new school prior to being eligible to compete.

Unofficial Visit

Any visit by the PSA and/or parents to a college campus paid for by the PSA and/or parents. The only “gift” a PSA may receive from the college is three complimentary admissions to a home athletic event. A PSA may make as many unofficial visits as he/she likes and may take those visits at any time. The only time a PSA cannot talk with a coach during an unofficial visit is during a dead period.

Verbal Commitment

A verbal commitment offered by a coach to a PSA is a public statement declaring the desire of the coach to have that PSA play for his/her team and attend their school. It is a non-binding, oral agreement between the PSA and the coach at the school. The only binding nature of the commitment is the PSA’s word and the school’s promise. The important thing to note is the non-binding nature of this agreement. It is not uncommon for a PSA to verbally commit to one school yet sign a NLI with another, -or vice versa- for a school to offer a verbal commitment to a PSA, yet retract it and offer a NLI to another PSA, or for the Admission Office to decline admission to the school.

Walk-on

The term walk-on is used to describe an athlete who becomes part of the team as the result of trying out during preseason practice without being actively recruited beforehand or awarded an athletic scholarship. There are two categories of walk-ons: Preferred walk-on and Regular walk-on.

Preferred walk-on

When a coach offers a PSA a preferred walk-on spot, it is a verbal nonbinding offer of special consideration during preseason practice. The PSA’s performance will be critically evaluated above regular walk-ons for a spot on the roster. Preferred walk-on status is a nonbinding “handshake” with a coach for a non-scholarship spot on the roster for the first year. However, a scholarship may be offered during the following year based on performance.

Regular walk-on

This is an opportunity to try out for the team during preseason practice for a spot on the roster. No scholarship will be offered the first year, however, a scholarship may be offered for the following years based on performance. This is a more difficult situation than a preferred walk-on, but still a solid opportunity for many student athletes.

Sample sports resume for a PSA participating in an INDIVIDUAL SPORT

Name: _____

Address: _____

Home phone/ Cell phone: _____

Email: _____

Team: _____

Club: _____

Key Statistics

GPA _____

SAT _____ SAT II: _____, _____

ACT _____

Height _____ Weight _____

Best Scores/Time _____ Date _____

Junior Year Highlights

GPA _____

Best Scores/Time _____ Date _____

Championship _____ Position _____

Event _____

Awards _____

Summer _____

Sample resume for a PSA participating in an INDIVIDUAL SPORT
(continued)

Sophomore Year Highlights

GPA _____

Best Scores/Time _____ Date _____

Championship _____ Position _____
Event _____

Awards _____

Summer _____

Freshman Year Highlights

GPA _____

Best Scores/Time _____ Date _____

Championship _____ Position _____
Event _____

Awards _____

Summer _____

Other activities/interests/ awards:

Sample sports resume for a PSA participating in a TEAM SPORT

Name _____

Address: _____

Home phone: _____ Cell phone: _____

Email: _____

High School: _____ High School Contact info: _____

Height _____ Weight _____

H.S Coach: _____ Contact Info: _____

Summer Coach: _____ Contact Info: _____

HS Graduation Date: _____

Current information

GPA _____

ACT _____

SAT _____ SAT II _____, _____

Honor Roll _____

AP classes _____, _____, _____, _____

Sport Statistics

Position: _____ Varsity starter years _____, _____, _____, _____

40 yd. dash time: _____

Sample sports resume for a PSA participating in a TEAM SPORT
(continued)

Junior Year

Statistics: _____

Junior Year Athletic Awards/Honors: _____

Rising Junior Summer Tournaments: _____

Rising Junior Summer Camps attended: _____

Awards/Honors _____

Press Highlights: _____

Sophomore Year

Statistics: _____

Sophomore Year Athletic Awards/Honors: _____

Rising Sophomore Summer Tournaments: _____

Rising Sophomore Summer Camps attended: _____

Awards/Honors _____

Press Highlights: _____

Freshman Year

Statistics: _____

Sophomore Year Athletic Awards/Honors: _____

Rising Sophomore Summer Tournaments: _____

Rising Sophomore Summer Camps attended: _____

Awards/Honors _____

Press Highlights: _____

Other activities/interests/ awards: