



College Recruiting Guide 2010

By Lisa McGloin

FOR SHOWCASE TOURNAMENTS

BEFORE/FOR A SHOWCASE TOURNAMENT

As always, it is up to the individual teams and players to write or e-mail college coaches with their team's tournament schedule. Make it is easy for them to find you. Make sure you let them know over the next month.

Here are several suggestions;

1. Pick 3-5 schools that you are seriously interested in.
2. Write **the head coach.**
3. Let them know why you are interested in their school
4. Make sure that your Grades, SATs and skill level match their school and provide them this information.
5. **BE HONEST**
6. Let them know your tournament season schedule
7. Give them the tournament web site, as a reminder.
8. Do a follow up letter or email
9. Make sure we have all up to date statistical grade point and SAT information.

FOR SHOWCASE CAMPS/CLINICS

1. Always wear your team uniform.
2. Make sure your uniform is tucked in.
3. Make sure you hustle from station to station
4. **VOLUNTEER** and/or hop to the front of a line
5. Cheer for other teammates and others who you do not know
6. **DO NOT HANG HEAD**
7. **DO NOT** speak to coaches observing
8. **DO NOT** stare at coaches observing
9. **ALL YOU CAN DO IS YOUR BEST THAT DAY--** It is okay if it is not your best performance—skill/talent shows through bad performances.

FOR SHOWCASE CAMPS/CLINICS

1. Do not talk to college coaches.
2. Hustle from place to place
3. Watch your language.
4. Recover if you make a mistake—they happen in college too.
5. Keep shirts tucked in and uniform neat.
6. Do not look around to see what coaches are watching.
7. Cheer and be a good influence on your bench.

FOR PARENTS

1. Coaches cannot talk to you or your daughter
2. Stay away from roped off areas where the coaches are
3. Stay away from backstops labeled for college coaches
4. Do not park in college coaches areas
5. Do not sit near college coaches
6. Stay away from bench area and do not talk to your player during the game

www.ncaa.org

2010-11 Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete

- New! 2010-11 Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete (English)

Video:

Jack Dempsey: jd@sportsvideo@aol.com

781-861-1989

Carolina Softball
Coach Donna J. Papa



Getting Ready to go to the Next Level

- A. Important decision you need to make:
Do you want to get an education and play softball? OR
Do you want to play softball and get an education ?
- B. Important questions to ask yourself:
- 1) Do you really want to play softball at the collegiate level?
 - 2) Where do you want to play?
 - 3) What type of school are you interested in attending?
 - 4) How and when will you start the college search?
- C. Key factors - Three A's
- Academics
- a. Importance of grades – don't wait until your senior year to start thinking about this
 - b. Take challenging courses, especially your senior year
 - c. Take the SAT/ACT – early and often (junior year)
 - d. Identify schools initially based on academic interests
 - e. Have a good rapport with your guidance counselor –make sure transcripts are in order
 - f. Register with the NCAA Clearinghouse (end of junior year)
 - g. Choose a college you can be happy and that satisfies you academically if you aren't able to play
 - h. Know the admissions requirements of the schools you are considering

Athleticism

- a. Assess your athletic ability – be realistic
- b. Execution of the fundamentals
- c. Know your skill level – Div I, Div II, Div III, NAIA, Junior college
- d. Get on a strength and conditioning program
- e. Versatility –playing more than one position makes you more marketable
- f. Know the level of competition and caliber of athletes/teammates you are interested in
- g. Starter on a mediocre team versus bench warmer on a championship team

Attitude

- a. Love the game –willing to make the commitment
- b. Good work ethic
- c. Respect of teammates and coaching staff
- d. Ability to take responsibility for self and actions

Timetable for getting ready to get to the next level

Sophomore year and below:

- a. Attend camps and clinics. Allows you to improve your skills and get exposure to college coaches and programs

Junior Year:

- a. Develop a pool of schools based on academic interests(probably not more than 5-8 schools), then determine if the institution has the appropriate athletic program
- b. Develop a resume and cover letter to send to selected schools(attachment)
- c. Take unofficial campus visits. Set this up through the admissions office. You can also call the college coach and ask if you could meet with them. Possibly view a practice or a game
- d. Make a videotape, not more than 5 min in length (attachment)
- e. Attend camps and clinics. Allows you to improve your skills and get exposure to coaches and their programs
- f. Play on a competitive travel team
- g. Think about working with a hitting coach or pitching coach
- h. Take the SAT/ACT

Senior Year:

- a. Look to take official visits to the schools of your choice- after first day of classes
- b. File for Financial Aid in early January . Two major forms
CSS Profile Application and the Free application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

Resources:

Preparing to Play Softball at the Collegiate Level, Cathy Aradi

August 14, 1998

Coach Donna Papa
Carolina Athletics
University of North Carolina
P.O. Box 2126
Chapel Hill, NC 27515

Dear Coach Papa,

First, I would like to apologize for not getting my resume, transcript and survey sheet back to you sooner. I have been hard at work completing my summer assignments for AP Physics and AP Calculus BC as well as babysitting and umpiring.

As you know, I pitch and play outfield for both my high school and summer league teams. My high school team made it to the 4A state play-offs this year finishing fourth in the state. So far this summer the Dominators have won two tournaments.

In addition to playing softball, I am an honor roll student with a 4.079 GPA. I am in the National Honor Society as well as the National Spanish Honor Society and have been nominated for the Wendy's High School Heisman Scholarship Athletics Citizenship Award. I took the SAT last March and received an 1160, but will be taking it again in the Fall.

I have noted other awards and honors in my resume, as well as statistics, references, and other pertinent information which is enclosed. I have also included references and newspaper clippings from my career. Please feel free to contact any of the people listed about my ability and character.

I look forward to speaking with you again and appreciate your time.

Sincerely,

3420 Medford Rd.
Durham, NC 27705
919/383-2601

Year of Graduation: June 1999
Positions: Pitcher, Outfield

Personal Information

High School: Riverside High School
Address: 3218 Rose of Sharon Rd.

Durham, NC 27712

Phone: (919) 560-3965

Grade: 12th

Grade Point Average: 4.079

GPA Scale: 4.0 **Class Rank:** 43 out of 321

SAT: Verbal: 570 **Math:** 590 **Total:** 1160

Awards & Honors: National Honor Society; Spanish National Honor Society; Nominated for the Wendy's High School Heisman Scholarship Athletics Citizenship Award; Superintendents Honor Roll; Duke TIP Program

High School Softball Information

Coach: Mac Merritt

Phone#: (919) 477-9275

Team/Individual Awards & Honors: Varsity Softball All Conference Pitcher '96,'97,'98; PAC 6 Conference All Tournament Team '96,'97,'98; PAC 6 Player of the Year '96,'98; PAC 6 Tournament MVP '97; Herald-Sun Best of the Week Athlete on April 11, 1997; The Raleigh News & Observer Old Reliable Team '97,'98; 4A PAC 6 Conference Champions (10-0) and advanced to the final four of the state playoffs at Walnut Creek.

Summer Softball Information

Name of Present Team: Durham Dominators 18 & under

Coach's Name: Yvette Davis

Phone #: (919) 309-1259

Team/Individual Awards & Honors: Won ASA Regional Qualifier in Wilmington, NC & ASA Tidewater Invitational in Norfolk, VA.
Avg. Speed: 60 mph **Pitches:** fastball, curve, drop, change-up, rise & screwball

Other Important Information

Camps Attended: UNC-Chapel Hill Summer Camp & Pitching/Catching Clinic
Private Instruction/Coaches: Pitching Lessons from Yvette Davis & Hitting Instruction from Kellie Wagner

Employment: baby-sitting & youth softball umpiring

Extra Curricular Activities/School Clubs: Spanish Club

Mother: Cindy Fox **Occupation:** Retired (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)

Father: David Fox **Occupation:** Owner of Triangle Trailer Rentals, Inc.

References:

***Kellie Wagner**
(former Asst. Coach - UNCC-CH)
377 Hubert Herndon Rd.
Chapel Hill, NC 27516
(919) 932-6331 (home)

***Yvette Davis**
(former Asst. Coach - UNCC-CH and current
Coach of Durham Dominators 18 & under)
4435-B American Dr.
Durham, NC 27705
(919) 309-1259 (home)

***Mike Waldmann**
(family friend and former Asst. Softball Coach
at Riverside High School 1996)
Director of Operations
Society of St. Andrews
P. O. Box 329
Big Island, VA 24526
(804) 299-5956 (work)
(804) 525-4920 (home)

***Mac Merritt**
(Head Softball Coach, Riverside High School)
6222 Summerfield Dr.
Durham, NC 27712
(919) 477-9275 (home)

Donna J. Papa
Head Softball Coach
University of North Carolina

GUIDELINES FOR MAKING A RECRUITING VIDEO

The following guidelines are presented to assist you in making a videotape for a collegiate program. This tape should allow you to showcase your skills and abilities in a short and concise manner. The tape can either be made professionally or by the parents or with your assistance. Most recently, players have also started putting their skills on CD's. It is important to make a quality video as this may be the only opportunity that the coach has to assess your talents.

I. Overall guidelines

- 1) Begin the tape by showing an overall standing glance at yourself. State your name, address, high school, and summer team, year of graduation and telephone number. Another added feature to consider putting on the tape is to have script stating height, weight, stats (BA/Fielding % etc), and your number, if applicable. You should also make sure that name, year of graduation and address are on the label of the tape.
- 2) Most coaches prefer/encourage you to put more practice footage on the tape than a game tape. The ideal tape is to have a practice tape with game footage dubbed in. If you are going to use a game tape, make sure to let the viewer know your uniform number and what team you play for. It is also helpful just to dub the tape to show only your performance.
- 3) Keep the length of the video short - no more than 15 minutes.
- 4) Keep the number of repetitions to between 5 or 10 for each skill - fielding, hitting, pitching, etc.
- 5) You should put your strongest skill or position first on the tape and your secondary position next.
- 6) It is important to start this process early in your high school career. This tape should be made ready in your Junior year. Only send the tape if it is requested by the coach.

II. Specific Guidelines - Practice tape

- 1) **FIELDING** at your position:
Show front view to include throws to bases for infield and outfield positions
Field grounders showing skill for direct grounders and lateral movement to the left and right.
Middle infielders should show footwork for double plays, force outs etc.
Corners should show movement to and fielding bunts and receiving skills at bases.
Outfielders should show movement going back on balls, coming in on balls, and moving laterally to balls. Throws should be made to 2B, 3B, and home.
Overall, coaches are usually looking at the athleticism, mechanics, movement, and the strength of the throwing arm.
- 2) **HITTING**:
Film front view and side angle showing about 10 -15 swings. Hitting can be done off tee, machine, or live.
- 3) **BUNTING**:
Demonstrate all of the bunting skills that you possess showing about 5 swings for each (sacrifice, bunt for hit, push etc). Same angle as hitting.
- 4) **BASERUNNING**:
Show form running to first base, second base, third base and home. Some individuals will state their time on the tape.
- 5) **PITCHING**:
Film a front view (behind the catcher), pitching hand side, and directly behind the pitcher. Show all pitches from all angles. At least 5 of each pitch should be filmed. Additionally, if you play another position, show your fielding and hitting skills. Versatility is a plus in most coaches minds.
- 6) **CATCHING**:
Film catcher making throws to each base. Fielding bunts, blocking, and framing pitches should also be a part of their tape.

It's every high school athlete's dream : That someday all those endless practices, tiring scrimmages, overpriced equipment and exhausting games might translate into a chance to play sports on the collegiate level.

But with less than 10 percent of all high school athletes playing their given sport at an NCAA-member institution, and just a third of those receiving an athletic scholarship, it's crucial that players and parents learn all they can about this confusing, difficult and oftentimes frustrating process known as recruiting.

No matter what any one person or organization claims, nobody can guarantee you or your child an athletic scholarship. But it's our hope here at Active.com that this recruiting resource, along with additional information you gather along the way, can help you take control of the recruiting process and ultimately make an athlete's dream come true.

No.1: Take the Right Classes

Long before college catalogs clog mailboxes, and recruiting tapes are viewed, a student-athlete takes classes in their freshman year of high school that directly affect their NCAA eligibility.

Because eligibility standards continue to evolve--in 2008 the NCAA increased the number of English and math courses required by one--it's an athlete's responsibility to make sure their class schedule fulfills NCAA core course requirements.

The best way to make sure you meet all requirements is to schedule an appointment with a high school guidance counselor to ensure your course schedule is in-line with the approved high school core course list. (It's a good idea to do this each year as high school curriculums can change as often as [NCAA compliance standards](#).)

Quick Tip: Let your guidance counselor "guide" you in your high school course selections--starting with your freshman year and continuing throughout your high school career.



No.2: Register With the NCAA

It used to be called the NCAA clearinghouse, but now it's the NCAA Eligibility Center that students must register with to validate their status as an amateur athlete. (This is to ensure an athlete isn't secretly playing defensive back for the Denver Broncos during their high school career.)

The process is relatively pain-free; all you need is \$50 and a Social Security number. But don't leave it to the last minute. Every year a few student athletes miss out on the chance to play collegiately, because they fail to register with the NCAA Eligibility Center.

Quick Tip: Register with the NCAA by your junior year.

No.3: Make Your Lists(s)

Before you compile a list of 200 schools you would just die to play for, remember the function of the list is to help you focus your search going into your sophomore and junior year, not overly complicate the process with unrealistic expectations.

"I tell athletes to make three lists," says Michael Husted former NFL kicker and co-founder of activerectruiting.net--a platform for athletes to create interactive recruiting video profiles. "One: a list of their dream schools, two: a list of schools that they could realistically get into and three: a list of fallback schools in case something happens at the last minute."

Now before you freak out about the prospect of not attending your favorite university, Husted concedes that "there will be some overlap between the first two lists." But ideally your three lists should total no more than 12 to 15 schools, with the bulk of the schools residing in the "realistic" list.

Quick Tip: Make three lists--with four or five schools per list--to focus your college search.

No.4: Create a Video

The recruiting video is one of the most important ways an athlete can attract the attention of coaches at the university level. Unfortunately, it's also where many athletes come up short, with substandard video quality and unnecessary production components.

The structure and contents of your video will depend on the sport being promoted. Play-by-play sports such as volleyball, football and baseball generally work best with a collection of 15-25 highlight plays that illustrate an athlete's ability. Continuous play sports such as soccer, basketball and lacrosse should have 10 to 15 highlight plays-- with an additional game half included to show real-time ability.

So how do you make the video? Well, like anything in life, quality does count. This doesn't mean you have to hire Steven Spielberg to shoot your footage, but many people find hiring a videographer a worthwhile expense.

For those on a tighter budget, it is acceptable to shoot footage from the stands with a modest camcorder. Just make sure to use a tripod, if possible, to avoid camera shake and practice following the action numerous times to get the feel of filming a live sport. (The general rule of film is to shoot five times more footage than you'll actually need.)

Also, skip the heavy metal soundtrack and colorful graphics. Coaches hate them!

Quick Tip: Keep your video short, simple and as professional-looking as possible.

No. 5: Research the Schools

This task used to be a lot more difficult 10 years ago. But with the rise of the internet there is a multitude of recruiting information, both official and unofficial, about virtually any college or university you're interested in.

For starters, check out the school's website to find out the best coach or school official to contact. For smaller schools, individual e-mail addresses for coaches can be found quite easily, as they often view the website as a promotional tool for their institution. Bigger schools may require a little detective work to find contact information for specific coaches, but it is not impossible.

Simply find the e-mail address path (Eg: first name.last name@university.com, first name.last initial@university.com), usually found in the athletic department directory of websites. Then plug in the name of the coach you want to contact and let them know you're interested in attending the university.

In addition, Ronald Baum of HomeRun Softball camps believes a university's website can also save you time by pinpointing which schools are recruiting your position.

"If you're a pitcher, you can see that they've got four pitchers coming back next year. Chances are they're not recruiting a pitcher for the following year and you should probably look somewhere else."

Another great resource is to talk to current and former players who've already been through the recruiting process at that particular university. You can get player referrals directly from the school, or perhaps do a search for athletes who've played at the university on social networking sites such as myspace and facebook. Just let them know you're interested in attending their alma mater and ask if they have any tips or information about the program. Though the information you receive may not be entirely reliable, it can be an invaluable way to peek inside a program, warts and all.

Quick Tip: Check out a school's website. Find out who's on their roster and collect contact information for relevant coaches.

No.6: First Contact

Now it's time to place yourself on a college's radar in an aggressive--but friendly--way. It used to be this could wait until your junior year, but with the pace of youth sports increasing all the time, it's probably a good idea to begin contacting coaches in the summer before your sophomore year.

So what do you include in your e-mail or letter to the coach? Well, some sort of introduction explaining who you are and why you're contacting them. (Keep it short--coaches are busy.) A few paragraphs should do.

A copy of your recruiting video or a link where they can view your video--the latter quickly becoming a popular choice with coaches--as well as a recruiting resume with details such as stats, honors, academic data and contact information for your high school coaches should also be included.

Some people prefer to make contact with a coach by phone. This is fine as long as the athlete who's making contact, and not the athlete's mom or dad claiming their kid is the next Reggie Bush. (Not only does it come off as a unprofessional, but it also robs the coach of a chance to get to know the athlete on a personal basis.)

Quick Tip: Check out a school's website. Find out who's on their roster and let the coaches know you're interested.

No.7: Increase Your Game--and Your Exposure--at a University Camp

Sports camps generally serve two different functions: to help an athlete get better and to help an athlete get noticed. Some sports camps, especially those at universities you've targeted, can often do both at the same time. (Many coaches find camps a great way to fill out their rosters.)

Unfortunately those hoping a few days at a university camp will magically get an athlete recruited, without having established rapport with that institution beforehand, are often disappointed.

"At the big camps, less than five percent of the kids who attend are actually on the radar of that specific university," said Husted. "But that doesn't mean the experience is wasted."

This is because the coaching fraternity, despite the large number of colleges in the United States, is actually quite small. Though you may not get an offer from Penn State simply by attending one of their camps, this doesn't mean the coach running the camp can't point you toward an opening at a different university.

Like any job, it's all about networking and creating relationships. So be on your best behavior and be ready to learn as much as possible. You might just get recruited, without even realizing it.

Quick Tip: Attend a camp and be flexible; you never know where that first impression might lead.

No.8: The Final Choice

Ok. It's your senior year and, hopefully, you have a few offers on the table. So what do you do? How do you narrow it down to the one school that is right for you?

For most athletes, it will depend on the financial package being offered by the school. Are they offering a full-ride? A partial scholarship? If one school offers a significantly greater financial award, it shouldn't be considered lightly. (Not just to avoid going into major debt, but because it demonstrates their interest in you as an athlete and a student.)

For others, it will be a question of possible playing time on the next level. Do you have a good chance of getting in the starting lineup by your sophomore and junior year? If you're a third baseman, and they've already got two underclass third basemen in front of you, there might be better places for you to pursue your higher education while playing the hot corner.

Ultimately, though, most people suggest basing your final decision on the university itself. Not just the athletic department, but the overall collegiate experience a school has to offer.

"My suggestion to athletes is to narrow it down to their three top choices," says Husted. "And then think, 'if something happens to my athletic career which school would I be happy at.' There are no givens when it comes to athletics. All you know for sure is whether you'll feel comfortable at a certain university."

Quick Tip: Choose a university that offers you the best environment for athletic, academic and personal development.

Each year more than \$1 billion is awarded to over 126,000 student-athletes across the country. While there is no guarantee of getting a scholarship, there are ways to increase your chances. Get ahead of the class with this guide on how to cover your college expenses by doing what you love.

Where do I start?

Start by registering with the [NCAA eligibility center](#). Although there is no deadline, the NCAA recommends that you register early--by the start of your junior year. And be sure to update your participation information regularly. For specific information on eligibility requirements refer to the [college-bound student-athlete guide](#) available at [NCAA.org](#).

Your second priority is to make sure you are taking the right steps and following all the rules outlined by the [NCAA](#). Familiarize yourself with the academic and [amateurism](#) requirements in the college bound student athlete guide, and be sure that you are on track to meeting them. Academic refers to your grades, GPA, test scores and core classes. Amateurism refers to your status as an amateur versus any interaction you have had on the professional level.

Keep in mind that athletic scholarships are awarded through the colleges, not through the NCAA. Once you have chosen a handful of schools that you are interested in, you should find out what the individual schools' requirements and application procedures are in addition to the requirements outlined by the NCAA.

Notice that requirements are different for division I and division II schools: division III schools do not offer athletic scholarships so check with the institution you plan to attend.

How do I choose between Division I, II or III schools?

You should evaluate your talent honestly and select a number of schools that suit your athletic ability and that interest you academically. Make a list of schools that include dream colleges, realistic options and fallback schools.

Can I get a scholarship if I am attending a Division III school?

Since division III schools do not offer athletic scholarships, you don't have to register with the eligibility center. If you are interested in a division III school, you should contact the coach and the institution to find out what their requirements are.

Although division III schools do not offer athletic scholarships, they will most likely help you find funding from other sources if they really want you to play for their school. The better your grades and test scores, the more money you will likely receive.

How can I get my hands on some of those unclaimed scholarships that people are talking about?

"There is the perennial rumor that 'millions of dollars go unclaimed each year' but that is usually unfounded and pertains to non-athletic scholarships that might have very specific criteria," says Sue Biemeret, a college consultant at Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, Illinois.

For example, there are scholarships for students with a particular surname; if no one

applies to that college with that surname, the scholarship may go unused that year.

That said, there are scholarships out there that are not well-known. Some sports are less popular and less competitive than others. If you play two sports--or think you could pick up a less popular sport--start thinking about which one will more likely put you through college. It might be easier to get a scholarship for rowing or golf than for soccer.

Sara Allen played both soccer and lacrosse in high school. During her freshman year, she realized that there was more of a demand for female lacrosse players than for soccer players at the college level. She continued to play both sports in high school but focused her recruiting and scholarship efforts towards lacrosse. It paid off. She received a full ride to The University of Richmond in Virginia.

Women's sports that are defined by the NCAA as emerging sports are intended to provide additional athletic opportunities to female student-athletes. They are new and therefore less popular. Emerging fall sports for women include archery, badminton, equestrian, rugby, squash, synchronized swimming and team handball.

Start your scholarship search locally. Ask teachers, guidance counselors, church and community leaders, parents and their employers, and use the library and the internet to find privately funded awards.

Websites like collegescholarships.org have a list of Scholarships you don't want to miss when you browse their site by sport, and fastweb.com provides a free online scholarship database.

Also check with your perspective schools to find out what scholarships they offer in addition to the athletic ones.

Finally, the NCAA offers a number of special interest scholarships including the Ereedom Forum NCAA Sports Journalism Scholarship program for college juniors interested in a career in sports journalism.

Will a scholarship cover me for all 4 or 5 years of college?

Scholarship amounts vary for each athlete. They can range from a partial scholarship that only covers books to a full ride that covers tuition, room and board. Athletes can receive a maximum of five years of funding over a six-year period.

They are awarded on a yearly basis and renewed annually. The amount that you receive each year is based on your performance and a year-end evaluation; it does not hinge on how much you received the previous year and a renewal is not guaranteed. Find out up front what parameters you will be evaluated on at the end of the year and be sure that you are striving to achieve them.

Can I supplement my athletic scholarship with other aid? And is there a limit to how much money I can get from a school--athletic and otherwise?

This fluctuates by school. Some schools have limitations on how much you can supplement an athletic scholarship and some have caps on how much money you can accept in total.

Can a recruiting service increase my chances of getting a scholarship?

Recruiting services specialize in marketing student athletes to college coaches. The

NCAA, however, does not endorse any of these services. Beware that it is not permissible for a service to offer a money-back guarantee or base its fee on the amount of a student's scholarship.

Most of the tools and information you need are already available online, and through the NCAA, as long as you are willing to do the research.

Although scholarship matching services aren't endorsed, resume and video-building tools can be a great asset. They provide a forum where you can feature your stats and video clips, and a place where you can direct coaches to view your profile.

What could jeopardize my chance of getting a scholarship?

A number of things can bring your scholarship dreams to a dead end. These include but are not limited to the following.

- Playing for a professional team
- Receiving prizes or money for athletics
- Doing drugs
- Participating in illegal sport's betting
- Accepting gifts or money from prospective coaches
- Signing or having an agreement with an agent before eligibility expires

Additional red flags can be found at NCAA.org as well as information on rules of conduct.

Get started now. By the time you have to choose a school and apply for scholarships, you will know what your options are. Get yourself out there: attend camps, compile a resume or info sheet, make your video, visit schools, introduce yourself to coaches and know the rules.

Most importantly, don't rely on others to do the work for you. Seek out scholarships on your own. Figure out what schools you are interested in, find out what they offer, and apply, apply, apply. Remember, you have to work just as hard at finding the right school, and potential scholarships, as you do when you are on the field.



March 10, 2008

THE SCHOLARSHIP DIVIDE

Expectations Lose to Reality of Sports Scholarships

By BILL PENNINGTON

Correction Appended

At youth sporting events, the sidelines have become the ritual community meeting place, where families sit in rows of folding chairs aligned like church pews. These congregations are diverse in spirit but unified by one gospel: heaven is your child receiving a college athletic scholarship.

Parents sacrifice weekends and vacations to tournaments and specialty camps, spending thousands each year in this quest for the holy grail.

But the expectations of parents and athletes can differ sharply from the financial and cultural realities of college athletics, according to an analysis by The New York Times of previously undisclosed data from the National Collegiate Athletic Association and interviews with dozens of college officials.

Excluding the glamour sports of football and basketball, the average N.C.A.A. athletic scholarship is nowhere near a full ride, amounting to \$8,707. In sports like baseball or track and field, the number is routinely as low as \$2,000. Even when football and basketball are included, the average is \$10,409. Tuition and room and board for N.C.A.A. institutions often cost between \$20,000 and \$50,000 a year.

"People run themselves ragged to play on three teams at once so they could always reach the next level," said Margaret Barry of Laurel, Md., whose daughter is a scholarship swimmer at the University of Delaware.

"They're going to be disappointed when they learn that if they're very lucky, they will get a scholarship worth 15 percent of the \$40,000 college bill. What's that? \$6,000?"

Within the N.C.A.A. data, last collected in 2003-4 and based on N.C.A.A. calculations from an internal study, are other statistical insights about the distribution of money for the 138,216 athletes who received athletic aid in Division I and Division II.

Men received 57 percent of all scholarship money, but in 11 of the 14 sports with men's and women's teams, the women's teams averaged higher amounts per athlete.

¶On average, the best-paying sport was neither football nor men's or women's basketball. It was men's ice hockey, at \$21,755. Next was women's ice hockey (\$20,540).

¶The lowest overall average scholarship total was in men's riflery (\$3,608), and the lowest for women was in bowling (\$4,899). Baseball was the second-lowest men's sport (\$5,806).

Many students and their parents think of playing a sport not because of scholarship money, but because it is stimulating and might even give them a leg up in the increasingly competitive process of applying to college. But coaches and administrators, the gatekeepers of the recruiting system, said in interviews that parents and athletes who hoped for such money were much too optimistic and that they were unprepared to effectively navigate the system. The athletes, they added, were the ones who ultimately suffered.

Coaches surveyed at two representative N.C.A.A. Division I institutions — Villanova University outside Philadelphia and the University of Delaware — told tales of rejecting top prospects because their parents were obstinate in scholarship negotiations.

“I dropped a good player because her dad was a jerk — all he ever talked to me about was scholarship money,” said Joanie Milhous, the field hockey coach at Villanova. “I don't need that in my program. I recruit good, ethical parents as much as good, talented kids because, in the end, there's a connection between the two.”

The best-laid plans of coaches do not always bring harmony on teams, however, and scholarships can be at the heart of the unrest. Who is getting how much tends to get around like the salaries in a workplace. The result — scholarship envy — can divide teams.

The chase for a scholarship has another side that is rarely discussed. Although those athletes who receive athletic aid are viewed as the ultimate winners, they typically find the demands on their time, minds and bodies in college even more taxing than the long journey to get there.

There are 6 a.m. weight-lifting sessions, exhausting practices, team meetings, study halls and long trips to games. Their varsity commitments often limit the courses they can take. Athletes also share a frustrating feeling of estrangement from the rest of the student body, which views them as the privileged ones. In this setting, it is not uncommon for first- and second-year athletes to relinquish their scholarships.

“Kids who have worked their whole life trying to get a scholarship think the hard part is over when they get the college money,” said Tim Poydenis, a senior at Villanova receiving \$3,000 a year to play baseball. “They don't know that it's a whole new monster when you get here. Yes, all the hard work paid off. And now you have to work harder.”

Parents often look back on the many years spent shutting sons and daughters to practices, camps and games with a changed eye. Swept up in the dizzying pursuit of sports achievement, they realize how little they knew of the process.

Mrs. Barry remembers how her daughter Cortney rose at 4 a.m. for years so she could attend a private swim practice before school. A second practice followed in the afternoon. Weekends were for competitions. Cortney is now a standout freshman at Delaware after receiving a \$10,000 annual athletic scholarship.

"I'm very proud of her and it was worth it on many levels, but not necessarily the ones everybody talks about," Mrs. Barry said. "It can take over your life. Getting up at 4 a.m. was like having another baby again. And the expenses are significant; I know I didn't buy new clothes for a while.

"But the hardest part is that nobody educates the parents on what's really going on or what's going to happen."

When they received the letter from Delaware informing them of Cortney's scholarship, she and her husband, Bob, were thrilled. Later, they shared a quiet laugh, noting that the scholarship might just defray the cost of the last couple of years of Cortney's youth sports swim career.

The paradox has caught the attention of Myles Brand, the president of the N.C.A.A.

"The youth sports culture is overly aggressive, and while the opportunity for an athletic scholarship is not trivial, it's easy for the opportunity to be overexaggerated by parents and advisers," Mr. Brand said in a telephone interview. "That can skew behavior and, based on the numbers, lead to unrealistic expectations."

Instead, Mr. Brand said, families should focus on academics.

"The real opportunity is taking advantage of how eager institutions are to reward good students," he said. "In America's colleges, there is a system of discounting for academic achievement. Most people with good academic records aren't paying full sticker price. We don't want people to stop playing sports; it's good for them. But the best opportunity available is to try to improve one's academic qualifications." The math of athletic scholarships is complicated and widely misunderstood.

Despite common references in news media reports, there is no such thing as a four-year scholarship. All N.C.A.A. athletic scholarships must be renewed and are not guaranteed year to year, something stated in bold letters on the organization's Web site for student-athletes. Nearly every scholarship can be canceled for almost any reason in any year, although it is unclear how often that happens.

In 2003-4, N.C.A.A. institutions gave athletic scholarships amounting to about 2 percent of the 6.4 million athletes playing those sports in high school four years earlier. Despite the considerable attention paid to sports, the select group of athletes barely registers statistically among the 5.3 million students at N.C.A.A.

colleges and universities.

Scholarships are typically split and distributed to a handful, or even, say, 20, athletes because most institutions do not fully finance the so-called nonrevenue sports like soccer, baseball, golf, lacrosse, volleyball, softball, swimming, and track and field. Colleges offering these sports often pay for only five or six full scholarships, which are often sliced up to cover an entire team. Some sports have one or two full scholarships, or none at all.

The N.C.A.A. also restricts by sport the number of scholarships a college is allowed to distribute, and the numbers for most teams are tiny when compared with Division I football and its 85-scholarship limit.

A fully financed men's Division I soccer team is restricted to 9.9 full scholarships, for freshmen to seniors. These are typically divided up among as many as 25 or 30 players. A majority of N.C.A.A. members do not reach those limits and are not fully financed in most of their sports.

Ms. Millhous, whose Villanova field hockey team plays in the competitive Big East Conference, must make tough choices in recruiting. The N.C.A.A. permits Division I field hockey teams to have 12 full scholarships, but her team has fewer.

"I tell parents of recruits I have eight scholarships, and they say: 'Wow, eight a year? That's great,'" she said.

"And I say: 'No, eight over four or five years of recruits. And I've got 22 girls on our team.'"

That can mean a \$2,000 scholarship, which surprises parents.

"They might argue with me," Ms. Millhous said. "But the fact is I've got girls getting from \$2,000 to \$20,000, and it all has to add up to eight scholarships. It's very subjective, and remember, what I get to give out is also determined by how many seniors I've got leaving."

Two Brothers, Two Stories

Joe Taylor, a soccer player at Villanova, received a scholarship worth half his roughly \$40,000 in college costs when he graduated from a suburban Philadelphia high school three years ago. He had spent years on one of the top travel soccer teams in the country, F.C. Delco, and had several college aid offers.

"It was still a huge dogfight to get whatever you can get," Mr. Taylor said. "Everyone is scrambling. There are so many good players, and nobody understands how few get to keep playing after high school."

In 2003-4, there was the equivalent of one full N.C.A.A. men's soccer scholarship available for about every 145 boys who were playing high school soccer four years earlier.

"There's a lot of luck involved really," Mr. Taylor said. "I can pinpoint a time when I was suddenly heavily recruited. It was after a tournament in Long Island the summer after my junior year. I scored a few goals. The

Villanova coach was there, and so were some other college coaches. Within a couple of days, my in-box was full of e-mails. I've wondered, What would have happened if didn't play well that day?"

Mr. Taylor has a younger brother, Pat, who followed in his footsteps, playing on the same national-level travel team and for the same Olympic developmental program.

"He did everything I did, and in some ways I think he's a better player than me," Joe said. "But you know, I think he didn't have the big game when the right college coaches were there. He didn't get the money offers I did."

Pat Taylor is a freshman at Loyola College in Baltimore. Though recruited, he did not make the soccer team during tryouts last fall.

"I feel terrible for him — he worked as hard as I did for all those years," Joe Taylor said.

Their father, Chris Taylor, said he once calculated what he spent on the boys' soccer careers.

"Ten thousand per kid per year is not an unreasonable estimate," he said. "But we never looked at it as a financial transaction. You are misguided if you do it for that reason. You cannot recoup what you put in if you think of it that way. It was their passion — still is — and we wanted to indulge that.

"So what if we didn't take vacations for a few years."

Pat Taylor, who started playing soccer at 4, said it took him about a month to accept that his dream of playing varsity soccer on scholarship in college would not happen. He looks back fondly on his youth career but also wishes he knew at the start what he knows now about the process.

"The whole thing really is a crapshoot, but no one ever says that out loud," he said. "On every team I played on, every single person there thought for sure that they would play in college. I thought so, too. Just by the numbers, it's completely unrealistic.

"And if I had it to do over, I would have skipped a practice every now and then to go to a concert or a movie with my friends. I missed out on a lot of things for soccer. I wish I could have some of that time back."

Griffin Palmer contributed reporting to this article.

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: March 11, 2008

A front-page article on Monday about the unrealistic expectations of families in the pursuit of college athletic scholarships omitted a reporting credit. Griffin Palmer analyzed college and high school statistics for the