

COLLEGE VISITS

If you are looking at a lot of colleges, I suggest you begin visiting schools informally during your sophomore or junior year. This may help you eliminate some schools, and you can always go back for a tour with the softball coach or an official visit at a later date. If you are being recruited by a number of programs – and all want you to visit – try to pick your top five choices by the fall of your senior year. Some coaches will ask that you not take an official visit to their college unless it high on your list. You should respect this request and not use an official visit as an excuse to take a vacation. If you are willing to consider schools outside your home state, you may want to save your official visits for those schools. Of course, if your top choice is nearby, and you really want the experience of an official visit there, by all means use one of your five to see that school. When you start scheduling your college visits, allow enough time to do all the things you need to get a good “feel” for the college. Try to visit during the school year and on a typical school day or weekend. It’s easy to be overwhelmed. Some students come home from each visit feeling sure that this is the school/team they want to choose. Others feel they’ll never be able to make a choice. Try to separate genuine concerns about a particular school/team from the any normal anxiety you may be feeling about leaving home, taking on college, making the team, etc.

1 BEFORE YOU LEAVE HOME

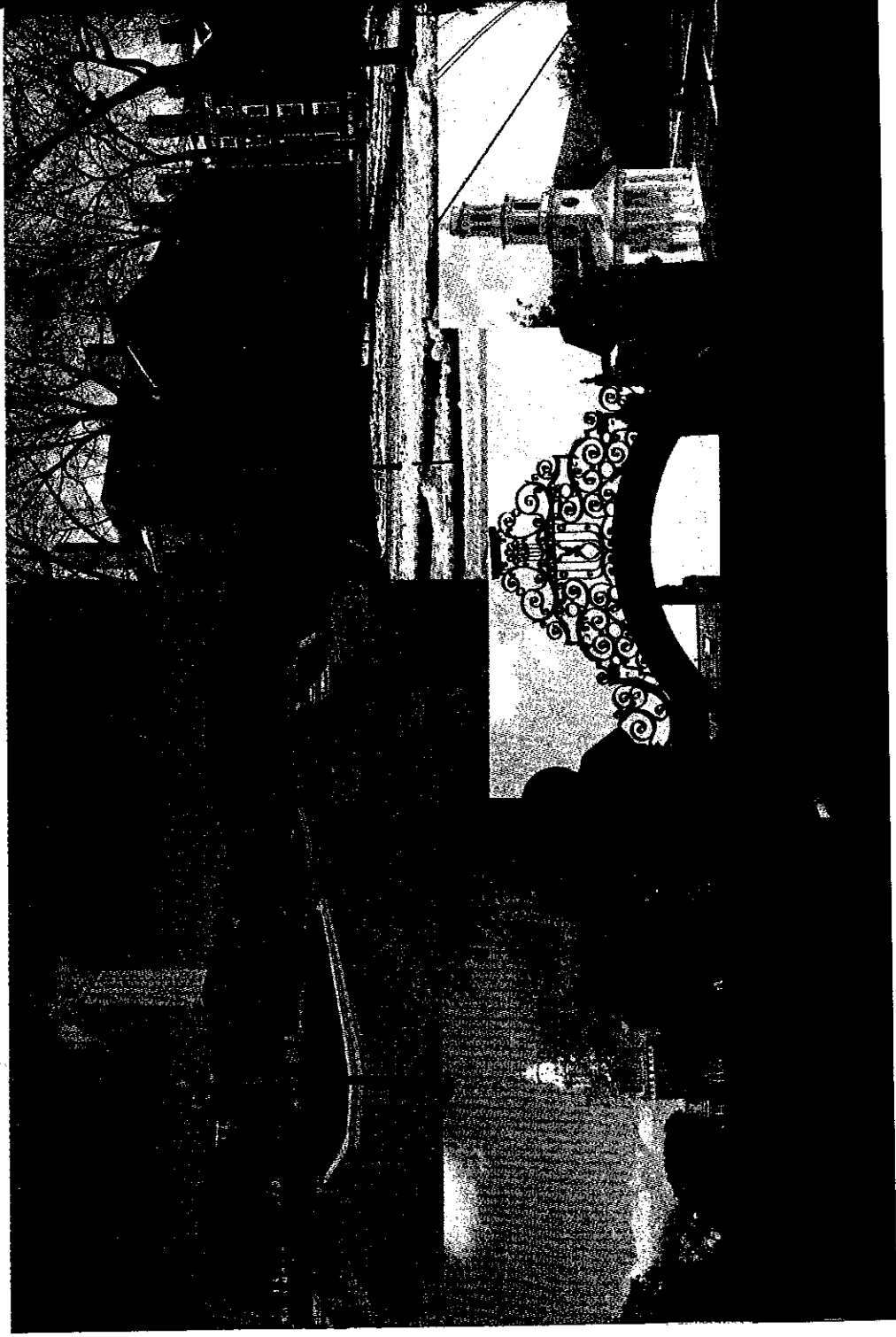
- Know who you will be meeting and where you will meet them
- If it’s an official visit, know how the expenses are being handled (is the school paying for travel costs, accommodations, meals?) How will any necessary reimbursement be handled?
- Know what to bring. This includes clothing – for example, if you go from Florida to Minnesota in December, you’ll need cold weather gear. You should also take a notebook so you can make notes during your visit.

2 WHEN YOU GET THERE

PART 1: CAMPUS

Learn as much as you can by:

- taking a tour of the campus, including dorms, classrooms, library, athletic facilities, etc.; and, if possible the area around the campus to see what it’s like
- meeting with an academic advisor or someone in your major
- if possible, attending a class
- if possible, attending a softball practice and/or game



SEE DOWN AS WELL! THERE'S TOO MUCH TO SEE AND VERY LITTLE TIME IN WHICH TO DO IT. WE OFFER SOME TIPS FOR PLANNING AND SURVIVING A COLLEGE VISIT SO THAT YOU COME HOME WITH A REALISTIC IDEA OF WHETHER OR NOT THAT SCHOOL IS A GOOD FIT FOR YOU...

3 WHEN YOU GET THERE PART AS STUDENTS

Learn as much as you can 'by:

- talking with some non-athletes
- talking with some softball players, particularly freshmen, to get their perspective on adjusting to the first year; you may also want to get the phone numbers of some players and call/text them after your visit to get their personal feelings about the school and the team.

4 LOOK, LISTEN & LEARN

- How does the team interact? Do all players appear supportive of each other? How do you think you'd fit in with this particular group of people?
- How does the coach's style fit with your style? Does the team seem to respect him or her?
- Remember to make notes about the things you see, hear and feel.

5 WHEN YOU GET HOME

Be sure to send the coach a thank you note. Go through your notebook and see if your impressions still hold. Talk to your parents and see what they think—particularly if they visited the campus with you. Once you've found the school for you, let all coaches who are recruiting you know right away. Then start getting ready for college!

NOTE: For additional suggestions about your college visits, consult my book, *Preparing to Play Softball at the Collegiate Level*. It has a detailed checklist you can take with you on your visits, as well as three pages of questions to ask college coaches—about their programs, their schools, their approach to coaching, and more.

Catherine Alarid is the author of *Preparing to Play Softball at the Collegiate Level*, published by the NFCA. She maintains the Fastpitch Recruiting Web Source, and she works as a recruiting consultant with athletes and colleges around the U.S. You can call her (415-456-9649), visit her website (<http://pitchrecruiting.com>), or email her (info@pitchrecruiting.com).



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