

So you're looking to get your daughter recruited.....

Before you get started, take a deep breath. The process can be a bit overwhelming and is definitely a ton of work, but it can pay off big time with the right planning, execution and mindset.

Before you contact any college coaches, be sure to read The Guide for the College Bound Student-Athlete for NCAA recruiting rules. This will teach you and your daughter what you can and can't say to coaches as well as providing timelines for recruiting. In addition to the dos and don'ts, it will give you an outline of what classes your daughter needs to take in high school to be eligible as a recruited athlete. Don't expect your daughter's high school counselor to be well versed in these requirements.

Here's the link to that Guide:

<http://www.ncaa.org/wps/ncaa?key=/ncaa/ncaa/legislation+and+governance/eligibility+and+recruiting>.

Make a basic athletic resume for your daughter and keep it in a Word file in your computer. I've attached a sample to show the basic format. These can be sent to colleges as well as handed out at Showcase tournaments.

If your daughter hasn't taken the SAT test yet – and most sophomores haven't – you can list the planned dates to take the test. She should plan to take the SAT at least twice in her junior year. Check out www.collegeboard.com for more information.

Here are some suggestions on how to proceed from here: Have your daughter assess her top 20 college picks. You want to cast the net wide and contact coaches that may not be your daughter's first or second choice. The reality is that only 1% of high school athletes go on to play Div I sports. However, there are a lot of schools that recruit athletes in Div II and III. Although Div III schools do not have athletic money to give, they do have academic money and financial aid. Money is money. The athletics will allow them to get their foot in the door where they might not have made the cut otherwise. The Ivy League schools are a great example of this.

It is extremely important that you honestly assess your daughter's ability to play for a particular school. The TNL coaching staff will help you with that if you have questions. Very few kids can play in the Pac 10, and it is much more important for your daughter to find the right fit both athletically and academically than to be disappointed when you haven't sorted through the schools in a realistic manner and don't garner any interest from those schools who make it to the College World Series year after year. There are a lot of schools out there. Spend the time to find the right fit.

Plan to spend time with your daughter pulling up each college website and finding the link (usually on the college's Athletics page) called "Recruiting Questionnaire." The information is pretty basic, but you may need to do this yourself. How anyone can expect a teenager to navigate the system is beyond me.

It is a common misconception that college coaches will find you if you are good at your sport. You have to let them know that you are interested in their school first. The Recruiting Questionnaire is the first step. Some parents make the mistake of approaching college coaches at tournaments and introducing themselves and their athlete. DON'T make that mistake. Your daughter can't talk to the coaches until she has finished her junior year of high school.

The second step is to find the coach's name and contact info for a particular school (usually on the same Athletic webpage). I've attached a sample grid that I made to help me keep track of who, what, when of our contacts. Then start sending out your first contact letters. I've also attached a sample letter that you can use as a template. With each contact letter, make sure you change the coach's name, school, etc. so that you don't accidentally send out a letter to one coach with the name of a different school on it. I've also attached a sample letter to attach with your daughter's skills video which should be sent out to her college choices. I've also included a couple of videographers' contact information to help you with creating a quality skills video.

Keep in mind, most college coaches may or may not respond to your daughter's letters or emails now. They will, however, keep track of your daughter's info. It is very important to provide all the tournaments your daughter will be playing in over the next season so they can come watch her play. Just remember that if you are at a showcase and there is a college coach there that you recognize, don't say anything other than "hello" or this will be a violation of NCAA recruiting rules until after July 1st of your daughter's junior year.

Another important piece of information I have learned both from experience and from talking to other parents: College coaches cast the net very wide in the recruiting process and it is important that you or your daughter do not put too much weight in these initial contacts if she gets them. I have known many an athlete who received letter after letter from college coaches, and then one day it all just stops cold. It can be because that coach isn't looking for that athlete's particular position or the athlete's grades aren't good enough or they don't have enough seniors leaving the team in that year, etc., etc.

I know this is a lot of information, but just take a deep breath and re-read it a little at a time. Probably the best advice I can give is that your daughter's GRADES are hugely important, so make sure she keeps them up. An SAT prep class can be a great help for those kids who haven't done so well the first time around.