



Cleveland Force SC Guide to Playing College Soccer



Now that your child is in high school, we must begin to educate our families on the process of college recruitment. We understand that some kids will not want to play collegiately, but in the past 15 years we have seen 92% of our senior classes continue playing soccer at the collegiate level.

For those that want to play at the next level, this guide is for you!

Before we start, it is imperative that you understand that no two players will ever follow the same recruiting path, as there are so many variables one encounters during this journey. It is best to never look to compare your child's ability with another player's as college coaches simply look at their needs and if your child can fit those needs for their program.

So your child is interested in playing collegiately...

Here are the steps that will help you along the way:

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 - ii. Creating a player bio and highlight video
 - iii. Attending College ID Camps

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1. College Tips

1. Getting College Coaches to Watch You Play

i. Recruiting Yourself

#1 Rule - You are your own advocate and you must take the lead in contacting schools that you are interested in. Recruit yourself to the program and never wait for a school to recruit you!



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Always have an introduction letter to send to a college coach as your first communication with them. Make sure to make these personal by addressing the letter/email with “Coach Johnson” rather than by “Dear Coach”. You should also inform the coach of why you are interested specifically in their program and school. Do not send a template email out to hundreds of coaches as they get those every day and simply delete them without reading past the first line. Make it personal!!!

- Players must create a Player Bio or Resume that is to be attached to every email that he/she sends out to a college coach
- The bio must list all of your accomplishments both athletically and academically
- Make sure your club and HS coach’s contact information is posted on the bio
- Create a highlight video containing all of your soccer abilities (not just scoring goals!) as this can be linked to a private YouTube link that you can provide to coaches to view
- You must be proactive in communicating to the coach where your club team will be playing (College Showcase events) and what the game schedule will be
- Find out where a coach may be attending College camps at and sign up to attend those camps to work with her/him
- Sign up to attend the ID Camps of those schools you are most interested in as that provides you with direct access to the coaching staff
- Always follow up with coaches to ensure they are still interested in you...never wait for them to communicate with you as they are dealing with dozens of recruits similar to you!

ii. Creating a Player Bio and Highlight Video

Every team will have a team bio to hand out to college coaches that attend our showcase games, but each of our players should create their own player bios and highlight videos to provide as additional information when communicating with college coaches. Keep in mind that the resume and video will be the guiding force in gaining the interest of a coach and enticing them to want to come out and see you play in a game or inviting you to attend their ID Camps. Many of the national level College Showcase events we attend do provide video services and will offer a player specific highlight video for purchase.

The Player Bio should include:

- Basic Contact Information for the Player
- A color photo in your soccer uniform (head shot)
- Graduation Year
- Field Position and Jersey #
- Club Soccer Accomplishments (include Club Coach’s Name and Contacts)
- HS Soccer Accomplishments (include HS Coach’s Name and Contacts)
- Other Soccer (ie: ODP, ID Camps, US Soccer Training Sessions, etc...)
- Academics (current GPA, ACT/SAT Scores, what you would like to study in college, if you know)
- Volunteer and Community Involvement
- Link to a Highlight Video

The Highlight Video should include:

- Video footage that is of high quality and from a high angle
- Opening screen should list your name, measurable (height/weight), and jersey number, and contact information
- The video should be no longer than 7-8 minutes
- For field players, look to highlight goals, shots on goal, assists, crosses, clearances, corner kicks or any free kicks taken, ability to win the ball out of the air, steals/tackling, passes (short and long range, give and go’s, thru balls), ability on the ball (1v1 attacking, shielding, keeping possession, first touch), and runs off of the ball



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- For keepers, look to highlight shot stopping ability, diving to both sides, low and high saves, collecting high balls on shots and crosses, defending 1v1 breakaways, how you time the decision to come off of your line, distribution from hands and feet (punting, goal kicks, and playing out of the back)
- DO NOT add music in your video
- Use spot shadowing, arrows, and/or freezing techniques to highlight yourself before each play and then let the video continue

iii. Attending College ID Camps

The absolute best way to build a meaningful relationship with any college coach is to attend one of their programs many College ID Camps. These camps are typically listed on the program's website and comes with a fee to attend. Attending these ID Camps allows the player to work directly with the Coaching Staff and in some cases the current player's are in attendance. You get to get a first-hand look at what type of coach you are dealing with and if their personality and coaching style fits what you are looking for....but remember that this goes both ways as they are also looking to meet you and see what kind of person and player you truly are.

Always remember to show your strengths and try not to allow someone to place you into a position on the field that you are not comfortable in. Play the positions you know best and showcase your talent! Asking politely to move into a position of desire for yourself is not a bad thing as it shows you are assertive and can communicate effectively with adults/coaches.

Many of our players, if not all, will get bombarded with the same ID Camp invitations after some college showcase events. It is difficult to know which ones are sincere and which ones are solicitations, so we ask that you speak to other people on the team to see what they may have received and always speak to your Coach and Club Director about this.

2. The Recruitment Process

This process can be both an amazing experience and very frustrating at the same time, so keep patient and even keeled about your opportunities.

The process begins earlier for girls than for boys as college coaches look at physical maturity as a sign of what the player can potentially do at the next level. Physically, girls mature earlier than boys so the recruitment process follows mother nature!

It is best to begin your recruitment process as a freshman in highschool as the vast majority of our girls players commit by the end of their Junior year and boys by the February signing deadline their senior years.

To understand when to get started, you need to work backwards. Coaches build their annual recruiting process around the official signing date, February 1st. By February, many coaches have identified and talked with the players they want to be a part of their program. Because college soccer is a fall sport, most, but not all, recruiting takes place over the spring and summer months. However, there also is a flurry of recruiting that does take place after the fall collegiate soccer season is over between November and December.

Note: NCAA regulations permit coaches to *respond* to prospective student-athlete inquiries, but the coaches cannot *initiate* contact until July 1 of the summer leading to your child's senior year. The Club Coach and/or Director will serve as the liaison for communication between the player and coach until that date.

i. Creating a List of Schools

You must first begin with research on schools and begin to create a list of schools that fit your needs.



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Think about the following things when looking at schools:

- Local vs Distant
- Urban vs Rural
- Commuting vs Residential
- Large Campus vs Small Campus
- Meeting Admission Standards
- Majors – area(s) of academic interest
- Expense
- Soccer Program (Staff/Quality/Accomplishments)

Cast a wide net when initially considering schools as that list will become more refined as you get towards your final commitment. The more options you create early on means the more chance you have at finding the right fit.

ii. Visiting Campuses

Campus visits can never begin too early, so take every opportunity to visit schools while setting up admissions tours bundled with a brief meeting with the college coaching staff. It is most important to schedule a visit while school is in as it gives the prospective student a visualization of what a school day will look and feel like.

The more campuses you visit will help guide you in your decisions early on if a campus does or does not feel “like home” for you.

Always try to communicate with the coaching staff when you know you will be on a campus as it is a great time to meet one another and express your interests. It is extremely important to inform your Club Coach or Director of who/when you are meeting as our staff may be able to help in arranging these meetings as well as providing the college coach with some background of you as a person and player prior to your meeting.

iii. NCAA/NAIA Rules and Regulations

It is the player’s responsibility to understand and abide by the NCAA/NAIA regulations. Please take time in educating yourself on the rules and regulations of both the NCAA and NAIA.

NCAA Guide for College Bound Student Athletes - <http://www.ncaapublications.com/productdownloads/CBSA16.pdf>

NAIA Guide for College Bound Student Athletes –
http://www.naia.org/fls/27900/1NAIA/membership/NAIA_GuidefortheCollegeBoundStudent.pdf?DB_OEM_ID=27900

If you are interested in playing either NCAA DIV I or DIV II, and or NAIA athletics, you must register with the eligibility center for each one and pay the required fee(s). NCAA DIV III does not require registration in the system.

NCAA-

- The NCAA Eligibility Center registration fee is \$65.00
- Fee waivers are available to those student – athletes who meet the criteria set forth by the NCAA – refer to the NCAA web site for specifics
- Students should register for the NCAA Eligibility Center at the beginning of their Junior year of high school

NAIA -

- The NAIA Eligibility Center registration fee is \$70.00 for both U.S and Canadian students enrolling full-time for the first term of college following high school graduation



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- The registration fee is \$90.00 for U.S and Canadian transfer students who are current NAIA attendees, or students with more than a summer break after high school graduation
- Fee waivers are available for U.S students – refer to NAIA web site for specifics
- Students should register for the NAIA prior to their senior year of high school.

For students and parents with questions - visit the NCAA and NAIA Eligibility Centers for registration policies, fees and information regarding eligibility procedures.

NCAA Eligibility Center - http://web1.ncaa.org/ECWR2/NCAA_EMS/NCAA.jsp

Phone: 317/223-0700

Fax: 317/917-6888

NAIA Eligibility Center - <http://www.playnaia.org/>

Phone: 816-595-8300

Toll free: 866-881-6242

Fax: 816-595-8301

Email: ecinfo@naia.org

3. Academic Eligibility

Obtaining a great education is the #1 priority, so do not choose a school based on the soccer program.

Your school's guidance counselor will serve as the main contact for you to utilize as it pertains to ensuring you meet academic eligibility to play collegiately. Please schedule a time to meet with them sometime in your Sophomore year or at the beginning of your Junior year.

i. Signing up for the NCAA Eligibility Center

As noted above, you are to contact either the NCAA or NAIA Eligibility Centers to better understand what will be required from you academically in order to be eligible to play collegiately. Div III does not require this process.

Some quick facts:

- Registering will allow you to be cleared to receive athletic scholarship aid.
- Research which core classes you must take and the grades you must earn to be academically eligible, then arrange your academic calendar around it
- Research which exams you must take and the minimum score requirements (less schools are requiring the SAT test)
- Read the NCAA and NAIA Guide for the College Bound Student-Athlete

ii. Planning your ACT/SAT Testing

Aptitude Tests (SAT/ACT)

The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or American College Testing, which measure verbal and mathematical ability, are required for both international and American students alike.

For additional information about examinations, dates of testing, and fees, contact:

ACT - Student Services, 2727 Scott Blvd., P.O. Box 414, Iowa City, IA 52243-0414 USA



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Phone 319-337-1270

Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., Central Standard Time

SAT - College Board SAT Program, P.O. Box 025505, Miami, FL 33102

Phone 1-866-756-7346 International 212-713-7789

Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 9 p.m. Eastern Standard Time

Every player should look to begin some type of pre-testing their sophomore year and eventually take the test 2-3 times in their junior year. The vast majority of students will re-take the test in order to earn a higher score, so try to plan out the testing in advance as to not conflict with college showcase events in the spring season.

Each school has different academic requirements, but a good rule of thumb is that a 27 ACT score will begin to earn you significant academic aid in your standard University/College.

iii. High Grades = \$\$\$

College and universities will offer academic and merit scholarship money awards dependent on your high school GPA and SAT/ACT test score(s). The better your GPA and test scores, the more money you could receive in scholarship monies. Have a GPA of 3.5+ and an SAT of 1800+? You could earn a Presidential or Provost Scholarship!

What's even better? The amount awarded will usually be offered for each year you attend (up to 4 years total), as long as you maintain the designated GPA set forth by the college to keep the scholarship. This means your college education, or a good part of it, could be paid for due to the great grades you earned in high school.

Additional opportunities to garner scholarship monies can often come from these categories:

- Community Service work
- Religious affiliation
- Athletics
- Work Study
- Endowments and Grants
- Departmental Opportunities
- Fine Arts
- Leadership
- Environmental or Green Club
- ROTC

Each college or university web site will have information on the scholarship/grant opportunities they offer, guidelines for eligibility, and the process for application. Be mindful of application and scholarship deadlines, so you don't miss out on money to help fund your college education.

4. Athletic Aid

There are well over 1300 men's soccer programs available, and approximately 1400 program options for women. Athletic scholarship awards will vary by affiliation, division of play, and the individual funding that each college provides to the coach for that particular athletic program (not all will be fully funded). You will need to check with the coach of each program you are interested in to determine the number of athletic scholarship options available to you.

Keep in mind, that the coach will use his or her available scholarship funds to cover freshman through seniors for the upcoming year. In addition, student athletes awarded athletic money usually only receive those funds for a one-year period of time. This



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means that at the discretion of the coach, he or she can do the following for your return to the program the following year; renew your scholarship for the same amount, withdraw the scholarship altogether, increase or decrease it.

Soccer at most schools is not a revenue-generating sport like football and basketball. Therefore, the soccer programs do not have the depth of scholarship money like the other sports. Each program is given a set number of scholarships for the program – not per year. It is not unusual for players to receive partial scholarships, which allows coaches to spread the funds across several players.

Because of limited scholarship funds, players and parents are encouraged to research the financial aid and merit scholarship options available through the schools. Again, the player's guidance counselor can be very helpful navigating the financial aid process.

Advice - don't ask about scholarships, money, etc...because if you are a candidate for a scholarship, you'll be offered one. Do, however, inquire about financial aid and what the academic standards are for merit aid.

On average, here are the standards required to play at each level for players:

Men's Soccer

NCAA D1

- Olympic Development Program (ODP) Experience
- All-American
- All-State
- All-League/District
- 3-4 year varsity starter
- Extensive club team experience (top leagues)
- Participation in major tournaments and showcases

NCAA D2

- Olympic Development (ODP) Experience
- All-State
- All-League/District
- 2-3 years varsity starter
- Team MVP
- Extensive club team experience (top leagues)
- Participation in tournaments and showcases

NCAA D3/NAIA

- Extensive club team experience
- 2 years varsity starter

Women's Soccer

NCAA D1

- Olympic Development Program (ODP) Experience
- All-American
- All-State
- All-League/District
- 3-4 year varsity starter
- Extensive club team experience (top leagues)
- Participation in major tournaments and showcases

NCAA D2



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- Olympic Development (ODP) Experience
- All-State
- All-League/District
- 2-3 years varsity starter
- Team MVP
- Extensive club team experience (top leagues)
- Participation in major tournaments and showcases

NCAA D3/NAIA

- Extensive club team experience
- 2 years varsity starter

i. NCAA/NAIA Athletic Scholarship Budgets

Remember, soccer is an equivalency sport, which means all scholarships are NOT full scholarships, and coaches may divide the total number of scholarships allotted to them between as many athletes as they wish.

Men's Soccer

NCAA D1: 9.9

NCAA D2: 9

NAIA: 12

NJCAA: 18

Women's Soccer

NCAA D1: 14

NCAA D2: 9.9

NAIA: 12

NJCAA: 18

Number of College Soccer Programs

Men's Soccer

NCAA D1: 204

NCAA D2: 172

*NCAA D3: 394

NAIA: 216

NJCAA: 291

Total: 1,277

Women's Soccer

NCAA D1: 314

NCAA D2: 223

*NCAA D3: 409

NAIA: 221

NJCAA: 276

Total: 1,443

*NCAA Division 3 schools do not offer athletic scholarships, but do offer other forms of financial aid.



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5. What do College Coaches Look For?

i. Checking off the player competency boxes

There are four categories a coach will evaluate a player from:

1. Technical Ability
2. Tactical Ability
3. Physical Ability
4. Psychological Ability

Most top recruits are great in these four categories, but it really requires a player to be great in 1-2 of these to find your way onto a roster.

Coaches may only watch you play 10 minutes of a game before moving on to watch another player at another field, so make every moment count when in front of coaches!

Beyond a player's skill, most coaches are looking for the following qualities:

- Work ethic (what does the player do after they lose the ball)
- Attitude (towards teammates, coaches, referees, opponent)
- Coachability (does the player take direction and apply it)
- Speed and Athleticism (are you able to compete physically at the next level)

ii. On and Off the field traits

One of the first questions club coaches and directors are asked is "tell me about this player as a person". No program wants to bring in a problem player/person, so they do their research on the person they are looking to bring into their program as well as the player.

It is so vital that you lead by example in everything you do both on and off the field as one single off the field incident can ruin your chances when finding a college.

iii. Parental traits

Parents, these schools are looking at you as well! No club or HS coach wants to deal with a "helicopter" parent and certainly no college coach will allow it. Keep in mind that coaches want to know about you and how you have raised your child before they make a decision on if your child is going to be the right fit for their program. Problem parents typically means a problem kid!

Coaches do not want to speak to parents much when it comes down to recruitment and the player's desire in joining a program. Let your children lead this process, ensure they do all communications with the coach, and simply be there to support them during this time.

6. College Tips

Tip # 1

As you begin to cultivate a list of prospective colleges, keep your search in perspective – this means academics should be the first priority above all else, regardless of if you play college soccer or not. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What happens if I don't get along with the coach?
- I become injured and can no longer play?



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- I find other activities I prefer to be involved in?
- I lose my athletic scholarship?
- The University eliminates soccer from their athletic program?
- Would I still attend a particular college if I no longer played on the team?

Your answer should be - yes.

There are many factors that can impact your college experience, with some that you can control and others you can't. Playing college soccer is a great experience, but it should not dictate your decision to attend a particular university or not. At the end of the day, earning a college degree is much more important to your future than playing a sport.

Tip # 2

Think about where you would fit best in an athletic program. Are you DIV I material, or are you best suited for a DIV II or a DIV III program. Do you want to play right away, or are you OK with sitting the bench your freshman or maybe even sophomore year? Have you thought about the NAIA, USCAA, or NJCAA? Do you have the time management skills to juggle college soccer and studies?

Depending on the program, these variables can have a big impact on your decision to pursue a particular program or not.

Understand all the athletic affiliations that are available, the divisions within each, and determine which one might be the best bet for you. Consider the following:

- NCAA
- NAIA
- NJCAA
- USCAA
- NCCAA

Tip # 3

Every college coach gives clues about what he or she may be looking for in a potential prospect and there is no better place to begin your research than to visit the athletic website of each program of interest. Here are a few things you can review to see if you "measure up" to what a coach may be looking for in a recruit:

- Coach's biography – Learn about where he or she played in college, the style of play they utilize in a game situation, how successful the program has been under their guidance, and the expectations they have for the program going forward. These details will help you understand their coaching philosophy.
- Roster – Size yourself up and see if you model the type of player the coach recruits. Look at physical characteristics of the players, the pedigree of the players (what level they may have played at during high school), the area/state(s) players are being recruited from and potential number of graduating seniors on the roster (this will give you an idea of the roster holes that need to be filled for the next season).
- Conference and record – Look at the conference the school competes in to determine how competitive the program currently is, where the team may need help from an impact player(s), and if there is good opportunity for incoming freshman to fill important positions.

Although these are just a few considerations, being well informed about the program you are pursuing, is half the battle.

Tip #4

Everyone wants a full ride when it comes to athletic scholarships, but the truth of the matter is that very few athletes receive one. Not all soccer programs are created equal and when it comes to scholarship dollars, amounts can vary across the board from one college to the next.

Review scholarship limitations for each athletic affiliation to see what could be available for those programs you might be interested in. Remember, that although a Div I college may be able to offer up to 9.9 scholarships for men's soccer, not all will have the full funding to do so based on allocated funds. Find out from each coach what might be available for your specific situation regarding athletic scholarship opportunities.

Tip #5

If you haven't created a player resume and cover letter, it's time to get started.



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An introduction of yourself via a cover letter along with your player profile is ideal. If you are participating in an upcoming showcase or tournament where college coaches may be attending, provide your game schedule as soon as possible. This gives those attending coaches you contact a good indication of your interest in their school, an opportunity to see you play, watch you develop as a player, and determine if your abilities could fit well with their program.

If participating in a showcase(s), be sure to review the list of attending colleges coaches and connect with those who have what you are seeking both academically and athletically in a college program. An email introduction with 3 to 4 paragraphs about yourself is sufficient, be sure to include your game schedule, and attached your player profile/resume as well.

Follow up with any email or phone calls from coaches after the showcase in a timely manner, and begin to establish a dialogue.

If your and their interest persists, consider scheduling a campus visit, see if there is opportunity to work out with the team and even spend the night. This will help you determine if this could possibly be your perfect college fit.

Tip #6

Keep your eye on the ball when it comes to your high school GPA. You could be a great athlete but if you aren't making the grades, you won't be playing college soccer.

Consider taking Honors, AP, or Dual Credit classes when you can. These types of classes can go a long way when a coach evaluates not only our athletic ability, but if you will be able to stand up to the academic challenges of college coursework.

Coaches need student-athletes who cannot only handle it on the field, but in the classroom too.

In addition, these types of classes are what college admissions like to see on a student's transcript. The overall idea is to have a student who has challenged himself or herself with rigorous classwork, even if they received a lower GPA because of it. It is often a good indicator to admissions of the type of student you are and could be at their college or university campus.

Tip #7

Know the 4 components that college coaches look for in a recruit:

- Tactical ability
- Technical ability
- Physical ability
- Psychological ability

(These have all been outlined on the US Youth Soccer website, not sure if you wanted to utilize some of the content you have provided all ready)

It's essential to be excellent in at least one component if you want to garner the attention of a college coach at any level.

Tip #8

Take the time to attend a college game and watch the team in action for those programs you are considering. This is a great way to view the team in a game situation, see how the coach conducts him or herself on the sidelines, and to see if you have the ability to contribute and make an impact to the program should you play there.

If you can't make it to a game during the season, visit the college web site and see what games might be streamed live and or if there are any games that have been recorded and archived for viewing. If the college web site does not have any taped games available, check out YouTube or any number of social media sites to see if there might be game tape for viewing through these outlets.

Tip #9

Don't get stuck or focus on schools where the coach has shown no interest in you as a recruit.

Too often players will latch on to a college or university because it has always been their dream to play for that particular program or they feel pressured to pursue it because a parent or relative may have attended and played a sport there. Although it's good to have aspirations to play say, for the top Division I program in the nation, if you aren't what the coach is looking for, you need to move on. Most coaches will let you know exactly where you stand in their recruiting hierarchy and if you are a consideration for their roster, or not.

Tip #10



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Arrange for a campus visit and see if there is a chance to spend the night with the team. The length of your visit may be based upon the athletic affiliation the school is tied to. The coach from the program you are visiting will give you specific details on how long your visit can be.

You'll have a chance to talk to rostered players, develop a rapport, and gain valuable insight into the program from a players' perspective. You'll also get to experience campus social life and get a good feel for what you could expect as an attending student.

Tip # 11

Always respond to a coach who has reached out to you and initiated the recruitment process. Why? You never know when your college search could change course, and a program you might not have considered as an option initially, could well become your first choice.

It also goes without saying that once you have made a decision to commit, to let those coaches who were also recruiting you, know so. Thanking them for their time and interest is not only the right thing to do; you may find they are willing to keep the door and line of communication open should things change for you in the future.

Tip #12

Be sure to update your player profile on a regular basis to reflect any changes that may have happened recently.

These should include your most recent GPA, SAT and ACT scores if applicable, AP or Honors courses, volunteer work, jobs, accolades both academic and athletic, coaches information (both high school and club), club affiliation and level of play.

Keep your resume to one page only and include only relevant information and events from grade 9th going forward.