

Excerpt taken from Norcal Soccer.com Discussion Board

It is written by a parent whose daughter verbally committed in January 2012 and details their findings with the process.

1. Players: Work hard on your academics. When you think you've done enough, work harder.

College coaches are looking for well-rounded young people who will not have difficulties being accepted by the college's admissions office and who will be contributing members of their squad on every level – athletic, emotional, social, mental, etc. Strong academic performance is an indicator to coaches that the player will fit that description. It suggests to the coaches that the player knows how to establish healthy priorities in their life, can set and reach goals, can manage their time effectively, etc.

College soccer programs only have a certain amount of scholarships they can offer, although since soccer is what is known as an "equivalency" sport, those scholarships can be spread out over more individuals than the number of available scholarships. Athletic aid will not always be available in the amounts you are hoping for and/or in the years you are hoping for. Working hard on your academics while you're in high school gives you flexibility when you're in the process of choosing the school you want to attend and at which you want to play soccer.

Strong academics can give you enormous flexibility in the recruiting process because you don't have to depend entirely on the amount of athletic aid offered as the determining factor in choosing which school you are going to attend.

2. Parents: Resist the temptation to view the amount of your child's athletic award as an issue of prestige. For parents, there is quite a bit of emotion wrapped up in the recruiting process. You naturally want to see your child succeed. You've sacrificed quite a bit to help your child succeed in their soccer life – you've spent countless weekends in other towns at soccer tournaments, you've lived in hotels, eaten at restaurants, etc. You've paid enough money over the years for club soccer fees, for equipment, for hotel stays, etc. to fund your child's college education (but did so because of your child's love for the sport). Now, it's tempting to see the amount of your child's athletic award as justification for all the time and money you've invested. But take a step back and remember that the point of this process is ultimately to allow your child to receive the best education they can. That may or may not mean that your child receives a large athletic award.

3. Parents: Strive to maintain a stable family life. It was interesting to hear one coach we met with talk very pointedly about the fact that they recruit the whole family – that they are looking for stable families who won't cause problems once their child has been recruited.

4. Players: Don't be involved in the wrong groups of friends. Be careful what goes on your Facebook and Twitter pages. Pay attention to not only what you put on your Facebook wall, but to what others may post about you that ends up on your wall.

5. Be a better player. When you think you're good enough - work harder, learn more.

6. Don't immediately dismiss the value of loyalty to your club – in other words, don't always be looking for a better opportunity. Here's a quote from Claudio Reyna, US Soccer Youth Technical Director: "One of the problems [with American youth soccer] is that we have kids bouncing around all over the place. Kids frequently switch youth clubs, join travel teams, transfer to other high schools, all in pursuit of better soccer. (But) that turnover needs to calm down a little bit.

It's better for the development of a kid if they're at one place in the same sort of comfortable environment, rather than move around."

7. Prepare a soccer profile which includes the following information (we used a two-column layout for our daughter's profile – with soccer information on one side and academic information on the other side):

Contact Information: name; mailing address (we used a PO box); telephone number; email address (we set up an email alias for our daughter to use that forwarded to her email address and our email address – so we would be able to help her stay on top of contacts from coaches); website address (if applicable)

Personal Details: birthdate; Graduation year; height; weight; position; parents' names (and email addresses); a photo (either a headshot or an action photo)

Soccer Details: club team; high school team

Team Accomplishments: tournament and league season successes (championships, placing as finalists, placing as semi-finalists), both for club team and high school team; successes of teams you've guest-played with; successes of ODP/ID2 teams (it may not have played any part in how her profile was received, but we chose to put team accomplishments before individual accomplishments – as a subtle implication that team success was more important to our daughter than her own individual success.)

Individual Accomplishments: highlights of participation in ODP/ID2, Market Training Center; individual awards for club and high school participation

Soccer References: name, position, and contact information (phone number and email address) for current club and high school coaches, club director of coaching, past coaches, ODP coaches, etc. Goalkeepers should include goalkeeper trainers. Ask permission to add their information before you do so. Ask your coaches to write quotes about you that you can include in your profile

Academic Background: high school and its location; course of study (are you pursuing honors classes?); current GPA (simple or weighted); scores for standardized tests (SAT, ACT, and/or PSAT); academic honors; counselor's name and contact information (phone number and email address). Ask permission to add their information before you do so.

Community Service: List any community service activities in which you participate.

8. Prepare video highlights. You should start recording video at an early age – in our experience, it takes some practice before you become adept at capturing video appropriate for a highlights video. We started with our daughter when she was about 12 or 13, even though coaches won't want to see video of players at that age (highlights of when they are 16 or 17 are probably more useful). Take a lot of video (it requires a lot to get enough satisfactory footage).

In your final highlights video, use an arrow or a circle to identify your child. Post it on YouTube, and keep it up to date. For field players, off the ball footage is important. We've been told that goalkeepers need videos of both highlights and training sessions, although we never ended up taking video of a training session.

It may make sense to consider hiring a professional (the perspective from the tall cameras used by many professional sports videographers can be good, especially for field players) – at most showcase tournaments, there is an approved company that takes videos. If all (or many) of the parents on your child's team chip in, the cost can be manageable.

Keep the purpose of video in mind – and this is the purpose of a lot of what you're going to be doing during the college recruiting process. No college coach will choose a player based on video highlights. What you're trying to do is convince the college coach that it will be worth their time to come watch the player at a game.

9. Consider putting your profile and highlights video on a personal website.

10. Start the recruiting process earlier than you think you should. Freshman year is best. I can't tell you how many times we heard parents saying, "We've got plenty of time." Those are the same parents who two years later were saying, "I wish we would have started earlier."

11. Ask your club coach and director of coaching for an honest appraisal of what level of school you can play at. That will help you formulate a list of 10 schools you might want to attend from a soccer standpoint. See #12 below.

12. Research colleges from an academic and athletic standpoint. Use the U.S. News & World Report Ultimate College Guide (or something similar) and SportSource's Official Athletic College Guide for Women's Soccer. Choose 10 target schools for academics (divided fairly equally between schools where a student of your academic standing should be easily accepted, schools where acceptance will be a bit more challenging, and schools where you anticipate acceptance will be difficult) and 10 target schools for athletics (divided fairly equally between schools where a player of your skill should easily make the soccer team, schools where making the soccer team will be more challenging, and schools where making the soccer team would seem to be quite difficult). Rely on your club coaches to give you an honest assessment of your skill level, and use that assessment in evaluating which soccer programs will be easy, challenging, and difficult for you. Then focus on the overlap between your academic list and your athletic list. Note: in our experience, goalkeepers need larger athletic lists because schools that are on your original list may not be recruiting for goalkeepers in your graduation year.

13. Begin to send emails to college coaches on the overlap list in your freshman year. Include your profile and upcoming game schedules (although realistically, they probably won't come and watch you until you're in your junior year/U16-17). Copy the head coach and/or recruiting coach, depending on who you are sending the email to. Same with the goalkeeper coach if that's your position.

It's important to personalize even the introductory emails a bit based on your child's research of the school's academic and soccer programs. Be able to tell the coaches why you want to attend their school and play soccer for them. In our daughter's case, we came up with the basic introductory email first and then for each school, she told me why it interested her and we came up with a paragraph to add which made each introductory email more specific to the school.

14. Begin to call coaches on the overlap list. You can almost always find their phone numbers on the team web pages of the colleges' intercollegiate athletic websites. Prepare a list of questions in advance – include more questions on your list than you think you will ever ask (otherwise, you will almost certainly have "dead space" during your calls when you can't think of any more questions).

It will be a challenge for your son and daughter to make these phone calls, but they can start with schools for which they believe they could easily make the team – it may end up being practice, or depending on how well you and your child have judged their abilities, it may end up being one of the schools they seriously consider. Your child should keep in mind that college coaches talk on the phone with youth soccer players quite a bit – they know you're nervous. Sometimes (especially if they want your child badly), they will be nervous too. Your child will probably never be completely comfortable with this part of the process, but it's a good growth opportunity for them.

15. Play in showcase tournaments. But choose the right showcases - it doesn't do any good to play in a showcase where 300 college coaches are in attendance if the coaches of the schools you want to attend aren't going to be there.

This is probably the biggest fallacy that leads to players frequently switching clubs. The thought is that the only way to get seen by college coaches is to play on a team that's going to Surf Cup, Disney, Las Vegas Showcase, etc. every year. And so if the team you're playing for doesn't go to those showcases, you'll have to switch teams or you won't be seen by college coaches. That's a fallacy that coaches and parents on other teams (who have a specific motivation – that their child's team will get better so that their child will be seen by college coaches because they've believed the fallacy as well) try to convince you of.

Players who take this approach are hoping that one of the coaches who sees them play will want them to come to their school, and they are relying on volume to facilitate the recruiting process for them. Their thinking is that if there are 300 college coaches watching, the chances increase of one or more of those coaches seeing them and wanting them to come play at their school.

This line of thinking is logical to a point, but its making assumptions that don't have to be made. A better strategy, we think, is to make the lists of colleges suggested in point #12 above and then use effective strategies to put yourself in front of those coaches. Find out where they will be – their own ID camps, other schools' ID camps, ODP camps, Market Training Center events, showcases, etc. Then do everything you can to put yourself in front of those coaches at those events. Ask your club coach and coaching director to talk to those coaches in advance and ask them to watch you.

Consult the college coach lists at showcase websites. And/or just ask the coaches when you call them which showcase tournaments they will be attending and if they would come and watch you play. Make sure your club coach knows what colleges you want to attend and what college coaches you anticipate coming to watch you play so they can do their best to give you adequate playing time in games where the coaches of your target colleges will be watching.

16. Your team should develop a team profile that can be distributed to college coaches at showcase tournaments. The team flier should include the following:

Team Information: team name; team photo; about our team; team accomplishments

Who To Contact: We included contact information for our team's coach, our team's goalkeeper coach, our team manager, and our club's director of coaching.

Brief Profiles of Individual Players: name; uniform number; position; height; weight; left- or right-footed (or both); parents' names; phone number; email address; high school; graduation year; GPA; test scores (SAT, ACT, and/or PSAT); up to 5 academic/community service accomplishments; up to 5 athletic accomplishments

17. Write thank you notes to coaches who watched you play. Emails are good, but a handwritten note will really stand out. A phone call would stand out even more.

18. Attend ID camps at the colleges you're interested in – but contact the coach first to let them know you will be attending and your purpose. And/or have your club coach and/or director of coaching contact the coaches to let them know you will be attending. Attendance at an ID camp can be invaluable in the recruiting process (we know it helped tremendously in our daughter's case – it was the first time, to our knowledge at least, that the coaching staff of the college she will be attending saw her play). But you have to be certain they will watch you during the camp. There will probably be a lot of players attending the camp, and you want to make sure that you are "on their radar" from the beginning. A call from your club coach or director of coaching will help in that regard, as will a phone call or email from you.

19. Network, network, network. Your club coach and director of coaching can be invaluable in this regard if you reach out to them (early in the process). Keep them apprised of your progress and target schools.

20. Watch as many college games as possible. Either on TV or in person. If you watch one of your "overlap" teams' games in person, sit in a strategic spot to maximize the chances that the coach will see you (we started doing this after our daughter had attended the ID camp of her dream school - so the coaches knew who she was in advance).

21. Register for the NCAA clearinghouse (http://web1.ncaa.org/ECWR2/NCAA_EMS/NCAA.jsp) or the NAIA Eligibility Center (http://www.playnaia.org/?ATCLID=205323010&SPSID=647589&SPID=100441&DB_LANG=C&DB_OEM_ID=27900) depending on the school(s) that you are interested in.

22. Be aware of recruiting rules. You can download the NCAA Guide for the College Bound Student Athlete here - <http://www.ncaapublications.com/DownloadPublication.aspx?download=CB12.pdf>.

23. For the schools you're interested in, "like" the Facebook page of their soccer program. Follow them on Twitter. Comment on their Facebook page after games you've watched.