

The Do's and Don'ts of College Recruiting

Who is Coach Hyndman? The US Youth Soccer Show recently sat down with Schellas Hyndman, head coach of FC Dallas in Major League Soccer, to talk about the do's and don'ts of college recruiting. In addition to being a former collegiate and professional player, Coach Hyndman is one of the most successful college soccer coaches in American sports history, compiling a 466-122-49 record as the head coach at Southern Methodist University.

Here's what Coach Hyndman had to say about college recruiting:

Do: Narrow down your list (When to start thinking)

- Sophomore year: Start thinking about colleges
- Junior year: Have your list to 5-6 colleges and do research and visits on schools (meet players, coaches, attend camps)
- Senior year: Have your list down to 3-4 school, and you might even be contacted by a team outside of that list because of your play

Don't: Get your heart set on one school before you do any research

- Make sure you take into account all the factors (Academic, social, athletics, etc.)
- It's a huge mistake to choose a school because of someone else's recommendation. What do you want (academics, social environment and athletic environment)?
- You need to investigate:
 - Does the coach want you?
 - Will you make the team
 - The roster (If you're a goalie— do they already have that position filled?)

Do: Know the rules

- NCAA doesn't give you any leniency for ignorance. You really need to do your homework and the best place to start is to learn the NCAA rules. If you are uncertain of something you can always contact the NCAA for more information.

Don't: Be obnoxious or over-attentive

- Coaching is a full-time job. There is a difference between contacting, showing interest, and the other side, which is being a little obnoxious and overbearing.
- NCAA has a rule that coaches can only contact you once a week
- Once you're a freshman in high school you can be recruited. Everything you do from then on has an effect on you being eligible. What you're doing at freshman year and what you're doing at senior year has an effect.
- If you contact a coach more than once a week you're starting to overbear.
- Easiest way to contact a coach is through e-mail (you don't want coaches to start avoiding your calls)

Don't: Be under attentive

- Every 10 days, maybe twice a month contacting. If you really want to have a relationship with the coach, then have a relationship with the coach. Make personal contact (don't make mom or dad call). Follow up on the season; ask about experiences with the team. Doing this shows real interest.

Do: Introduce yourself

- An introduction letter is very important and not a reproduced one. Make this letter something personal.

Don't: Send a fill-in-the-blank mass e-mail

- Make sure you introduce yourself even if it is through a letter. Seeing a face makes you easier to identify and is more personal. You have to remember the coaches will identify the players they want.

Do: Let them know why you want to be there

- Let them know why you want to attend the school (e.g. coaching style, academics... this is why I think I would be a good fit for the team...)
- Talk about why you personally would be a great addition and what you would bring to the team

Do: Get out your video camera

- One of the best ways to see a player play is video. Some coaches want videos showing your best moments, and some want full games.
- Think about giving a little bit of a teaser (highlights and adding on a game at the end). Important thing is when you get into the game portion of the video you identify yourself. (I'm on the Blue team, center midfield and I'm wearing number 8). Identify key moments in the video to see— this helps coaches who may have time restraints.

Don't: Let your mom send your 6th grade championship videos

- Go to your coaches and ask them to send most recent games to a school and to put in a recommendation letter. High school coaches want to help you the best they can and reach your dream.
- With YouTube, you can put it in an easier format for a coach. It's easier for the coach to handle an e-mail link over receiving a huge collection of videos.

Do: Have three positive references

- Get the right people to write your recommendation letters. Think about what these people are going to say about you.

Do: Keep your grades up

- Players forget this. A lot of people think that just because they're athletes someone will bend the rules or give them a break. The NCAA is very concerned about student-athletes, academics and graduation rates. Today there is more pressure on coaches to make sure their student athletes graduate from colleges. Why would a coach recruit a player that has bad grades when it could affect the coaches' number of scholarships or job stability?
- Coaches are looking for students who have a sincere concern about their academics and they want people who are doing well on their testing (ACT and SAT).
- Soccer will get you to the door but you won't get in if you don't have academics

Final Thought:

- Would you come to this university if you didn't make the soccer team? If the answer is no, don't go to that university. If you would go to the university even if you didn't make the team, this could be the right university for you. Enjoy this time, investigate and prepare yourself to make the right decision. It will be one of the biggest decisions of your life.