

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT VOLLEYBALL RECRUITING - January 2015

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Terms to Know

NCAA Clearinghouse or Eligibility Center (eligibilitycenter.org) – is the NCAA office that certifies a student-athlete’s academic credentials to be eligible for Division I and II athletics. You cannot make an official visit to a DI or DII school without being at least registered with the clearinghouse.

NCAA Division I – 334 Volleyball teams at some of the most well-known schools (Florida, Texas, Duke, Rutgers, Seton Hall, Iona, etc.). Division I schools are permitted to offer scholarships to up to 12 student athletes for volleyball. Schools that are “fully funded” will only offer full scholarships. Partially funded programs will split scholarships and stack with academic and need based aid money to make you an offer, but they can still only offer athletic money to 12 players per year. The season is August and into December, with off-season training through the spring and even summer months at many schools. This is the highest level of college athletics, and is generally the most demanding.

NCAA Division II – 299 Volleyball teams at lesser known schools (Felician, Georgian Court, Tampa, Lemoyne, Millersville, CW Post). Division II schools are permitted to divide the value of 8 full scholarships among a larger number of student athletes. Many DII schools only have between 1-3 scholarships, which they divide and stack with academic and need based aid, but seldom is it a full package. The season lasts from August through November, with a spring season that is less demanding than Division I in most cases.

NCAA Division III – 430 Volleyball teams at a variety of schools (including NYU, Chicago, Johns Hopkins, Williams, Stevens, Kean, St. Elizabeth’s, etc.). Division III schools CANNOT offer athletic scholarships, but they do often have academic scholarships available for qualified students. The season lasts from late August and into November. The spring season is limited to 16 days over 5 weeks; however some schools do not have an offseason, either for academic or financial reasons.

NAIA National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics – naia.org has 220 programs (Including Shorter College, Mobile, Missouri Baptist, Fresno Pacific, Indiana Tech) a separate organization to the NCAA, made up largely of religious based institutions but does have some public schools. There is little presence in the Northeast. Their recruiting rules are simpler. A player who is not an academic qualifier with the NCAA out of high school can go to an NAIA school for a year, get good grades and transfer to an NCAA school and be eligible.

NOTE: The NAIA now has its own version of the Eligibility Center - playnaia.org

NJCAA (National Junior College Athletic Association – njcaa.org) is an association of 2 year colleges (Passaic, Bergen, Middlesex and Union County are some of the NJ 2 year schools with volleyball), that like the NCAA is divided into Divisions I, II and III. Most Division I schools have 8-12 full scholarships, (locally I believe the only one is Monroe, in New Rochelle, NY). Division II can offer scholarships up to the amount of tuition and fees, but not room and board. Division III offers no scholarships – most schools in the Northeast are Division III. These schools are typically more affordable, and easier to get into. “JuCo’s” are also an avenue for an NCAA non-qualifier to become eligible for NCAA Division I or II – once you earn an associate’s degree you are eligible at all levels.

Athletic Scholarship – Is typically a 1 year renewable contract for a value up to the cost of tuition, room, board, books and fees. A few larger schools have started to offer 4 year scholarships but the standard is still for 1 year at a time. If you get hurt before you complete 4 years, some schools will continue your scholarship “on medical” even though you cannot play. Also, some better funded schools will pay for a 5th or 6th year if you do not graduate in 4 years. These are questions you want to ask if a scholarship is offered.

Cost of Attendance Stipend- the NCAA recently allowed for Division I schools to pay a stipend that will cover travel to and from campus as well as the cost of other incidentals not included in the room, board, tuition, fees and books that scholarships have traditionally covered.

Letter of Intent or LOI – The Letter of Intent is a legal contract binding you to a college’s athletic program for 1 year in return for an agreed value of scholarship toward the cost of one year at the school. Volleyball players can sign these papers in a given 2 week “signing period” in November or April of their senior year. Once you sign an LOI you are legally bound to attend and play for that school.

Official Visit – A visit of 48 hours or less where the school pays all or part of your expenses. In Division I and II this will happen during your senior year, but at Division III it can be spring of your Junior year as well. You may take a total of 5 official visits to all Division I and II schools.

Unofficial Visit – A visit at any time that is made at your own expense. The school can accommodate your visit with tickets to sporting events, a tour, etc. but you pay for the travel and the accommodations. Unofficial visits are not counted or limited in any way.

Who can play college volleyball?

Talent wise – there is literally a school for EVERYONE if playing is your only criteria. The better you are, the more options you have.

Academically – Divisions I and II have a required course load of “core” classes and almost all school curriculums meet these requirements but it is still something you need to look into if you want to play at this level. Also, for Division I there is a scale between GPA and SAT/ACT scores that one must earn to become eligible. These requirements are being made stricter

every couple of years so please check eligibilitycenter.org to make sure you know the requirements for your graduating class.

For Division III you only have to be admitted to your school of choice, but with many of the smaller and more competitive schools, that can often be much harder than meeting NCAA minimums for Division I and II.

How do you get selected to play college volleyball?

It is estimated that over 95% of Division I players were identified through club volleyball. Athletes are selected for any number of reasons, including skill, potential, height, build, and attitude, down to details such as finger length, pelvic tilt, brain typing, etc. There is a coach for every theory. Be who you are and somebody will appreciate that. If you pretend to be something or somebody you are not, it will be a long 4 years.

To Get Noticed

- Make a video, a resume, and a cover letter.
- Make sure your information in UniversityAthlete.com is current. This is the database that coaches are using when you see them staring at their smart phone or iPad at a tournament.
- E-mail the coaches at schools that you are interested in.
- Go to camp at schools you are interested in (and tell them ahead of time why you are coming)
- Put your contact information in front of coaches on FREE websites, such as BeRecruited.com, ncsasports.com, and RecruitingRegistry.com.
- Put your videos on youtube.com and send the link out often.
- Lock your twitter/Facebook profiles. One inappropriate comment about a coach, a teammate, a party, etc. can and will undue all of your hard work.

When making a video

- Introduce yourself in the beginning of the video, with your name, high school, club team, graduation year, position and height with sneakers on.
- For a skills video do not edit the footage. If you cut out the bad swings, we don't know if you had 10 good swings out of 10, or 10 good swings out of 1000. Show us 10 repetitions in a row and the standard to impress the coaches is much lower.
- Show all skills you are confident in. Middles do not need to set and liberos do not need to block, but if you can do it, show it off!
- Some coaches like highlight videos, others like 5-10 minutes of unedited gameplay (especially if you are a passer or setter). It's a good idea to have both available.

When making a resume

- Several schools have online questionnaires. Find a few and see what questions they are asking. Generally you will need contact info, academic info, athletic info (include your jersey number!) and a list of schools you're considering.
- Have it ready on your computer and e-mail it out to schools that you are interested in or if a school contacts you.

-If a school asks you to complete their questionnaire, some are fine receiving your standard form, others will look at this as a sign that you are not interested in their program so if it is a school you are interested in, make time to complete their form.

When you e-mail a coach

-The subject of the e-mail should be something like “Jane Smith 2016 6’ OH” and NOT “I like volleyball!”

-Say something about WHY you are e-mailing THEM. You like the campus, you want to play in an offense like theirs, or whatever, but let them know that you did not send that same e-mail to 74 other college coaches.

-Sophomore year and beyond, the recruit should be the one who writes the e-mail, and makes the phone calls. She has to play for this coach for four years. You do not need to be afraid of the coaches - coaches WANT the conversations to go well, and they are practiced at making them go well. Parents who are “protecting” their daughter are often costing her scholarship offers.

When to start looking at colleges

NOW. Like anything else, visiting colleges is a skill. You will make a better decision if you visit a handful of campuses, even if you just take the admissions tours and listen to what questions other people are asking, and thinking what that means to you. You may not fully understand what you are looking at until you’ve been to 3-4 schools. What is important to one person may not matter to someone else, and you need to figure out what qualities you like about a college and what you don’t like.

If you have not visited any schools yet, you might start by looking at youuniversitytv.com and click on “college video tours” and pick a few colleges. These are paid advertisements for the schools so they will ALL look outstanding, but this can give you an idea about what qualities you like and don’t like

Do NOT make your number 1 choice the first college you visit in person.

Suggested Questions to Ask About the Program

-Do you cut recruited players?

-What are the team’s rules that I should be aware of? If they don’t address alcohol, or skipping classes, ask specifically – even if you don’t think it impacts you, it impacts your teammates, which impacts you.

-What time of day do you practice? What is expected as far as off-season conditioning/training?

-How do you travel (bus or van, commercial flights or charter flights)? If it’s a van, who drives? How long are your road trips? What is the policy on missed classes?

-Do athletes get priority scheduling for classes? What academic support resources are available to athletes? What is the team GPA? How many players are struggling? Are the players graduating on schedule?

-If I get injured and require surgery, can I choose my doctors? Who pays for surgery/rehab?

-If you are looking at a Junior College, or if you would like to play after college, ask them how do they go about promoting their players? What can they do to help you keep playing?

About a Scholarship

- Do you have scholarships available, for my position, in my year? (Don't ask this at D3 or a school that you know doesn't have athletic scholarships).
- What is included in my scholarship? Is there a stipend? Do you cover Books? Does it cover room and board if I live off campus? If so, how much will I get to spend on rent? Food? (Some pay much better than others) Is there a stipend in addition to the scholarship?
- If I get hurt and can't play anymore, do I keep my scholarship?
- If I don't graduate before I exhaust my eligibility, do I keep my scholarship for a 5th/6th year?
- If it's a walk-on position, are walk-ons treated as equals to the scholarship kids? How are they different? (Sometimes it can be very different).

Things Coaches Want You to Know

Parents, this is your daughter, not a used car you are trying to sell. It's not ALL about the money. Fit matters. If you call a coach and ask "How much will you give me for her?" that's a big red flag for a lot of coaches.

This is your daughter's decision to live with, and if this is going to work, it should not be the FIRST life decision you allow her to make.

Division I and II coaches have NCAA rules that dictate when they can call you and how often, when you can visit, and what they can do on the visit. If you contact them before that and they don't get back right away, they are not ignoring you. Keep calling until you reach a person. There are several rules in this area and different schools interpret some of these rules differently so don't get frustrated with them.

Getting a questionnaire in the mail does not necessarily mean you are being recruited by that school. It does mean that you've gotten their attention in some way, which is good first step.

There is more academic money out there than volleyball money so remember to ALWAYS put your grades first.

If you don't like a college that contacts you, reply anyway. That coach may not have what you want, but maybe his friend has exactly what you are looking for, but hasn't noticed you yet. Coaching is a small circle, and it's wise not to ignore anyone who is a fan of yours.

Do your homework – don't ask "who do you play?" or "what league are you in?" or other questions that you can easily answer in 5 minutes online. If you want them to think you are interested, be interested.

After you complete your junior year, Division I and II coaches can talk to you in person at the conclusion of a tournament. Division III can talk to you at the end of each day of the tournament, and starting with the class of 2017 D3 can talk to you as of January 1 of your junior year. When you finish an event, don't be in a rush to leave - somebody may want to talk to you.

Camps

The summer after sophomore and junior year you should be going to the camps of the schools that you are interested in. Official and unofficial visits everyone is sort of on their best behavior but over 2-3 days with coaches, players and other recruits at the camp, often this is as good a look inside a program as you are going to get. Also, it gives coaches a chance to see how you work, and learn, and to compare you to the competition. Each year there are a few stories where a camper shows up a top recruit and gets the offer ahead of the recruit. Whether you are the camper or the recruit, this is important to remember.

Choosing a College

A well-known club, in polling their alumnae discovered that only about 1/3 of their players are going to get enough playing time and win enough to be completely satisfied athletically, while receiving the educational experience that they desired. Everybody imagines playing, winning and receiving a great education but if you can only have 2 of the 3, which one are you most flexible on? If you have to choose one, which is the most important? Think about each of the schools with that in mind, and best of luck as you make your decision.

Once You Are Committed

Once you make a decision you still are not done! There is one last “to do” list for you.

-Call the other coaches that were recruiting you and tell them about your decision. It is going to feel like you are breaking up with each of them, but the coaches are used to it and will respect you more for it. This is important for 2 reasons – first, if you later decide to transfer, it is nice if they still think fondly of you, and second, coaches change jobs and that coach you almost went to play for, or a friend of theirs, might become your coach before you graduate. Or perhaps you will apply to them for a job or graduate assistant position after college. It’s just wise not to burn your bridges.

-Tell your club and high school coaches of your decision, as well as your guidance counselor. All are potential points of contact for an interested coach and you can save everybody time by letting them know to turn away schools that are late to your party. It is also a great opportunity to thank them for their help in getting you to this point.

-Tell the local newspaper. You deserve a pat on the back!

-Update your status with Universityathlete.com, and then e-mail rich@richkern.com with your name, height, position, high school, home town and the school you are committing to. www.richkern.com keeps the most reliable list of college commitments and this is the easiest way of announcing to the college coaching community that you are off the market.

Making your commitment public should reduce the volume of contacts from other schools, and it allows those coaches to focus on recruits who still need a place to play - it helps everybody.