



Navigating Through the Complicated College Lacrosse Recruitment Process

I am often asked several questions from parents and players regarding the College Lacrosse Recruitment process. The following information will attempt to inform parents and players of the various stages of Recruitment and also to hopefully answer some very commonly asked questions. For the purpose of this information my reference to College includes Universities as well.

Scholarships

As a starting point I believe it is very important for everyone to realize and appreciate that there are limited amounts of Athletic Scholarship dollars that are available to be offered by College Lacrosse Programs. NCAA Division 1 Lacrosse Programs have the equivalent of 12.6 Athletic Scholarships for Men and 12 for Women, Division 2 Schools have 10.8 for Men and 9.9 for Women and Division 3 Schools cannot provide Athletic Scholarships, they can only provide Academic assistance. Putting it in perspective there are 64 Division 1 Varsity Lacrosse Program's, 46 Division 2 Program's and 189 Division 3 Program's currently being financially supported at NCAA affiliated Colleges in the USA. Estimating that each College graduates roughly 20 percent of their 40 to 50 player Roster each year, there are approximately 8 to 12 Lacrosse roster spots available at each College every year. College Lacrosse Programs Graduate a smaller class of seniors than the class size of welcomed freshman classes. There are several reasons for players not completing their athletic or educational commitments. These reasons include having difficulty with Academics, personal conduct or not having the ability to cope with the amount of playing time and attention that they are accustomed to. Regardless of playing time all members of the Team must commit to the daily grind of College Varsity Lacrosse without being rewarded similarly with equal playing time. With Lacrosse continuing to be the fastest growing game in the USA, reportedly having in the neighborhood of 200,000 Players, and the number of players playing in Canada somewhere around 80,000 it doesn't take long to realize that the acquisition of a sizeable Lacrosse Scholarship amongst qualifying athletes is getting increasingly more and more competitive. Academic Scholarships and Financial assistant grants are provided in Division 3 Programs solely, while they are used as a tool to increase the financial aid provided to players in Division 1 and 2 Colleges. It can't be overstated enough that players from families with limited financial means must achieve the best possible grades they can if they want to pursue a USA College Lacrosse experience. Of the fifty players who comprise a NCAA College Team's Roster, just over half receive any athletic scholarship assistance. Of the portion that receive athletic scholarship money; very few receive "full ride", type assistance.

Division 1, 2 or 3

You'll see many varied attempts at describing the differences between NCAA Division 1, 2 and 3 College Lacrosse Programs. Aside from the difference in Academic Ratings from College to College, in my opinion the primary differences between the 3 are centered on the financial support that the Lacrosse Program receives from the College itself. With the additional financial support comes additional pressure on the Coach and its Athletic Director to have a successful Program. In addition to the Athletic and Academic Scholarships that a College awards its players, the quality of facilities and support from Alumni has a very positive and direct impact on the significance of a College Lacrosse Program. NCAA Division 1 Colleges demand more of their players both athletically as well as academically. Division 1 Institutions are the Colleges with additional academic support in the form of private tutors, Varsity Athletics labs and academic resources, dedicated Lacrosse training facilities, dedicated fields, comprehensive modes of travel to and from games and fully sponsored equipment and apparel contracts. Along with the additional perks comes a much more rigorous daily training program where daily expectations are common place. Attitude and work ethic both in the classroom and on the practice field are determinate factors that will dictate how a Lacrosse student athlete succeeds for the duration of time that he or she is at College. In determining which category of College best fits with each player it is important to take inventory of what in fact are the player's primary reasons and expectations of being a Lacrosse Student Athlete at College. Division 1 Programs are more competitive and attract the best players in the USA and Canada. Canadians are very much coveted at US Colleges however the calibre of lacrosse in the states is improving and fierce competition for playing time is common place. Just this year the # 1 - 2010 recruit out of High School was demoted from his starting Attack position at UNC. The College had recruited 2 Attack that the Coach felt better suited his offence. The player has redshirted this year and is seeking a new College to continue his Collegiate Career at for the 2013 and 2014 Seasons. Players attending Division 1 Colleges must recognize that they need to be prepared to treat each practice as a game as they are being evaluated every step of the way which translates into being scrutinized on a daily bases. Typically speaking US College Lacrosse Programs covet Canadians for their stick skills and ability to score. The truth of the matter is that Canadian Attackmen and Midfielders have the best opportunity to obtain Scholarships at NCAA Colleges. This is due to Canadians above average stick skills and ability to score. Very few Poles or Goalies receive the recognition and reward that they truly deserve as US Colleges appear to feel that they can save their limited Scholarship money and attract athletic and very capable American Poles and Goalies more inexpensively than Canadian offensive prowess.

High School Academics

In preparation for College acceptance it is important that all Lacrosse Athletes understand that there are 16 High School core courses that will be required to be taken for admissions into NCAA affiliated Schools. In Canada grade 9 is the American equivalent of a High School Freshman age and the beginning of the period of time that grades are significant. There is a great deal of material on line that goes into greater detail of the breakdown of English, Mathematics and Science course requirements that will need to be completed at a minimal grade standard. It will be important to register with the NCAA Clearinghouse on line as you begin the process of acquiring the checklist of items that will be required over the process of finding a suitable NCAA College.

Exposure

Likely the biggest question I face centres around what is the best course of action to take to ensure that players are scouted. It is important for players to recognize that it is their responsibility to Market their Lacrosse ability. There are different ways of doing that and Team BC provides a great vehicle for exposure to Colleges in the USA through its U 16 Field Lacrosse Travel Program. The east coast of the USA is the hotbed for Division 1 Lacrosse while the West Coast only provides limited Division 2 opportunities. It is important for players to reach out to College Coaches as early and as often as possible in the recruitment process. There is absolutely nothing wrong with players sending e-mails to College Coaches, addresses of which can be obtained from the respective Teams Web Page. There are several unusual rules regarding the acceptable telephone contacting methods of players by College Coaches however as a rule of thumb e-mails from College Coaches can be exchanged without any concern of recruiting violation which is governed by the NCAA. In the end it's a business for the College Coaches and very much a benefit for the player having more than 1 or 2 Colleges interested in you as a student athlete. Ultimately this can positively impact the amount of Scholarship dollars that you are offered. Should a player not receive the interest from a US College Coach at a desired destination there is likelihood that the specific College would be hosting a players Camp. Check the particular College Web Site for information and attend the Camp to gain the required exposure.

Lacrosse Resume

It is important to begin to acquire and build a Lacrosse Resume which would include a list of accomplishments, accolades and video highlights of your games. During the process of communicating with the various College Coaches you should not be shy in passing on further accolades as they happen. Recognize that every college Coach is sifting through hundreds of player's e-mails and enquiries so you need to make yours stand out. I've been very intrigued at the various compilation of video footage of players that I have viewed over the past 7 years. It is important not to lose sight of exactly what you're trying to accentuate. For example if you're a Goaltender you must show key attributes such as ball stopping, passing and athletic ability. If you're a Pole you must show key attributes such as quickness, footwork, one on one defensive success, the ability to slide, discipline, stick skills and athletic ability. If you're a Midfielder you must show key attributes such as athleticism, stick skills, the ability to dodge effectively one on one, outside shooting ability and finish or defensive excellence. If you're an Attackman you must show key attributes such as quickness, athleticism, stick skills, the ability to dodge effectively one on one, outside shooting ability and finish.

Verbal Commitments

A player can make a Verbal Commitment to a College as early as his or her High School Sophomore Year or Grade 10. Verbal Commitments do not accompany any signed documentation what so ever and essentially are made between the respective College Coach and the player. It is very unusual for a College Coach to ever not honour his acceptance of a Verbal Commitment from a Player; however I have knowledge of it occurring. If a player suffers a serious injury, fails to meet the admissions criteria of the College, the College has a change in the Coaching Staff or the player has personal conduct issues, the College's Lacrosse Program could withdraw its Scholarship offer. Players have been known to de-commit from a Verbal Commitment having found a better offer or situation that might come along. This

is strictly a personal choice that should not be made lightly. Verbal Commitments should be made after much consideration of a variety of issues including the College's Academic suitability, Academic support offered to the player, the player's personal connection with the Coach, stability of the Lacrosse Program and comfort level of the Campus and the surrounding area. I am familiar with several situations where players hadn't even visited the College Campus prior to making their Verbal Commitment. I strongly recommend that prior to making a Verbal Commitment players and their family visit the College to ensure that it's a good fit. In some cases I am familiar with players coming to regret their decision to attend a College based on the isolation of the institute, something that can be easily avoided by taking the time to conduct a College visit to obtain very valuable information. It's important to appreciate that players can become very lonely being away from home and if the support system at a College isn't adequate the College experience is sure to fail. A player can have as many unofficial visits to as many different Colleges as they please as they are done at the cost of the player. Unofficial Visits can be taken at any time but typically during the time of considering various College options as a High School Junior or in grade 11. Players can only accept the offer of 5 Official Visits combining those taken at a Division 1 or Division 2 College. Official Visits are funded through the College and can only be offered after August 31st of a player's senior year of High School or grade 12. Colleges will not schedule an Official Visit until the player has met the initial NCAA Clearinghouse Admissions Standards. The NCAA Clearinghouse Web Site will clearly prompt you through the process of registering and will provide prompts for tasks that will need to be completed as you progress through your recruitment.

SAT's

SAT's are a test that all players must take in order to meet the Admission Standards of most if not all NCAA Institutions. There are some that do not require SAT's and will accept ACT's however the most common and easily accessible test is the SAT. The SAT should be taken more than once to allow for an improvement of score. It is recommended that players take their first SAT no later than their Junior Year of High School or Grade 11. Each additional test taken can be used to better the player's score in essence improving the opportunity for more Academic Scholarship money. SAT tests can be scheduled through a web site named College Board which is very easy to negotiate through and includes many local locations that testing is conducted.

National Letter of Intent

A one week period in the Month of November of the year prior to commencement of attendance at your College of choice is the time that players will sign their National Letter of Intent. This Document is a Contract that specifies the Terms of the Scholarship offer. The duration of the Scholarship offer is officially only one year. The Terms of the Scholarship are typically always renewed however the College is well within their rights to withdraw Scholarships at any point during the period of time a player attends the College. Reasons such as substandard grades or personal conduct can certainly affect the Scholarships players receive. It is not uncommon at all for players to receive an increase in their Scholarship support as they progress through their Education and Lacrosse development. At any time over the duration of a period of time at College a player can re-take his or her SAT to improve their score with the intention of increasing the amount of their Academic Scholarship Award.

Conclusion

I wanted to complete this information with my own personal conclusion. Many players are exceptionally wrapped up in the desire to play in the NCAA at a US School that it can lead to making a decision that he or she as well as their family can come to regret. It is of the utmost importance to recognize that the Education that you will be receiving from the College experience is significant. We are fortunate in Canada in that we have an unparalleled Education system. Be up front with any College Coach that you speak with so you can make a well informed decision on what's best for the player and the family both financially and educationally. At the end of a Players Collegiate Career whether it's received in Canada or the USA he or she will have a degree and many fond memories. The time and place where this is achieved is a matter of what the individual makes it.

I would be pleased to answer any questions that anyone may have. From personal experience I have navigated through the Recruitment Process from the start to finish and if I can assist in any way it would certainly be my pleasure. There are a great number of exceptionally talented Lacrosse Student Athletes in the Province of BC who have gone on to represent our Country, Province and the BCLA in a very commendable fashion, good luck to all players during this exceptionally exciting time in your life!

Yours in Lacrosse,

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