



5 Keys to Playing College Sports

Securing a real opportunity to play college sports and having on-field success results from having a plan, and not something left to chance.

2.5 million high school athletes are entering their senior year. They will compete for the opportunity to secure one of 100,000 roster spots open to incoming college freshmen. Just **1** in **25** will move on to having an opportunity to play at the college level. Becoming the “**1**” can be won on your ability to search out and find your right opportunity; to be timely, knowledgeable, involved, and engaged. Intuitively, everyone would agree that it makes good sense to take this approach on such an important matter, but in practice, few do. Too many people “hope, wish, and wait” and leave their fate in the hands of others. However, that doesn’t have to be your story. You can take ownership of your situation right here with our **5 Keys to Playing College Sports**—

1. Identify and target colleges matching your qualifications, interests and needs; the key is to be proactive and realistic. Interest from colleges and their coaches will only come to those who demonstrate qualifications for admissions and athletic potential. We call this the reality check and it’s often a most challenging aspect of the process.

It’s fairly easy to assess your academic record and match it to college standards for admission. It’s far more difficult to project your ability to play in college as your physical development and game is an evolving situation. Coaches can evaluate your game at any given moment, but they don’t know who will do the work required to excel at the next level. Therefore, it’s your job to identify colleges that are a good match to you and target their coaches for contacting.

2. Build a personal marketing plan complete with an email marketing package; the key is to have one and keep it current. An email marketing package consists of three items- a student-athlete profile sheet; a well done video; and, an introductory email.

The marketing plan is to broadcast your interest to coaches from colleges you identified. Email your profile and video to coaches along with a brief introductory email message. Follow up with a phone call, maybe two or three; send it again, call again. Continue to email and call until you reach the coach.

3. Plan campus visits, contact coaches and prepare for meetings; the key is found in being organized, prepared, and focused. The families who do this best are the ones who start early, as early as in 10th grade. That makes 11th grade your “go-to year”, the year in which you begin to build relationships with college coaches beyond receiving casual emails and camp invitations.

Reaching college coaches is a challenge. So prepare for that, accept it, and don't take it personal. Typically, when it's convenient for them, it's inconvenient for you; and when it's convenient for you, it's inconvenient for them. It's been that way for years. Most people give up easy and miss their opportunity in doing so. Rather, make it your plan to initiate, persist, and engage with college coaches.

Preparing for your visit requires you to research the college and their sports team; spending 45 minutes on the college website prior to your visit to learn everything you can about the college, the team, and the coach. Your preparation, or lack thereof, will be reflected in your meeting.

4. Visit colleges, meet coaches; the key to extending a 10 minute meeting into an hour is to ask probing and relevant questions. There are three primary objectives to achieve during a coach's meeting. One, understand the coach's situation, team, recruiting plan, and timeline. Two, begin to evaluate your opportunity to fit into their program. Three, demonstrate your ability to be a successful student and athlete at their college.

All three objectives are met by asking probing and relevant questions of the coach. You can't ask questions for which the answers are found on the college website. Rather, do your homework and construct a list of 15-20 questions to take in with you. For example, *“I see that you came in 4th place last year. What is your goal for this year's team? What is your 5-year plan?”*

5. Have a college admissions plan and strategy for acceptances; the key is to make this as much a priority as is your athletic recruiting. A college sports opportunity can come only from colleges in which you secure a college acceptance. College coaches tend to have less of an influence in admissions as they use to. Rather, it's on you to build value to the college, connect with the admissions office long before submitting an application, demonstrate interest, win acceptances and create quality college options in doing so.

In closing, consider this- ***“Your recruiting cannot begin until you have earned the trust of a college coach; and it cannot end until the coach has earned your trust.”*** - Hans Hanson

For questions or comments on the college search, recruiting, admissions, or scholarship process, send an email to hans@totalcollegeadvisory.com or visit our website at www.totalcollegeadvisory.com