



PORTLAND TIMBERS FC ACADEMY PROGRAM

College Pathway Process

Purpose: This document is meant to help navigate the college soccer recruitment process. As part of the Portland Timbers Academy vision, every player graduating from our Academy should have opportunities to continue playing soccer. The most common player pathway from the Academy is to college soccer.

There are several services to help prospective student athletes in this process, each with a varying level of effectiveness and at different price points. The most effective as well as cost effective is a motivated and educated player and parent executing on a plan.

General Information: ncsasports.org provides a lot of good FREE information. Much of the information below can be found via the links we've provided.

- Players recruiting college soccer programs is just as important as college soccer programs recruiting players!!
- There are 5 levels of college soccer, with a good explanation of each provided [in this link](#).
- 4 out of the 5 levels of college soccer are able to offer athletic scholarships. NCAA DIII is the only level not allowed to offer athletic scholarships. Details of each school's **MAXIMUM** allowed athletic scholarship can be found [in this link](#). Not every school offers the maximum level of scholarships, so this is a good question to ask during the process.
- Most schools offer academic scholarship to students that qualify. Athletic programs often have the ability to access this money for their prospective student athletes. Academic scholarships can be combined with athletic scholarships. (ex. 25% athletic scholarship can be combined with 30% academic scholarship and would cover 55% of the total cost... only the 25% athletic scholarship will be used toward total athletic scholarships available to that program)
- Most schools offer financial aid to students that qualify. Every school has different qualifications as well as abilities to grant money. Most schools use the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) to determine financial aid available. Currently, financial aid combined with athletic scholarships is state by state. Several states are either voting on or have already adjusted the ability to treat financial aid the same as academic scholarships in combination with athletic scholarships. (ex. 25% athletic scholarship combined with 30% financial aid would cover 55% of the total cost... However, depending on the state, this may count as 55% athletic scholarship used toward total athletic scholarships available to that program). Therefore, this is an important question to ask in the process.
- NCAA soccer rankings can be found [in this link](#). For the fullest set of NCAA DI rankings, make sure you have filtered for "DI" and "NCAA Men's Soccer RPI." It's much harder to find comprehensive rankings of NCAA DII and DIII from a soccer perspective, but some can also be found via filtering respectively. NAIA rankings can be found [in this link](#). Select the latest "Modified Ratings Percentage Index (MRPI)."
- There are a number of sources for Academic rankings. We've found the deepest list to be [in this link](#). Please keep in mind there are several different lists as this is much more subjective. Also keep in mind schools are able to pay their way up these lists, but for the most part you can get the information you need easily enough.

Decision Factors: Below is a list of suggestions (in no order) to consider when selecting schools to recruit. Everyone has their own preferences, so it's important to understand what those are prior to putting a list of schools together. This list is not all inclusive, but it should be a good start.

- Distance from home
- School size
- Academic prowess
- Soccer program success
- Soccer conference strength (competition)
- Immediate playing time - Don't spend too much time trying to figure this out by looking at rosters, etc... This is information you would gather through the process
- Coaching staff / team culture
- Campus life

Preparation List: Below is a list of items players need to have prepared as they are all priorities for college coaches. Having everything below prepared for college coaches leaves nothing from the player's side to hold the process back. If all items below are prepared and provided, players will be able to gather where they stand with each specific prospective school much quicker.

- **SAT (RECOMMENDED PRIOR TO COMMUNICATION)**
 - Click on the link for test information and scheduling dates.
 - As a staff, we try our best to schedule our games to work around test dates, so please confirm with staff if you see a conflict.
 - This test score is important to your application process, so we highly recommend studying for this test!
 - Score and score document should be uploaded into your Modular11 profile for college coaches to access
- **ACT (RECOMMENDED PRIOR TO COMMUNICATION)**
 - Click on the link for test information and scheduling dates.
 - As a staff, we try our best to schedule our games to work around test dates, so please confirm with staff if you see a conflict.
 - This test score is important to your application process, so we highly recommend studying for this test!
 - Score and score document should be uploaded into your Modular11 profile for college coaches to access
- **NCAA Eligibility Center (RECOMMENDED PRIOR TO COMMUNICATION)**
 - If you want to play a sport in college, you MUST register at the NCAA Eligibility Center (link above).
 - Prior to taking any official visit to DI schools, you must provide your eligibility number to the University.
- **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) (RECOMMENDED PRIOR TO COMMUNICATION)**
 - It is recommended everyone complete this process.
 - Parents will need to take the lead as it gauges how much Financial Aid is potentially available based on household income.
 - Each school has differing abilities to gain access to financial aid, but this has helped a lot of people save a lot of money!
 - This document can be uploaded to your Modular11 profile for college coaches to access. Please note, this document is **NOT** accessible by anyone other than users with .edu email addresses (college coaches).
- **Most Recent Unofficial Transcript (PRIOR TO COMMUNICATION)**
 - After every semester, each student should obtain a copy of their most recent unofficial transcript.
 - This document should be uploaded into your Modular11 profile for college coaches to access.
- **Highlight Video (PRIOR TO COMMUNICATION)**
 - This video can be as simple or elaborate as you want. However, it should be clear which player you are and the total video should be anywhere from 3-5 minutes.
 - Each player has access to vLoop and there is a tutorial video on how to create something simple.
 - Additional movie creation tools such as iMovie can be very helpful in this process.
 - This video should be uploaded into the highlight video section in your Modular11 profile for college coaches to access
- **2 Half Games (PRIOR TO COMMUNICATION)**
 - Please determine 2 half games you would want a college coach to watch.
 - You can either provide college coaches those direct game links or you can give the game details for them to access via Modular11 as they have access to all the games in your "Match Schedule."

Timeline: Below are important recruiting rules to understand as well as guidelines of what to expect when. Most important thing here for both players and parents is, **DON'T STRESS!** Set a plan and try to stay on track. Use our staff when there are questions on the timelines. Everyone is on their own timeline. Stress/pressure will show up negatively in this process.

- You can find a good compilation of recruiting rules for the different levels of college soccer [in this link](#).
 - NCAA DI - June 15th following a player's sophomore year is the first time college coaches can make direct and personal contact with a prospective player.
- August 1 prior to the prospective player's junior year, official and unofficial visits are allowed to be taken.
- At any moment, a prospective player is able to call a college coach and have a conversation. However, a college coach can not return texts or emails and can not call someone back if they missed the call.
- As a sophomore, toward the end of the Spring season, players and parents should begin collecting information for this process.
- In the Fall of a player's junior year, Timbers staff will begin helping with this process.
- In the Spring of a player's junior year, they should be communicating with college coaches. This is the heaviest period of recruiting for college coaches.
- Summer going into a player's senior year is a good opportunity to attend ID camps or summer camps.

- Fall of a player's Senior year is the most common decision time with applications being submitted typically Nov 1 - Jan 1. Again, don't stress if this is not the case. There are plenty of success stories going into a players Spring season of their senior year... Use the Academy staff!

Process: Most Portland Timbers Academy players are focused on playing soccer in college and have leverage to do so. Any decent level college soccer program will contact our staff prior to making a decision or even recruiting a player. Therefore, the below process sets out an effective plan allowing our staff and our players to work as a team in this process.

1. Decision Factors - have a general idea of decision factors above.
2. Preparation List - have all controllable items on the preparation list available.
3. Create a List of Schools/Programs - Use the links above to do your research and create your list (15 schools). Be as realistic as possible from athletic and academic perspective.
4. Communicate List of Schools/Programs to Academy Director and Head Coach - Academy staff will help confirm this list is in line athletically.
5. Initial Communication - Once Academy staff has confirmed list, begin communication (email template provided below).
6. Academy Director will follow up with college coaches, removing player and parent from communication in order to provide more unbiased information. Academy Director will make sure college coaches have all access they need to player information.
7. Academy Director, Head Coach, Player, and Parents keep in contact regarding follow up communications!

Communication Process: Please see below a suggested template to send to coaches.

To: All coaches you can get emails for

CC: Rmiller@timbers.com, (Your Head Coach's Email)

BCC: Your Parents

Subject: Portland Timbers Academy - Your Name - Graduation Year - Position

Coach (Enter Last Names of All Coaches Being Addressed)

1st paragraph - something about the specific soccer program in order to establish this is a unique email and display you've done some research. (Ex. *Congratulations on beating Harvard in your final game this season! I'm sure the team was satisfied finishing the season on a strong note.*)

2nd paragraph - your basic information. (Ex. *My name is Ryan Miller and I'm from Barrington, Illinois where I am part of the 2003 graduating class at Barrington High School. I'm currently playing with the Portland Timbers Academy U16/17 team in the Development Academy.*)

3rd paragraph - summary of your academic performance thus far. In this paragraph, you should include your overall GPA and any tests you've taken as well as those scores. You could also include a potential academic interest you have consistent to their school furthering your research prior. (Ex. *I have maintained a 3.8 GPA thus far. My ACT score is a 25 and my SAT score is a 1250. I plan to take both tests again to further improve my score. I'm very interested in your top 10 nationally ranked business school.*)

4th paragraph - summary of you as a soccer player with any quick highlights you'd like to mention. The most important part is highlighting yourself while remaining honest. If you don't get as much playing time as you would like, say that and be respectfully honest. Any coach that gets a sense of being misled will immediately drop interests in the player. All coaches will formulate their own opinions through watching players via video and ideally, live. Additionally, they will acquire more information from our staff. (Ex. *I've spent most of my time playing on the Right Wing. However, my coaches have said they love my versatility as I've also spent time playing as a Right Back, Attacking Midfielder, and Striker. I've started 14 out of our 16 games this season and scored 7 goals with 4 assists. My best experience has been playing at the Generation adidas Cup as I love playing against top competition.*)

5th paragraph - If you have any questions, feel free to call me at (player's phone number & provide best contact window). I have CC'd my current coach (current coaches name) and our Academy Director (Ryan Miller) for more in-depth feedback.

(Include highlight video here for convenience)

I look forward to speaking with you!

Go (School Mascot)

(Your Name)

What to Expect / Gauging Interest: Below you will find a few guides in regards to expectations moving forward.

- If a school is interested in recruiting you, it will be very clear. You will exchange emails, texts, and phone calls with their staff. After several communications between player and coach, it is appropriate for a parent to request to be part of the conversation. Parents should focus on the financial aspects of this process.
- No response - If you get no response from a college program after 5 days, check in with Academy Director and Head Coach to see if they got responses. If still no response, send a short follow up email on the original chain. You are also free to try calling the phone numbers listed for the coach.
- Questionnaire - Often coaches will direct you to or send you a general recruiting questionnaire to fill out which will ask for a lot of the information discussed above. Complete this and always make sure you understand what the next contact will be.
- Respond to texts, emails, phone calls immediately! This might sound obvious, but trust us, we hear really poor feedback regarding players in our program not doing this!
- An offer by a school to host players on an "Official Visit" is a really good indication of interest.
- Athletic scholarships are hard to earn with full athletic scholarships being extremely rare. If a player receives greater than a 50% athletic scholarship over 4 years, this is a good sign of commitment by the college soccer program to that player. Financial conversations are typically after several conversations with college staff to gauge mutual interest.
- Only go to camp (ID camp or summer camp) if you are really interested in the school and have a general idea the school is also interested at some capacity. This is an opportunity to impress, but again, make sure there is interest!

Summary: Players need to recruit colleges as heavily as college coaches recruit players. Taking control of this process is in every player's best interest. College soccer has been around for a long time and so have those coaches. They've seen a lot of players come and go and have different levels of success. For a player who is solely driven to be a professional, this process is a very good litmus test as you should be receiving multiple full-scholarship offers.

Again, our staff are extremely dedicated to making sure the Portland Timbers Academy is not the final destination for **ALL** of our players. Use us in every way possible to make sure you are able to achieve your personal and professional goals!

Please reach out to me directly with any questions or comments regarding this process!

Thank You,

Ryan Miller



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