



## Student-Athletes: The 740 Club

By Mike Kostoff, M.A., Ed., Total Student, Inc., Livonia, MI

**“M**om and Dad. I got a recruiting letter from

Anytown University today,” contains a phrase that is spoken thousands of times every year by senior high school athletes across America. The athlete is flattered and the parents are hopeful. For the athlete it is exciting to know someone at the “next level” has noticed his or her skill. The parents have visions of financial relief of tuition. The initial excitement of recruitment gives way to questions of, “What next?” Before the recruit asks that question, he or she needs to look to the past. The recruit’s athletic skill may have gotten he or she noticed, but recruitment is just as much about what has taken place in the athlete’s academic past. Once the recruiters gain enough information about grades, attendance, and character...

Every year finds countless numbers of high school senior athletes wishing to continue their athleticism. They are student-athletes who don’t understand that becoming a college recruit is a four-year process approximately 740 days.

Most remember hearing about a “Clearinghouse thing” and hearing their coaches and counselors talking about grades, but that’s as far as it went.

We are all aware of the shortsightedness and invincible attitude of many adolescents – the student-athletes who are part of the “restart generation.” Like their peers, they have grown up in the video-game era in which they can create and control all aspects of the game. If the game is not going as they wish, they will simply hit the reset button and start over again.

This “restart” attitude has carried

over into every aspect of student life and for a large number of the athletes; it’s an attitude that can hurt their future.

I believe it is critical to educate the student-athletes and their parents in the beginning of the freshman year. They have to understand that becoming a college recruit is a four-year process and every 740 days of school will count.

The high school transcript is the one piece of paper that will tabulate every one of these days – a student-athletes’ resume toward college athletics. It can determine whether the athlete will become a college recruit.

The first question asked by every recruiter is, “What is the player’s GPA and class rank?” The higher the GPA and class rank, the greater the number of athletic opportunities that will be made available to him or her. The



lower the GPA and class rank, the fewer the opportunities.

The dream of college athletics should go along with the NCAA Division I academic standards for all young student-athletes. College recruiting is not just for the DI, blue-chip athlete. These athletes are the elite and the minority of college recruiting.

Academic progress starts the first day of every athlete's freshman year. A player's abilities for the different levels of college will not be determined until their junior and senior years. Most DIII athletes won't be able to afford the tuition unless they have the opportunity to earn academic scholarships to help defray the cost of private education. (Remember, most DIII schools are private and all are non-athletic scholarship.)

The NCAA academic standards can be a motivational tool for all young athletes. They can instill the athletes with the importance of their GPA, explain how the sliding scale works, emphasize how poor school attendance may have a negative impact on any possible recruitment, etc.

I believe it's critical to start with freshmen and even 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Waiting until their junior year may be too late for most. Our job as educators is to ensure the student-athlete of understanding how to qualify for college recruitment every step of the way.

I believe the implementation of this approach can be a powerful motivational tool for high school student-athletes. High school is the time and place for our students to dream and dream big. For student-athletes, the dream of college athletics can be the force that pushes 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> grades to academic success.

College recruiters would hear less about the problems that the athletes had in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and these athletes wouldn't have to learn there isn't a "reset" button for high school transcripts.

In the end, this approach will simply produce senior student-athletes with a

"resume" to become college students.

Another benefit of this approach is to protect the coaches. Across the country there are hard working, honest coaches getting wrongfully criticized because the child of a politically powerful parent didn't get a scholarship offer. We all know coaches don't get athletes scholarships, athletes do.

The following are excerpts from my recruiting guide and workbook, *Win All Four - A Four Year Guide for High School Students Aiming for College*.

## THE RECRUITING PROCESS

The purpose of this workbook is to assist high school athletes with the recruiting process and to achieve one's dream of becoming a college athlete.

Recruiting is a complicated, drawn-out process. At times, it is also very confusing. Many misconceptions have a negative impact on many recruits.

Countless high school seniors with athletic ability good enough to earn athletic scholarships are discouraged by the complexities of college recruiting.

I worked for a college head coach who made this statement every year to his recruits, *"The decision of college and those next four years is preparing you for your next 40 years of your life (R. Dan Simrell, HC Toledo, U of Findlay, Asst. Coach WVU)"*

This statement sums up the importance of a college education. Individuals who are considered college student-athletes experience more professional opportunities upon graduation than most regular students. Most college athletes have acquired a unique work ethics and time management skill that companies around the world are seeking in their employees.

**This workbook looks at the importance of all four grades in your high school career.**

### Freshman year - "Your Resume Begins":

- You begin to build your resume for a college scholarship.
- You need to start off strong academically.

demically.

- It's easier to maintain high academic success than to try to work your way up.

### Sophomore year - "Formulate Your Game Plan":

- You begin to formulate a game plan for getting recruited as a student-athlete.
- Some elite athletes have already started getting recruited because of their athletic skills and accomplishments. Keep your focus in the classroom.
- Summer preparation before your junior year is critical.

### Junior year - "Time to Work":

- You put your plan into action.
- Your name should appear on recruiting lists and schools might start contacting you.
- Varsity performance will increase or decrease your opportunities.

### Senior year - "Win the 4th, Win the Game":

- Should be successful and productive in competition.
- Your academics need to be in-line.
- Complete all the recruiting tasks to put yourself in the best possible position to be recruited.
- Your dreams of becoming a college student athlete could be achieved.

## ROLES OF THE INDIVIDUALS

The next issue that has to be covered is the state of people involved in the recruitment of a student-athlete and his eligibility for any kind of scholarship.

Each of these individuals will have a specific role and responsibility during the recruiting process: the student-athlete, his parent or guardian, his head coach, his high school counselor, and his college recruiters.

## THE PROSPECTIVE STUDENT-ATHLETE

The most important person is you



(the student-athlete) plus your parents or guardians. You have to be committed to the work required to achieve your goals. A small number of athletes will have an easier road to travel. They will be the elite "blue chip" recruits, the ones getting all the media attention. They will also be the exception, not the rule.

For the majority of college prospects, the recruiting process will involve time-consuming hard work – some times a very frustrating commitment.

*The question that every prospective college athlete has to ask himself before beginning, "Is the commitment worth the possible reward?"*

## Rules of Recruiting for the Student-athlete:

- **Be Honest** – Be honest to everyone in the recruiting process. Remember the truth will come out.
- **Promote Yourself** – It is important to get your name out to the schools you have an interest.
- **Summer Camps** – First, you have to be in the best physical shape possible and have practiced the drills that the college coaches will test you on. Second, have the proper attitude at a summer camp. Be ready to hustle, display great work ethic, and be coachable to every coach at the camp.
- **Regional and National Exposure** – Some of the amateur events may be more important than camps.
- **Neatness** – Another point to keep in mind is that neatness and grammar counts when sending out letters to coaches.
- **Make a positive impression** – Be prepared when you talk with a recruiter face to face. Recruiters are analyzing everything about you when they meet you for the first time. Your non-verbal communication may be more powerful than the small talk. You need to sell yourself as a confident individual, with positive qualities.

Most schools have classes that cover the techniques to make a good impression in a job interviewing. It's important for you to use the techniques when you're speaking to a recruiter not only face to face but also on the phone.

Lastly, consider the greeting you chose for your cell and house phones. Vulgar, inappropriate, or a tasteless greeting will give a bad impression to a recruiter attempting to leave a message for you.

## THE COACH

One of the biggest misconceptions in the recruiting process is thinking a particular coach can get scholarship offers for his players. I've heard athletes say time and time again, "My coach is going to get me a scholarship." Coaches don't get players scholarships. The student-athlete earns his or her scholarship.

Certain coaches have more contact with college coaches, have more athletes who've earned scholarships in the past, and may do a better job of promoting their players.

The athletes themselves earned their scholarships by their abilities, talents, and academic success.

A college coach will not offer an athlete a scholarship if they don't feel the athlete can help win games and be successful in the classroom.

The coach-player relationship is a two-way street. The player's responsibility is to commit to the coach, to his philosophy and to the program. There are very few, if any at all, coaches who will recommend a player to a college coach if the player has not displayed a certain level of commitment to the team.

Every student-athlete needs to be accountable to his coach and for his actions. A student-athlete should not put a coach in an awkward position and expect his coach to lie to a recruiter about the player's character.

The college coaches' jobs security is based on recruiting the "right" student-athletes, who will depend on the honest

evaluations of the high school coach.

The high school coaches will have new seniors every year and a dishonest evaluation on a particular senior one year may hurt any future recruiting for his seniors in years to come.

## THE GUIDANCE COUNSELOR

Your counselor, academic advisor or whoever in your school is responsible to assist you with college is the most important relationship you need. (Throughout this booklet, we will refer to this person as your counselor.) This individual will be a key person in determining if you will be admitted and eligible to become a college student-athlete (after your performance in the classroom).

## THE COLLEGE RECRUITER

Recruiting quality student-athletes is the most important job of a college coach. He has to recruit athletes who will have success in games and help the program win. The coach has to recruit students who will attend class and be successful in academics. And lastly, he has to recruit individuals who will not act in negative ways and embarrass the program and the school.

Most recruiters are honest and also competitive. They want their recruits to pick their school. Their job is to bring the best possible recruit to their school and to always have someone else if they lose that recruit.

There are a number of resources available. I believe *Win All Four* will benefit all high school student-athletes, parents, coaches and counselors. This book can be carried and used throughout a student-athlete's 740 days of high school.

It's a simple read with 25 pages as an overview of the recruiting process and 24 pages with checklists, guidelines, and worksheets the student-athlete can use through their four years in high school.

Please visit my Web site ([www.totalstudentathlete.com](http://www.totalstudentathlete.com)) and email me any questions or comments. ■

Copyright of Coach & Athletic Director is the property of Scholastic Inc. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.