

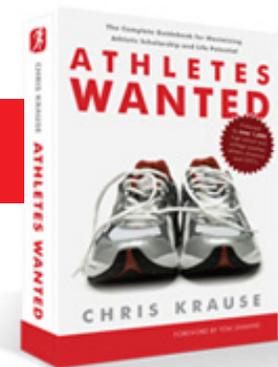
8 Rules To Help Your Child Get An Athletic Scholarship

Excerpted
From
Athletes
Wanted



The Complete Game Plan for Maximizing Athletic Scholarship and Life Potential

By CHRIS KRAUSE





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The Complete Game Plan for Maximizing
Athletic Scholarship and Life Potential

Parents Role

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FOR PARENTS, the recruiting process can be one of the greatest challenges—a test of patience, endurance, and discipline all wrapped into one exhilarating yet anxiety-plagued package. In some ways, parents have been preparing for this time since first enrolling their child in AYSO soccer, Little League baseball, or Pop Warner football. They have invested time, money, and sweat for a decade. It can feel as if Mom and Dad have almost as much at stake as the athlete does.

A parent's primary challenge is to walk the fine line between guiding the athlete through the process and becoming overbearing. Parents might be tempted to take full control, especially when they see how overwhelming the experience can be. A parent's goal is to find the middle ground between a "hands off" parent and one who micromanages every move the student makes. These parents offer a certain threat to their children. By taking complete control of the process, these parents jeopardize their children's ability to learn and grow from the experience. As well, they can annoy the living daylights out of college coaches. Bob Chmiel, NCSA Education Speaker and former football coach at Notre Dame, said he stayed a mile away from children of "we dads."

"You always know who the 'we dads' are because they start every sentence with the word we. 'We are applying to Georgetown. We had a great season.'"



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Chmiel goes on to explain that college coaches do not want to be distracted by overbearing, meddlesome parents, so a parent who seems too controlling might actually hurt an otherwise-qualified student's ability to be recruited.

Perhaps Chris Ducar, North Carolina's assistant women's soccer coach put it best. Ducar once told me that in his twelve years as a coach, he has never once recruited a mom or dad to play for him.

COACH'S TIP

"It isn't unusual to drop a prospect from the recruiting board because the parents are a problem," said Randy Taylor, former recruiting coordinator for UCLA .

Some parents, on the other hand, take a completely hands-off approach, even though the athlete is still a teenager and can lose focus. A gentle guiding hand is the perfect touch, though not always easy for a parent to produce.

THE PARENTS ' GOLDEN RULES

Rule #1: Don't be a helicopter mom or we dad.

This rule applies regardless of how old a child is, and whether dealing with a child, athletic director, high school coach, college coach, or Pee Wee football coach. A helicopter parent hovers over the child, not allowing her to grow or act for herself. A we parent lives vicariously through the child's accomplishments.

Remember, in the parent/student-athlete relationship, the [student-athlete must become the team captain!](#)

The greater load the student-athlete takes and is able to handle, the better. This particularly applies to communicating with the coach.



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When a parent might be well spoken and articulate, a student-athlete might mutter, stumble over sentences, and shake at the thought of approaching a coach. The parent's first inclination might be to jump in and rescue a child from her fledgling attempts at communication. But consider the college coach's perspective. Who would the coach rather hear from: the parent, or the student-athlete who will play for the program for the next four or five years?

Coaches are impressed by students who initiate conversations. As difficult as it might be for students to muster the courage to call coaches, student-athletes' abilities to represent themselves is critical to the recruiting process.

And the earlier parents can loosen the reins, the better. By allowing children to communicate directly with elementary, junior high, and high school coaches, parents will allow their children to grow confident, which means the athletes will make great first impressions when they pick up the phone to call their first college coach.

"A parent actually detracts from a high school student's ability to learn a valuable skill set if she marches into the coach's office every time there is a conflict or every time she thinks her son is not getting enough playing time," said Joyce Wellhoefer, who has coached for high school and college basketball, softball, and volleyball programs.

A high school athlete will have only one chance to make a first impression on a college coach. Confidence will be critical to this interaction, so early opportunities to communicate with adults is critical to an athlete's success down the road.

From a recruitment perspective, Carmen Bucci, a former San Diego Padre, agreed. If a college coach receives phone call after phone call from a parent, the coach might start to think that the parent is a nuisance, which could cost the child his athletic scholarship. Does this mean the best approach for parents is to send their child into an unfamiliar, sometimes-scary world completely alone? Of course not!



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Don Beebe, a former member of six Super Bowl teams, now runs a program called House of Speed in which he teaches athletes to build character through sports. The most important role he sees for parents is to create an environment that fosters positive growth.

Beebe had the following advice for parents: “The biggest thing is to stop putting pressure on kids. If playing sports is her passion, back her and support her. If a child puts her heart and soul into a game and still loses, a parent should pat her on the back with as much enthusiasm as if she had beat a world record.”

COACH'S TIP

The mark of a good parent is an athlete who succeeds even without parents looking over his shoulders, said Chmiel.

RULE #2: TEACH HUMILITY.

On the flip side, young athletes—especially those who are talented—can receive too much support, develop attitude problems, and become less motivated in important activities outside of their sport.

Quality parenting can make the difference between a child who thinks he is king of the world and a humble, gracious child who works hard and excels as an athlete and a student, said Michel Balasis, the former kicker for Michigan State University and head of Loyola University's department of visual communications.

“Student-athletes are a mixed bag. Because they are great athletes, the pampered ones think they can skate by,” said Balasis, noting they are easy to spot for their lack of work ethic.

But Balasis takes notice of the students whose parents expect more of them. These students are also easy to spot because of their rigorous work ethic and ability to go the extra mile.



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Parents are primarily responsible for their children's attitude. Children who strut into class thinking they will sail by because they are student-athletes will learn a lesson later in life. Parents who teach their children early to work hard will save their children from years of suffering while in college and later during their careers.

“Teach your kids that they need to earn what they have,” agreed Beebe, who knows a thing or two about hard work. “When they cross the line in sports or academia, step in and tell them they have to change.”

To compete successfully in sports, a student must maintain an academic standard. Parents should insist on it now, and their child will be better prepared for the demands of college. If parents overlook it now, their student-athlete might not make it past freshman year in college. Like a good coach, a good parent will discipline their children who have stepped over the line.

What the student does off the field is just as important as what takes place on the field. As the recruiting process begins, maintaining good grades becomes more and more important. Performance in the classroom tells a coach plenty about an athlete's likelihood of reaching their potential on the playing field. Coaches know that good students tend to make the most of their abilities and stay out of trouble.

Michael Stonebreaker, two-time All American from Notre Dame, reports that his father made him go to summer school because he received a C on his report card. Stonebreaker was not happy with the requirement, but it was the only C he would ever receive. Later, his high GPA helped him earn a full scholarship to Notre Dame, so while he had to devote his summer to academics, he learned a valuable lesson.

We suggest the three-part ACE formula for teaching students to be accountable.



Parents Role

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Academics: Remember that a college coach will not recruit a student-athlete who cannot compete in the classroom. Academic performance tells a coach a lot about a child's ability to manage time, set goals, and prioritize.

Charakter: Character is a big part of a sport. No coach wants to work with a sore loser or an ungracious winner. Remember that you can tell a lot about a child's character by the company he keeps. Parents need to make sure that their children know how to make good decisions and are accountable for the actions they take.

COACH'S TIP

College coaches want character, not characters, said Coach Chmiel.

Effort: Effort and work ethic are a big part of children's ability to be successful student-athletes. During summers and weekends, my parents had a rule: I either worked or I did housework. If I worked, I made money, so I chose the former. Having a paper route and working as a caddy at the local golf course taught me the value of hard work early, and when I left for college, I stood out from the crowd because I was accustomed to working hard to achieve my goals.

Win or lose, a coach wants to know that student-athletes did their best not only athletically, but also academically. So long as a student makes his best effort with every play and in every classroom on every homework assignment and in every practice, a coach will see that the athlete is a class act.



Parents Role

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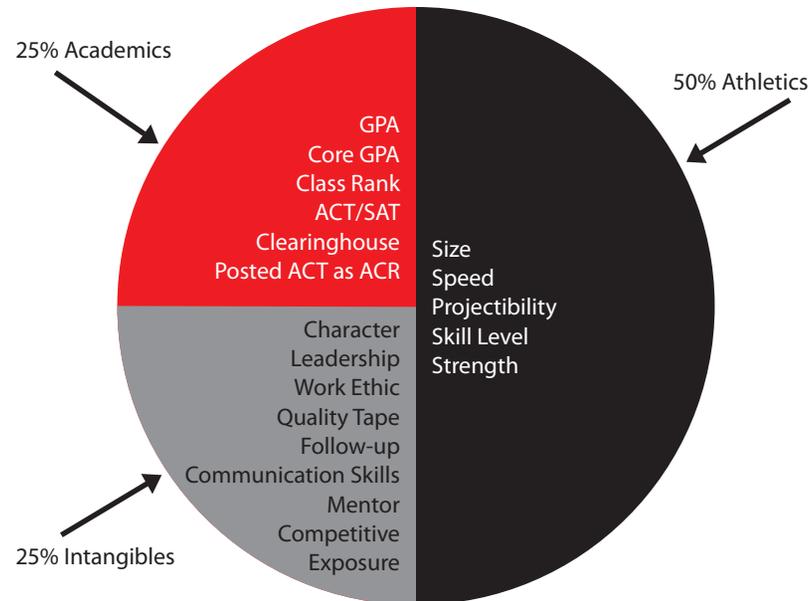
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THE WELL-ROUNDED STUDENT-ATHLETE IS SUPERIOR AT ACADEMICS, ATHLETICS, AND INTANGIBLES



When considering whether to recruit a student-athlete, coaches weigh intangibles, as well as the student’s athletic and academic ability.

RULE #3: Parents should be their child’s assistant and mentor, not just the cheerleader.

A parent’s primary role is to be the child’s assistant and mentor. While a cheerleader simply offers encouragement and approval, the parent’s job is to help the child.

I specifically remember asking my dad every week how I did in Pee-Wee football. Finally, my dad turned to me and said, “Son, you will know you played well when you do not have to ask me how you did.”



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PREPARE THE STUDENT-ATHLETE BY ROLE PLAYING

If a child is calling a coach, he will likely be nervous and stumble over his words. Parents can help by role-playing with their children, having them practice leaving voice mails and talking with coaches. For parents, who are confident and accustomed to making business transactions via phone, this might seem like a simple—or even silly—thing to do. Parents need to remember that most student-athletes have little experience initiating relationships with authority figures over the phone. Every impression counts, and parents want children to sound confident and capable.

Parents should start by having the child leave a practice voicemail, pretending as though the athlete is leaving a message for the coach. Parents should listen to the message with the athlete, and help the child eliminate “ums” from the message. As well, they should help their child sound enthusiastic. Often, a child who is timid leaving a message sounds bored, and a coach might misread this as lack of interest. A parent can help a student prepare for calls with a coach by asking questions the coach might ask the student-athlete. Some sample questions include:

- How was your season?
- What other colleges are you looking at?
- What do you consider to be your strengths and weaknesses?
- What other colleges have called you?
- What other colleges have made offers?

Some coaches will ask questions specifically to get a handle on how highly recruited an athlete is. Parents need to prepare their child to be strategic by reading Chapter 5.

A student-athlete can start by practicing with schools he is less interested in so that he can learn from his mistakes. Far better for a child to fumble with a low-ranked school than his top choice, and this builds a student’s confidence while



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teaching him how to communicate with coaches so that he is prepared when it really matters.

Remember: Coaches like student-athletes who take initiative and are proactive in the recruiting process. A student-athlete who takes charge off the field will do the same thing on the field!

Helping children with these rudimentary matters while letting them find their way will ensure that student-athletes will savor the process (and may even guarantee that Mom and Dad will get a call every Sunday once their children are out of the nest for the first time!).

The recruiting process can test a child's psyche. Rejection can deeply affect a teenager, and rejection will be part of this process. This is where parents can provide that loving, guiding hand. They should remind their children that they are immensely proud of their accomplishments and that the rejection does not diminish their efforts or alter their worth in any way.

Rejection is part of the educational experience, and it will happen again at some point. Parents should try sharing some of their experiences with rejection. Michael Jordan hit the nail on the head when he said, "I have missed more than nine thousand shots in my career. I have lost almost three hundred games. On twenty-six occasions I have been entrusted to take the game winning shot—and I missed. I have failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is precisely why I succeed."

(Incidentally, Jordan was cut from his high school basketball team.)

Everyone fails. It is not how many times athletes get knocked down, but how many times student-athletes get back up. A parent's role is to help a child deal with rejection and prepare the athlete for a future in the real world. Parents need to remind their child that the person who never quits can never be a loser.



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COACH'S TIP

"There comes a point in time when a young person has to stand on her own two feet," said Chmiel. "She has to shake hands and socially interact and look people in the eye."

RULE #4: Parents need to create a specific plan and follow it.

This process can be daunting, but the early bird gets the worm. Those who act quickly and prudently have the most choices. Those who wait too long can miss opportunities. Parents should set an example for their child by emphasizing the importance of creating a plan to follow. Use the Recruiting Checklist and set SMART goals: Goals should be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, and Recorded over Time. This will be the roadmap and blueprint for success.

A parent's job is to help the child create and stick to a timeline. Parents should:

- Create a plan to incorporate each element from the Recruiting Checklist into a timeline. Complete the [Recruiting Action Plan](http://www.athleteswanted.org) questionnaire at www.athleteswanted.org for sport-specific steps that will increase a child's likelihood of being recruited. Parents should remember that the overall plan consists of three components:
 1. The academic plan that tracks grade-point average, core courses, tests, and progress.
 2. The athletic plan for goal-setting (specific physical accomplishments to reach recruiting benchmarks) and tracking physical aspects of the child's progress as an athlete, such as height, weight, speed, and strength.



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3. [The recruiting plan to create the child's résumé](#), make a highlight or skills video, and build relationships with college coaches.
- Research websites and track progress using the Initial Target List and Correspondence Log, both of which can be downloaded at www.athleteswanted.org. Both parents and athlete should be familiar with the NCAA Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete and the admissions processes for the athlete's top schools. Again, a parent needs to empower the athlete to take control, make decisions, and initiate research, but as the more mature, experienced person, a parent should make sure the child is meeting deadlines and staying abreast of the recruiting process.
 - Narrow the list of potential colleges, reminding the athlete that the first goal is to get an education.
 - Make sure the athlete is communicating with coaches. Parents need to remember to use a Correspondence Log to track communication with college coaches.
 - Carve time in the athlete's schedule to take unofficial and game day visits with local colleges and colleges of interest.
 - Find an [objective and credible third-party](#) to provide an evaluation of the athlete's abilities.
 - Map out the child's core courses and track GPA.
 - Examine the Media Guide of Potential College Programs to realistically examine potential opportunities and set goals. The Media Guide usually appears on a school's athletic website and contains biographies of all the school's current players. The player's biographies reflect clues as to what accomplishments and statistics are necessary to be recruited



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by a particular program. Parents and athletes should pay attention to an athlete's size, strength, athletic, and academic honors.

- Help build a skills, game, or highlight video (see Chapter 8 and www.athleteswanted.org).
- Make sure that the athlete has a positive relationship with high school coaches. Though a high school coach cannot secure a scholarship for an athlete, a high school coach can make an offer disappear. Before making an offer, a college coach will always call the athlete's high school coach.
- When the time comes, make sure the child completes and submits college applications.

RULE #5: Parents should be realistic and get an honest evaluation of an athlete from a high school coach, club coach, or scouting organization.

Most student-athletes are dreamers. Though it is important to shoot high, it is equally important to have at least some grasp on reality. If an athlete is only five feet tall and plans to win a full-ride scholarship to play center guard for women's basketball, her parents might want to direct her toward some objective standards so she can set more realistic goals.

Likewise, parents should also be realistic about their child. Most parents are partial to their children and might not be the best judges of a student-athlete's ability. Parents should try to find objective statistics about their child. See www.athleteswanted.org for [general statistics about student-athletes at Division I, II, and III levels](#) for each sport so parents can see how their child stacks up.

The most successful student-athletes are the ones who aim low but shoot high.



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In other words, parents should not pressure their children to get into a Division I school, but allow and encourage them to apply to these schools, as long as they are also applying to schools where they realistically stand a chance of admittance. (Remember that the best schools do not always have great athletic teams, and that we recommend starting from the Division III level.) Parents should do their homework and have a good understanding of the [NCSA Collegiate Power Rankings](http://www.athleteswanted.org), available at www.athleteswanted.org, which compares academic records, athletic records, and graduation rates.

Parents need to be realistic about the financial side of their child's experience as well. Though many, many opportunities await, the majority of athletes will need to supplement their educational costs even if they receive athletic or need-based academic grants-in-aid. Parents should establish these parameters early and start doing research. Sometimes, the more expensive schools will offer the most in scholarship money, so a \$40,000 school might cost only \$10,000, while a \$20,000 school might cost \$15,000. Never evaluate a collegiate opportunity based only on a college sticker price.

RULE #6: Parents should know their Expected Family Contribution.

Critical to the financial side of a child's college opportunities is the [Expected Family Contribution](#) (EFC). The EFC determines how much the family can contribute, and understanding how this number is derived allows parents to make adjustments or allocate assets in such a way that best leverages their financial situation. Not knowing an EFC is like not knowing a credit score, or not knowing how much a person can afford for a down payment before buying a home. The EFC will allow a family to objectively compare collegiate opportunities. Remember that it can change year to year, and it is based on how many full-time dependents a family has in college.



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(See Chapter 9 for more information on the financial side of collegiate opportunities.)

Once parents have determined how much they can contribute, they should clearly communicate that the athlete must find a way to cover the gap through work-study programs, jobs, other grants, and student loans. Remember that being a college athlete is essentially a full-time job, and that maintaining another job, even if part-time, can be overly taxing and harm performance on the playing field and in the classroom.

RULE #7: The greater the distance, the greater the opportunities.

The process of discovering the right college for a child usually begins in earnest during his or her sophomore or junior year of high school. At this point, parents are basically staring at a blank slate, even if their child has picked out a so-called dream school of choice. Parents should avoid fixating on that one school.

“I have talked to a lot of parents who are blinded by ESPN and the Name Game,” said Lisa Strasman. “They do not always take the time to investigate what different schools have to offer, and they end up finding out that the original image of a college was all wrong and not at all what they wanted.”

Another big mistake, said Andrea Emmons, is to consider only colleges close to home. Wanting to keep children close to the nest is a natural instinct, but it eliminates many options. Children are better positioned for success if they can evaluate all options without restrictions on geography. This means that parents might not be able to see all of their child’s games in person, a small sacrifice to pay for their child’s long-term success.

The greater the distances the child will travel, the greater the opportunity for recruitment.



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A student with an average ability who is willing to travel will have more opportunities than the student-athlete who has very good athletic ability, but who wants to play close to home.

Parents and their children should go into this process with open minds, without any preconceived notions about a college or region of the country. The search should be from coast to coast, border to border, refusing to eliminate a part of the country based on a stereotype that might be an unfair broad brush. I once received a call from a coaching staff member from Coastal Carolina University, who reported that the women's tennis team had two full scholarship opportunities. The coach went on to explain that the team was housed in an ocean-front condominium. This sounds like a fantastic opportunity to me, but how many parents and studentathletes would overlook Coastal Carolina University simply because they had never heard of the school?

This can be an exciting yet unnerving time for many reasons. Ultimately, all of a parent's efforts in the process will end with the child elsewhere, in a new home, out of the nest for the first time. The athlete is about to become an adult, entering an unfamiliar world where Mom and Dad will not be an immediate safety net, even if the college of choice is close to home. Regardless of whether a child is a two-hour drive or a five-hour flight away, parents will worry. It will be an emotional time. They can count on it.

RULE #8: Parents should not risk their child's collegiate future by relying solely on the coach.

A parent's job is to assist the child in this process. The child's high school coach is not responsible for getting the athlete a scholarship, [nor is the coach responsible](#) for helping the student-athlete figure out how to pay for school.



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“A child’s high school coach will do everything he can to help a child become recruited, but it will not be enough,” said Jack Renkens, the former coach of Massachusetts’s Division II Assumption College. The entire senior class hopes to be recruited, as do juniors, sophomores, and freshmen getting an early start. The coach has a job, a family, and countless other obligations. And he will not get paid for helping a child win a scholarship or turn the head of a college coach.

>>>> **FAST FACT** <<<<

The average high school coach has personal contacts with an average of fewer than five college coaches, 90 percent of whom are local.

In addition, the typical high school coach has few strings to pull. Most college coaches do not know high school coaches, and vice versa. With almost two thousand colleges to consider, parents are unrealistic to think a student’s high school coach has enough time to build relationships with college coaches. Likewise, how could a college coach possibly build relationships with the twenty-three thousand high schools in the nation?

If a family is lucky, the student-athlete’s high school coach is a veteran with a handful of local contacts in the college sports world. But even in this ideal situation, the high school coach’s help will not extend beyond a phone call or email.



Parents Role

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KEY POINTS

1. When communicating with coaches, a parent should not be a “helicopter mom” or “we dad.” Parents should loosen the reins and let the child take the lead. College coaches are not interested in dealing with their players’ parents, so an overly involved parent might hurt a child’s chance of being recruited.
2. The earlier the parent can loosen the reins, the better. By allowing a child to communicate directly with elementary, junior high, and high school coaches, parents will allow the child to grow confident in his communication skills, which means he will make a great first impression when he picks up the phone to call his first college coach.
3. Parents need to teach their children humility. To successfully compete in sports, a child must be willing to work harder than other students. If an athlete hopes to skate by on natural athletic ability alone, coaches will not be interested in recruiting him. In addition to athletic ability, a student-athlete will be judged on academia, character, and ethic.
4. Parents should be their child’s assistant and mentor, not just a cheerleader. The parent’s job is to prepare the child and assist with the recruitment process. The athlete should turn to the parent for help, but not for approval. Children who learn to stand on their own two feet will make better decisions and be more confident, capable people.



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KEY POINTS

- 5.** Parents can create SMART plans for athletic, academic, and recruiting goals. These plans should incorporate the Recruiting Checklist from pages 59 through 102. As well, parents should make plans to:
 - Complete the [Recruiting Action Plan](#) questionnaire at www.athleteswanted.org.
 - Research college websites, as well as the NCAA Guide for the [College-Bound Student-Athlete](#).
 - Help an athlete narrow the list of potential colleges.
 - Make sure the child is communicating with coaches.
 - Schedule time for official and unofficial visits.
 - Stay on top of application deadlines.
 - Find an [objective third-party](#) to evaluate the student-athlete.
 - Map out the child's core courses and GPA.
 - Examine the Media Guide of Potential College Programs.
 - [Help build a highlight or skills video](#).
 - Encourage the child to build a strong relationship with the high school coach.

- 6.** Parents should be realistic, and get an honest evaluation of the child from a high school coach, club coach, or scouting organization.



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KEY POINTS

7. Remember that the greater the distance, the greater the opportunities. Parents should make sure the Name Game does not blind the child and encourage the athlete to search high and low, in every nook and cranny, for the right college fit.

8. Parents need to be aware that the [high school coach is not responsible](#) for getting the child a scholarship. Most high school coaches are also teachers who have families and other obligations. They have anywhere from fifteen to eighty other athletes for whom they are responsible. Their time is limited and precious.



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