

Tournaments, Camps and Showcases: An Important Recruiting Tool for the Prospective Student-Athlete

By Tom Kovic

A critical component of an effective college athletics recruiting strategy is found in developing strong awareness for the prospective student-athlete. This can be accomplished through direct communication, the provision of a personal profile and skills DVD and the development of a personal website to name a few. Another effective way to get on the “radar screen” of the college coach is through participation in sport-specific camps, showcases and tournaments.

While providing coaches with general information (profiles, videos) can assist them with an initial evaluation of the prospect, participating in tournaments and camps will give the college coach a first hand look at the prospect and offer a more genuine evaluation. There are several events during the year and throughout the country that offer athletes the opportunity to “strut their stuff” against competition they would normally not see, and choosing the most “strategic” venues is important, especially if the athlete is trying to get some “good looks” from the college coaches.

One of the many recruiting areas that college coaches focus on is the evaluation of raw talent of prospects that are listed in their active file. Initially, they will begin with hard data that will include both academic and athletic credentials and build their information base further with onsite evaluations. Therefore, a prospect might choose a popular tournament that can result in a weekend of success and enjoyment, but if the further intent to participate in the event is to develop “visibility” and the college coaches are not in attendance, it may not have been worth the effort.

Determining the events to participate

This is a very important area that requires research, along with a team approach with your club and or high school coach. Firstly, you want to determine which events are most popular and attract a higher volume of athletes from a diverse geographic region. Secondly, you want to get an historical perspective of the event and determine past attendance by college coaches and more specifically who attended?

College coaches will make every effort to attend off campus tournaments, but they cannot attend them all! Obviously, if coach is recruiting 50 prospects and has the opportunity to view 15 PSA’s at 1 tournament, you can almost bet he or she will be there. College coaches strongly value “economy of time and effort” and will look to attend tournaments where their “active prospects” will be in attendance. Since college coaches are bound by strict contact rules, I suggest the prospect or parent call the college coach directly and determine which future events he/she plan to attend.

College Camps

On-campus sports camps are becoming more popular each year and for good reason. Not only do coaches who sponsors summer camp reap the benefit of bringing talented student-athletes to the university, they also have the opportunity to evaluate talent in the comfort of their home base, while offering prospects a first hand look at campus through a “pseudo” unofficial visit.

The prospect can benefit from this on campus experience as well. Since the event is held on the college coach’s campus, it provides the prospect with direct access to the coach and with very few restrictions according to NCAA unofficial visit rules. Not only will the athlete have the ability to take part in an exciting camp experience, he also has the opportunity to form the foundation of what can potentially become a mutually beneficial relationship. It gives the prospect a chance to “probe” the coach about his program, philosophy and where he possibly sees the prospect as a future member of his team, while creating a strong base of information that will only assist the prospect and his family as they navigate the college quest further.

Communicating with the coaches

Attending camps, showcases and tournaments is one thing, but if your sincere intention in attending these events is to get an initial evaluation from the college coaches, I suggest letting them know you will be there!

Remember, college coaches are bound by very strict contact rules, especially with 9th-11th grade prospects, but athletes and families are permitted to contact college coaches by phone, with little restriction. If you have begun developing a relationship with a number of college coaches, I suggest contacting them well before the scheduled event and determine which events they attend more often and utilize as their recruiting tools to evaluate future talent. Additionally, let them know that you have strong interest in their institution and would strongly value their personal evaluation.

Attending tournaments, showcases and camps will offer young athletes the chance to enhance their personal skill level and in new and exciting environments. Potentially, it also provides an additional benefit in providing prospective student-athlete’s with a chance at gaining strong visibility in the eyes of college coaches and further strengthen their position as they navigate the college search.

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