

The key phrase is "student-athlete". The days of the outstanding athlete who could not read and write but attended college on a full athletic scholarship are, for the most part, over. Most college admissions officials are very cautious about admitting athletes who have shown no history of academic effort. This does mean the athlete should take college preparatory courses, should have reasonable attendance and should have high school teachers who will attest that the athlete has been making an effort in the classroom and is working up to his or her ability. A history of participation and/or community service can also really help smooth out the admissions process. College coaches and admissions officers will work hard to try to provide opportunities for a student-athlete if they feel the player is serious about pursuing an education at their institution.

Myth #4

Players need parent agents.

When parents talk to coaches, they should not make the mistake that one father did when he called April Kater, the women's soccer coach from Syracuse University, an NCAA Division I school. April graduated from the soccer powerhouse, U Mass at Amherst, and is a former Hermann Trophy winner. She is active on the summer camp cycle and is able to recruit some of the top players in the US. This father called her on the phone, told her that his daughter was the best player she would ever see, and asked how much money April could give her. Coaches don't take kindly to individuals calling out of the blue and asking for money. To be considered for athletic omen of any kind, an athlete should arrange to be evaluated a number of times over an 18 to 24 month period. Most coaches are unwilling to dole out money to athletes they have never seen play.

Most of the preliminary communication about attending a college should be between player and coach. After a player has chosen a school, his/her parents won't be on campus to communicate for him/her. Parents should encourage their players to form bonds with a potential coach during the college search process. Since the parents are usually footing the bill for college costs, it's only natural that parent will have questions that should be asked and deserve to be answered. There will come a time when a final decision must be made. That is the time for a parent to have a serious conversation with a coach.

Myth #5

A four-year school is the only way to really play.

When investigating potential schools, don't overlook the possibility of attending a junior college. Junior colleges have three major advantages. First, they offer two years of education at a substantially reduced price. Second, for a student who does not know what area he/she wants to major in or who has not demonstrated academic focus in high school, a junior college can be an environment where a student can take solid general courses while proving that he or she can handle advanced academic studies. Third, the opportunity for a substantial amount of first-year participation time is much higher in the junior college programs than in many four-year programs. Student-athletes who choose the junior college route can spend two years taking classes which fill general requirements, play for their junior college team, and then transfer to a four-year school, often joining their new team with more participation experience than other players who have attended that school since their freshman year.

Myth #6

If you're good enough on the field, nothing else matters.

A player who wants to be considered for an athletic scholarship must start early contacting coaches. Do not wait to be "seen". While searching to find a college home, do the best you can in the high school classroom. Identify schools which appear to offer you the academic and athletic experiences you think you want. Make arrangements to be evaluated. Be determined and keep in mind that the race is not always to the swift. . . but to those who keep on running.