



[Things to Consider When Choosing a College or University](#)

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Most people would agree that choosing which institution to attend is one of the most crucial decisions a student-athlete and his or her parents will make in one's lifetime. It is crucial to find the right fit, to find the school that gives you the best chance to be both successful and happy for at least the next four years. It's important that the student-athlete coming out of high school, along with those who are going to help make the decision, weigh all options so as not to make a hasty selection. A poor or ill-informed choice of schools could result in a transfer or, even worse, a dropout situation.

The following are some of the things I believe are of importance to the student-athlete when considering which is the best college or university to attend:

1. Would I be content to attend this school if I couldn't play my sport anymore?

Unfortunately, injury is commonplace in athletics. Even though many athletes get hurt during their career, most do not suffer career-ending injuries. It is possible, however, that the athlete is one play away from never participating in their particular sport ever again. I've always advised recruits to pick a school they would go to even if they couldn't play sports. Social and academic contentment is the most important

2. Will the school provide me a good opportunity to succeed in a career after my playing days are over?

Sometimes athletes get so wrapped up on the hype surrounding their sport they lose sight of reality. Someday they will be part of the work force and will need a vocation in order to make a good living and provide for a family. The college or university of their choice should provide a sound education in a field they may have to work at for the next thirty or forty years.

3. Don't get wrapped up in the size of the school.

It really doesn't matter if you go to a school of 500 students, 5,000 or 50,000. You are only going to have a couple of handfuls of really close friends. There are usually others in your particular sport or field of study. A large institution can be as personable as you make it. Your free time is going to be more limited than ever before. Practices, workouts, attending class, study sessions, etc keeps you on a very tight schedule. Don't worry about sitting around with nothing to do, you'll be plenty busy. Parents and students must understand that class sizes are pretty much the same at all institutions in undergraduate studies. Class size will be reduced as the student athlete progresses through his or her major.



4. Don't make distance from home a big issue.

This is one of the toughest issues to deal with for the student-athlete and especially for mom and dad. Trust me, there are students who attend college in their own home state or even home town that do not make it home any more than students a thousand miles away. You get so wrapped up in your sport, your academics and your social life that within a semester or so at school, the loneliness and shock of being away from mom and dad will subside.

5. Make sure the college or university has a good support system.

No matter how good of a student or how outstanding of an athlete you are, there will be times you'll need help. Choose a school that has a good tutoring, mentoring and counseling system. Most schools have required study table for their athletes. The coaching staffs have a lot of time and money invested in each athlete they recruit and it is to their advantage you succeed in the classroom and on the athletic field. On your official visit to campus, most schools will be very informative in relation to the strength of their support system. If they don't, watch out!

6. Look for reasons to go to a particular school, not for reasons not to go.

So many students and parents have pre-conceptions about a school before they even visit. Always keep an open mind. Find out about all the positives, the negatives will stick out like a sore thumb. Many times a particular school is much more attractive than you thought prior to visiting campus. It's an important decision, don't jump to early conclusions.

7. How competitive is the school academically?

One of the biggest transitions from high school to college is the fact that academic programs are much more competitive. You must ask yourself "Do I have the self-discipline to compete in the classroom?" The biggest problem most students have entering college is poor study habits. They simply do not know how to structure their time when it comes to their studies. The material covered is massive and you must absorb it at a much faster pace. Most college professors do not care that you're an athlete. They expect you to keep up and compete with everyone else in the classroom. You're academic success is directly related to your own efforts. Don't expect any special treatment.

Even though academic concerns should take priority when choosing a college or university, as a student-athlete your success in your particular sport will make your entire undergraduate experience more rewarding. It's tough to do well in the classroom if you're struggling athletically. The following are some concerns an athlete might deal with before making a final decision on what college to attend:



8. How many returners are there at my position?

Competition is part of being an athlete. If you don't want to compete, you shouldn't even try to take your talents to the next level. At the same time, it's a lot easier to know how to set your goals if you know exactly what challenges you will face. And don't forget, the more experienced players will help you mature as an athlete.

9 How many players are being recruited at my position?

Coaches have a limited number of scholarships to offer so they can't recruit too many players at any one position. But don't be reluctant to ask the coaches who else and how many others are being recruited at your position.

10 What is the institution's policy if I was to get hurt and couldn't play anymore?

Make sure the school will guarantee at least four years of education even if you were to have a serious injury. Even though scholarships are all one year renewables, it is only fitting that an athlete will be put on a medical scholarship if injured. "Medicals" do not count against the school's regular grants-in-aid total.

11 What are the graduation rates of the athletes that play the same sport?

Many times the graduation rate of the regular student body differs from that of the student-athletes. Even though the NCAA is doing more to reward or punish schools based on graduation rates, there are huge variances by institution. Graduation rates are public knowledge and must be revealed by the school. Athlete graduation rates give recruits and parents an indication on how a particular coaching staff values education. Athletes should want to play for a coach who wants to see success on and off the field. As mentioned before, a strong academic support program is essential in order for the athlete to succeed.

12 Have the coaches been honest throughout the recruiting process?

If the staff broke rules during the recruiting process, there's a good chance they'll keep breaking rules. It would be a shame to lose eligibility as an individual or face NCAA sanctions due to dishonesty by the staff. YOU should definitely question the character of a coach who broke the rules and question the integrity of an athletic program if cheating was allowed to occur.



13 What kind of strength and conditioning program does the school have for its players?

Most players want to be the very best athlete they can physically be in order to compete and stay fit. College Coaches want to recruit players with high goals and aspirations. The College you pick, should have as a major goal, to help the athlete be the very best athlete he/she could be

during their college career. If they don't, don't go there!. Even though a very small percent make it to the professional level, a player may have the opportunity if they maximize their skill and talent level. The College you choose, should have a great strength and conditions program to help the player be at the top of his game physically. An athlete coming out of high school entering a Division I school should take into consideration the past history the college or university has had sending players to the next level. Division II or below athletes, obviously, have even less of a chance of becoming a professional, but it has happened in the past.

14 Will I get the exposure to reach the next level?

If you have the ability to play at the professional level, will you receive the media coverage and national exposure to be recognized by professional teams and organizations? If a particular team is on television, if pro scouts attend practices and the team competes at a national level, there is a good chance you will receive the proper exposure. Once again, check out the success the school has had in the past putting players in the pro ranks.

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