

College Mentoring Handbook for Players





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College Mentoring Handbook For Players

This handbook is to help players with the process of picking out a college and presenting themselves to college coaches. While this contains helpful information, you – **the player** - need to do the research, work and decision-making on your own. Only 2% of athletes are “actively recruited” by leading college coaches with the remaining 98% left to “recruit themselves” by self-directed efforts. You are your best recruiter and asset . . . not a paid recruiter BUT YOU!

The most important step in this process is choosing a college that has your academic area of study, location/distance, size, type, and environment that is right for you. Choosing a school based only on its soccer program is a setup for a possible unsuccessful beginning to your college career. SportSource Soccer Guide is an excellent tool in finding the right college for you. This guide includes admissions requirements, program of study, student-teacher ratio, cost, financial aid just to name a few. Athletically, you will find the coaches name, address, phone, fax, email, scholarships, positions needed, style of play, camps and other valuable information to help guide you to the right college or university.

Important contacts and websites:

- NCAA Eligibility Center (formerly known as the Clearinghouse): <http://www.ncaa.org/> - Click on Eligibility Center
- 2011-2012 Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete - <http://www.ncsasports.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/CBSA1.pdf>
- SportSource: <http://www.thesportssource.com/sports/soccer.aspx>
- Sample Resume: <http://www.thesportssource.com/planning/resume.aspx> (we have also included one in this handbook)
- File your application for Federal Student Aid TODAY: www.fasa.org

NCAA RULES ABOUT COACH/ATHLETE CONTACT

- NCAA regulations do not allow college coaches to send out any information about their programs until September 1st of your junior year. If you mail or email coaches something as a sophomore they can only send you a questionnaire and a soccer camp brochure.
- You may call or email college coaches as much as you like, but they cannot respond by mail or email until Sept. 1st of your junior year or by phone until July 1st of your senior year.
- NCAA regulations do not provide college coaches any off-campus contact with you during your sophomore and junior years. When college coaches see athletes or their parents at soccer tournaments, they are only allowed a “formal greeting”.

FRESHMAN YEAR

- Academics:
 - Your freshman year has been said to be your most important year in high school. You begin applying for colleges the beginning of your senior year so your freshman accounts for 1/3 of your GPA. Students who earn a 3.0 GPA their freshman year have a better than 80% chance of graduating with at least a 3.0 GPA or better. Students who have struggled in the past can turn things around if they come to high school every day and aim for at least a 3.0 GPA or higher. A good GPA is important – There are not that many soccer scholarships! Your grades and test scores can make the difference in being selected for a scholarship. Maintaining a good GPA throughout high school shows admissions officers and potential coaches that you are ready to handle the academic demands of college life.
 - If you hope to go to a top academic institution, it would be helpful to take honors courses during high school if you believe you can handle the load. Admission officers generally agree that receiving a 'B' in a tough course is often more significant than an 'A' in a frivolous one. Take the PSAT and Practice ACT tests, as they are offered to insure that you are prepared for the actual tests in future years.
 - Be sure that you begin to take courses that will ultimately fulfill the requirements of the NCAA. Speak with your counselor about classes meeting the NCAA requirements. Visit the NCAA website to learn which courses are required for Division I, Division II and Division III schools. In addition, consider NAIA schools. Start to design your course work accordingly.
- Begin a resume of community service activities, achievements, awards and academics.
- Begin to explore how you will finance your education.

SOPHOMORE YEAR

You may call coaches, but coaches CANNOT call or approach you. If the coach picks up the phone, they can speak with you. If your call goes to voice-mail, don't bother leaving a message, as they CANNOT return your call.

- Continue your emphasis on receiving the best grades possible. If you are pursuing a top academic school, take honors and AP courses when manageable. Meet with your counselor to make sure you are on track to take the 14-16 core courses (based on your intended graduation date) that are consistent with NCAA requirements for Division I and Division II schools. Many universities accept the NCAA academic requirements (see NCAA guide)
- Take the PSAT and Practice ACT tests, and possibly some actual SAT II tests following the completion of certain courses (i.e. biology, language, and math). Do not wait until your senior year to take the SAT II tests on courses you attended as a sophomore. Take the tests as you complete the course.
- Realistically consider your talent and the school that you might like to attend. Be honest in your personal assessment. Research colleges to determine which schools fit your academic and athletic abilities.
- Complete your Soccer Profile/Resume and introduction letter
 - Start sending emails or letters to the coaches of schools that interest you (10-15). Inform them of your games/matches/tournaments
 - The more contacts you create, the more options you will have.
 - You are getting the message across that you are interested and that they should make a strong effort to find out more about you.
 - After you send the coach a resume/soccer profile, make sure to follow up with a phone call to reinforce your interest.
- Be visible to college coaches:
 - Attend College Showcases
 - Attend college soccer summer camps of schools you are interested in.

JUNIOR YEAR

Beginning in March of your junior year, you can receive one (1) phone call from a coach. During the month of April, you can receive one (1) visit on your HS campus. Starting on July 1st after your junior year, off-campus contact and coach-initiated calls once per week are allowable.

- On September 1st of your junior year, college coaches are allowed to send you written (or emailed) correspondence as often as they like. All other rules remain the same.
- Continue the emphasis on your GPA and take the SAT, ACT and AP tests offered throughout the year. Be prepared to take the SAT twice or more. Remember that your GPA is the foundation for your ultimate success. Maintain YOUR highest academic standards. Meet with your counselor to plan your school year.
- Understand the academic requirements of the schools that you're interested in. Determine where your soccer and academic abilities stand, and approach the schools that are consistent with your level of achievement.
- Take "unofficial" visits (unpaid by the school) to the schools of your choice. Talk to students, admissions offices, and soccer coaches. Take campus tours and begin to narrow your list of schools.
 - Watch a practice or game
 - Gather applications to your schools of choice. Send for college applications at the beginning of the summer. You may begin receiving recruiting materials on September 1st of your junior year.
- Continue corresponding through emails or letters of introduction, with Soccer Profiles/resumes to the coaches of the schools that interest you... Try to narrow down your college choices to 4 or 5.
 - Send out update letters or emails that outline where you will be playing during the year
 - Coaches prefer to pursue soccer players that have expressed serious interest in their school. **DO NOT WAIST THEIR TIME!**
- Establish positive relationships with potential coaches by adhering to the NCAA guidelines regarding contacting coaches and visitations.
- Attend college soccer camps.

SENIOR YEAR

Coaches are allowed to telephone you on July 1st, after your junior year. Coaches are allowed one (1) call per week, per household.

Coaches are allowed to visit the home of a recruit on or after July 1st. This will count as one (1) of three (3) contacts allowable by coaches. On-campus visits don't count.

After your Senior year begins, you can begin to make your 5 "official visits" to Division I schools (where the soccer program may pay for your visit on campus for a maximum 24 hours).

The official signing date is in February. All commitments up until then are considered "oral commitments".

- In the FALL, meet with your counselor to review your transcript, and to ensure your compliance with the NCAA requirements. Apply for your Student-Athlete status with NCAA Clearinghouse. (877) 262-1492 or <http://www.ncaa.org/>.
- Retake the SAT/ACT if necessary (MAKE SURE you do not have scheduling conflicts!)
- Prepare yourself for face-to-face meetings with college coaches. Review and know the list of COLLEGE COACH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS at the back of this handbook. You may only get one opportunity to meet with a coach and/or his staff so it is critical you are prepared. You will make a memorable impression on a coach if you are confident, organized, and you have done your homework.
- Official Visits: You can make up to 5 official visits where the school hosts you and pays for you to come. You will tour the campus, meet the team, see a game, and stay overnight. Get to know the school and coach, and the team's style of play. Remember, the coach may not be continuously employed at the institution during your time attending the school. It is important that you settle on a school that "fits" your academic, athletic and personal needs. The college coaching profession is often unstable and subject to change!
 - You will have to send transcripts and test scores to the schools of your choice before you can visit officially.
- Get your applications in if you haven't already done so
- Keep up your grades throughout your senior year.
 - Some colleges will withdraw their enrollment invitation, and/or scholarship, if the student's academic performance declines in their senior year. This is no time for "senioritis."
- If you are accepted, finalize your admissions paperwork and Letters of Intent (if applicable) following NCAA regulations. A letter-of-Intent is usually sent out to you in February.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DIVISION I, II AND III?

http://www.ncaa.org/wps/portal/ncaahome?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/ncaa/NCAA/About+The+NCAA/Membership/div_criteria.html

Division I

Division I member institutions have to sponsor at least seven sports for men and seven for women (or six for men and eight for women) with two team sports for each gender. Each playing season has to be represented by each gender as well. There are contest and participant minimums for each sport, as well as scheduling criteria. For sports other than football and basketball, Division I schools must play 100 percent of the minimum number of contests against Division I opponents -- anything over the minimum number of games has to be 50 percent Division I. Men's and women's basketball teams have to play all but two games against Division I teams; for men, they must play one-third of all their contests in the home arena. Schools that have football are classified as Football Bowl Subdivision (formerly Division I-A) or NCAA Football Championship Subdivision (formerly Division I-AA). Football Bowl Subdivision schools are usually fairly elaborate programs. Football Bowl Subdivision teams have to meet minimum attendance requirements (average 15,000 people in actual or paid attendance per home game), which must be met once in a rolling two-year period. NCAA Football Championship Subdivision teams do not need to meet minimum attendance requirements. Division I schools must meet minimum financial aid awards for their athletics program, and there are maximum financial aid awards for each sport that a Division I school cannot exceed.

Division II

Division II institutions have to sponsor at least five sports for men and five for women, (or four for men and six for women), with two team sports for each gender, and each playing season represented by each gender. There are contest and participant minimums for each sport, as well as scheduling criteria -- football and men's and women's basketball teams must play at least 50 percent of their games against Division II or Football Bowl Subdivision (formerly Division I-A) or Football Championship Subdivision (formerly Division I-AA) opponents. For sports other than football and basketball there are no scheduling requirements. There are not attendance requirements for football, or arena game requirements for basketball. There are maximum financial aid awards for each sport that a Division II school must not exceed. Division II teams usually feature a number of local or in-state student-athletes. Many Division II student-athletes pay for school through a combination of scholarship money, grants, student loans and employment earnings. Division II athletics programs are financed in the institution's budget like other academic departments on campus. Traditional rivalries with regional institutions dominate schedules of many Division II athletics programs.

Division III

Division III institutions have to sponsor at least five sports for men and five for women, with two team sports for each gender, and each playing season represented by each gender. There are minimum contest and participant minimums for each sport. Division III athletics features student-athletes who receive no financial aid related to their athletic ability and athletic departments are staffed and funded like any other department in the university. Division III athletics departments place special importance on the impact of athletics on the participants rather than on the spectators. The student-athlete's experience is of paramount concern. Division III athletics encourages participation by maximizing the number and variety of athletics opportunities available to students, placing primary emphasis on regional in-season and conference competition.

Your Name

Student Profile

John Doe
123 Main Street
Greeley, CO 80634
(970) 000-0000
Parents: ??????

E-mail: YOUR EMAIL@XXX.XXX
DOB: MM/DD/YEAR
Student ID: ???????
Height: ?' ?"
Weight: ??? lbs

*Your picture
in uniform*

College Career Objective

As a senior, I would like to pursue two areas of study: a pre-medical program and/or an engineering program while playing college soccer.

Academic & Entrepreneurship

Graduation: Class of 20??
School: ?????? High School
Address: 321 Main Street
Greeley, CO 80634
Phone: (970) 000-0000

SAT: (Pending) **ACT:** ??
Cumulative GPA: X.XXX **Class Rank:** ??/257
NCAA Clearinghouse ID: XXXXXXXXX

Honors and Advanced Courses: I have already taken AP Statistics (Scored 3 on AP Exam) and AP Calculus (2 on AP Exam). AP Language and Composition (5 on AP Exam), Calculus 2, Statistics 2, and AP US History (2 on AP Exam). Enrolled in Magnet Math, Science, and Technology program.

Awards & Achievements: Ranked First in Class of 351, Honor Roll, Interact President, Student Council, RYLA Winner, Cache, Frederick Douglass Cache Bank Junior Board of Trustees and National Honor Society.

Employment: Safeway, Lawn Mowing Business, Blue Sky Flyers, State League Refereeing, Indoor Hot Shots Refereeing, and Northern Colorado Soccer Club.

Club Soccer, Tournaments & Camps

CLUB SOCCER EXPERIENCE

NCSC Bootleggers – Greeley, Colorado
2008-09, 2009-10 U-17 Elite State Team
Coach: YOUR COACH'S NAME
Cell Phone: (970) 000-0000
Email: COACH'S@EMAIL.COM
Coach: OTHER COACH'S NAME
Cell Phone: (970) 000-0000
Email: COACH'S@EMAIL.COM
Position: Defender/ Midfielder

Other: 2008-09 U-16 and U-18 Development Academy Team Appearances, 2007-08 U-16 Development Academy Team.

Tournaments and Camps: Development Academy Showcases: February 08 Frisco, TX; May 08 Chicago, IL; June 08, Greensboro, NC; May-June 10 Sarasota, FL; SUM U17 Cup, Denver, CO. SportsSource Dallas Cup Showcase December 4th-6th, 09. Las Vegas Mayor's Cup International Showcase February 13th-15th, 10. Rocky Mountain Cup and College Showcase U17 Boys Gold Champions June 18th-20th, 2010. University of Rochester Camp 2010. Colorado School of Mines Camp 2010.

High School Soccer

?????? High School
2008 – Present: Varsity
Coach: Jim Smith
Cell Phone: (970) 000-0000
Email: COACHES@EMAIL.COM

Personal Achievements: 10th, 11th & 12th Grade-First Team Academic All-State, 10th & 11th Grade-Second Team All-Conference, 12th First Team All-Conference, 12th All-State Honorable Mention, 12th Sweet Sixteen, Sam Chuenchit Award Winner, Team Captain, 9th, 10th, & 11th. Colo. Rapids U17 Superleague State League team. Team Captain 2008-09 & 2009-10.

References and Community Service

Additional References:
- NAME, TITLE (970) 000-0000
- NAME, TITLE (970) 000-0000
- NAME, TITLE (970) 000-0000

Community Service: STUCO '08-'10, 3v3 Kick It Soccer Tournament '08-'09, Sam Chuenchit Golf Fundraiser '08, Poudre Learning Center '09, Chuenchit Scholar '09, Head to Head Tutoring '10, Interact Club President/Member '10-'11, National Honor Society '09-'10, Pick Your Influence '10, Christa Connection '10, Community Outreach '10, Interact '10, RYLA Conference '10, Cache Bank Junior Board of Trustees '10.

FIRST COACH CONTACT LETTER/EMAIL SAMPLE



Your Name
Address
Address
Home Phone
Email

March 9, 2009

Bobby Muuss
Denver University
2199 S University Blvd
Denver, CO 80210

Dear Bobby Muuss:

I am interested in the academic degrees at the University of Denver (DU) as well as the soccer program. Enclosed is a brief resume of my academic profile and my soccer experience. After a discussion with my family and soccer coach, we have agreed that DU would be an excellent way for me to succeed in academics and athletics.

Attached is a copy of my upcoming soccer schedule for the Colorado Rapids U17 State League team, coached by David Proctor, for which I currently play. We are also playing in Colorado State Cup and I will forward that schedule to you as soon as I receive it. I also train and make appearances on the U18 Colorado Rapids Development Academy team, coached by Brian Crookham, and will notify you of those additional matches. In 2007-08, I played on the U16 Colorado Rapids Development Academy team. I'm currently maintaining a 3.348 cumulative GPA on a 4.0 scale and am taking college preparatory classes as a sophomore. DU provides many fields of study that are of interest to me, two of which are engineering and pre-med.

I have been following your soccer program and I have met and spoke with other staff at various tryouts. In the midst of communicating with my club and high school coaches, I find your soccer program to be a good fit for me.

I plan on using all available opportunities of financial aid, as well as support from my family, and given my academic standing, I will apply for scholarships. I would greatly appreciate receiving information about your soccer program.

Moreover, I want to thank you for your time and review of my profile. I will contact you by telephone next week to confirm receipt of this letter. I am looking forward to speaking with you concerning my future eligibility of entering your program at DU.

Sincerely,

Your Name

FOLLOW-UP COACH CONTACT LETTER/EMAIL SAMPLE

***Your Name
Address
Address
Home Phone
E-mail***

July 13, 2010

Dear (Coaches Name):

Having shown interest in the academic degrees at (School's Name) as well as the soccer program, I would like to send you an update. Attached is a brief resume, updated with my most recent GPA, test scores, extracurricular activities, and soccer tournament, with my academic profile and my soccer experience. (School's Name) remains one of my top choices both athletically and academically. I would greatly appreciate it if you could come out and have a chance to see me play.

Also, my new current cumulative GPA is a 3.345 and I am still ranked 35th in my class of 358. As well, my most recent ACT test score is 28 (32-math, 26-reading, 26-science, 26-english), and I did score a 5 on my AP Language and Composition test. I played on the Northern Colorado Soccer Club Bootleggers team in the Rocky Mountain Cup and College Showcase in Boulder, CO on June 12-14. Playing centermid in a 3-5-2 formation and scoring 2 goals and getting 3 assists, we won the Boys U17 Gold Division. I have also been given a promotion at my work and am now a manager. I will let you know of my Development Academy schedule with the U17/18 Colorado Rapids also.

On July 12 I will be doing a community outreach project in joint with the Cache Bank Junior Board of Directors (which I am apart of and am a service project coordinator). This project is intended to let financially limited and underprivileged kids enjoy a fun time, earn prizes, and make new friends. All 100 kids, aged 8-11-years-old and apart of the F.I.T.S. (Fun in the Sun) program at the Greeley, CO Rodarte Center, will enjoy snacks, water, and several gifts. All 100 kids, 10 board members, 2 board directors, and 9 Rodarte Center employees will be included in my service project that I am heading. Academically next year, I will be taking several AP classes, applying for many scholarships, and running for President of Interact Club.

Once my high school soccer schedule becomes available I will e-mail it to you. I have made a highlighted video of myself as a soccer player. The video includes 8 different games over 3 years of playing including my first years with the Colorado Rapids, some high school games, and my most recent International Showcase in Las Vegas. Shown in the video, I play centerback as well as centermid. These are the URLs of my finalized soccer videos. The first video is 10 minutes long and the second one is 3 minutes long. If you cannot click on the URL links below then simply copy and paste them into your address bar:

Video 1 URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zfEh1818Qrw>

Video 2 URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uNm8PeEWSHM>

Be sure to check the video description as game location, scores, dates, events, goal bookmarks, and contact information are listed. Listed below is my high school schedule for the 2010 fall school year:

Date	Time	Home	Away	Site
9/6/2010 (Mon)	7:00 PM	NORTHRIDGE	THOMPSON VALLEY	DISTRICT 6 STADIUM
9/8/2010 (Wed)	4:00 PM	ROOSEVELT	NORTHRIDGE	ROOSEVELT
9/10/2010 (Fri)	7:00 PM	GREELEY WEST	NORTHRIDGE	DISTRICT 6 STADIUM
9/13/2010 (Mon)	7:00 PM	NORTHRIDGE	FORT MORGAN	DISTRICT 6 STADIUM
9/15/2010 (Wed)	7:00 PM	NORTHRIDGE	WINDSOR	DISTRICT 6 STADIUM
9/22/2010 (Wed)	7:00 PM	NORTHRIDGE	STERLING	DISTRICT 6 STADIUM
9/27/2010 (Mon)	7:00 PM	NORTHRIDGE	SKYLINE	DISTRICT 6 STADIUM
9/29/2010 (Wed)	7:00 PM	NORTHRIDGE	FREDERICK	DISTRICT 6 STADIUM
10/5/2010 (Tue)	7:00 PM	NORTHRIDGE	ROOSEVELT	DISTRICT 6 STADIUM
10/7/2010 (Thu)	4:00 PM	FORT MORGAN	NORTHRIDGE	PIONEER ELEMENTARY
10/12/2010 (Tue)	7:00 PM	WINDSOR	NORTHRIDGE	WINDSOR
10/14/2010 (Thu)	7:00 PM	GREELEY CENTRAL	NORTHRIDGE	DISTRICT 6 STADIUM
10/19/2010 (Tue)	7:00 PM	NORTHRIDGE	STERLING	DISTRICT STADIUM
10/21/2010 (Thu)	4:00 PM	SKYLINE	NORTHRIDGE	SKYLINE

(School's Name) provides many fields of study that are of interest to me, two of which are computer engineering and biomedical engineering. Please see my attached resume which provides community service projects I have done/will do; my latest test scores and GPA; my soccer experience and personal achievements (including tournaments and teams I have played for as well as previous and current coaches with contact information); my current and previous employment; additional references; academic awards, achievements, honors, and advanced courses.

I plan on using all available opportunities of financial aid, as well as support from my family, and given my academic standing, I will apply for scholarships. I would greatly appreciate receiving information about your soccer program. If you could let me know of any scholarships I will be eligible for or any website I can look for scholarships as it involves (School's Name) would be greatly appreciated.

I want to thank you for your time and review of my profile. I would greatly appreciate you being able to come out and watch me play in the near future. I will keep you in the loop for any new updates I may have. I am looking forward to speaking with you concerning my future eligibility of entering your program at (School's Name).

Sincerely,
Your Name

FOLLOW-UP COACH CONTACT SAMPLE LETTER/EMAIL

Your Name
Address
Address
Home Phone
Email

January 28, 2010

Dear (Coaches Name):

Thank you very much for your e-mail! I am very excited to hear back from you and am very impressed with (School Name)! I am in the midst of making video of myself. As soon as I can I will send that to you as well as my schedule for the Las Vegas Mayor's Cup International Showcase and my spring season league schedule. Please let me know where to send my DVD of video for you to evaluate and look at. I may have a link of a video made for your convenience as well and I will update you once that is done.

On the weekend of February 13-15, I will be competing in the Las Vegas Mayor's Cup International Showcase in Las Vegas, Nevada at the Betty Wilson and Ed Fountain Fields. My schedule is below (all games are in Bracket 2):

GAME	TIME	HOME TEAM	AWAY TEAM	LOCATION
654	11:20 AM	COLORADO RAPIDS	ESCUELA INTERNACIONAL DEMILIO	BETTYE WILSON #01
656	6:00 PM	FURY FC OF ILLINOIS	COLORADO RAPIDS	BETTY WILSON #03
658	10:00 AM	COLORADO RAPIDS	DOWNTOWN LVSC 93 WHITE	ED FOUNTAIN #05

Games 654 and 656 will be played on Saturday February 13, 2010. Game 658 will be played on Sunday February 14, 2010. Additional playoff games can be seen at the tournament headquarters.

I'm currently maintaining a 3.348 cumulative GPA on a 4.0 scale and am attending and taking college preparatory classes as a junior. (School's Name) provides many fields of study that are of interest to me, two of which are engineering and pre-med. Attached is a copy of my resume.

I plan on using all available opportunities of financial aid, as well as support from my family, and given my academic standing, I will apply for scholarships. I would greatly appreciate receiving information about your soccer program.

Moreover, I want to thank you for your time and review of my profile. I would greatly appreciate seeing you at the tournament and I hope to hear from you soon regarding your attendance in Las Vegas, Nevada. I am looking forward to speaking with you concerning my future eligibility of entering your program at (School's Name).

Sincerely,
Your Name

COLLEGE COACH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The coach wants me to make an "official visit." From what I understand the NCAA only allows 3 official visits per prospective athlete. I do not want my visit to count as an official visit. What constitutes an official visit, and how do I avoid making mine one? If I stay with a student/soccer player, does it become an official visit? How do I make this apparent to the coach?

Very good question and one that many recruits would never think about. You are right on the ball with this, you are allowed three official visits, but you can make as many un-official visits as you would like. But, one thing about an **official** visit is they are basically taking care of almost everything for you. I don't know for sure, but I want to say they would pay for meals, lodging, etc. on an official visit. If it is an **un-official** visit, I'm pretty sure they can't pay for meals, lodging, or anything else... So it would be on you and your family as for your meals, where you were to stay the night, etc. As for you staying with a player, I think that is a great idea, but once again, I'm not for sure on how that would work with an official visit vs. an un-official on what they can let you do with that... I'm sure they are on top of all those rules, so just ask... But asking them if you can make it an un-official is fine and I doubt it would offend them. Like I said, it is a lot less paper work for them. I like your idea best though, spend as much time there and with players you will be playing with as possible. And as far as how you make this apparent to the coach, just ask him. Just say, would it be okay if my visit is un-official and me and my parents (or just you – however you are planning on going up) just make the trip without it being an official visit. I doubt they will think twice... And then that way if something is not good or what you are looking for you still have three official visits left... That is actually a good idea... Then you would just have to ask if you can still spend the night with a few players or how that works. I'm not for sure on that.

What are things that I should specifically be looking for during my 2-day visit (i.e. class size, curriculum, extracurricular, etc.)? Can I look into certain clubs, educational programs, etc. during my visit, or would it be the same to simply research it online? What should I know about the soccer program and academics of the college before I make my visit?

One thing I would stress on your visit is to keep eyes and ears open at all times... I wouldn't worry as much about trying to get around to every club/program/etc. during your visit as much as you spend a lot of time listening and watching the people taking you around and especially just keep an eye on everything with the coach and players... This is when you will get a GOOD or BAD vibe with the players and coaches. When you are with the coaches on campus listen to how they talk about everything. See what is important to them. Be sure to do research on the roster. Are they successful? How many FR, SO, JR, SR? Who gets playing time?... But see if you can get a vibe of how the coaches respect their players and vice versa. You don't want your coach taking you around saying something about how they can't stand player A and player B and that they will be glad when they are gone. Because you have to remember, in a year or two that could be you they are talking about. So keep an eye on how the respect factor works with coaches towards players and players towards their coaches.

Don't feel like you have to know everything about the school and soccer program before you go. This is your time to ask questions and really learn about things while on campus. Ask them about their in-season, off-season and winters and summers and just see what their routines are like. Make them be specific to really let you know what you are getting into – good or bad – about what you will be doing each month of the school year – and during the summer – so you know this is everything you are wanting. The last thing you want to do is find out once you get there that there is no spring workouts or winter conditioning and that is something you were really wanting.... Or the other way around. Maybe they wake up at 5:30 a.m. each morning from December through April and that is something you don't want either. When recruits don't ask these questions is when they get to a place, hate it and then transfer back home or to another school they were looking at. I have known people who have gone to 4-5 schools in 4-5 years.

Really take time with the players and **ask them a ton of questions**. Everything from how do you like the coach now? How was the coach when he was recruiting you? How was your playing time from what you thought it was going to be? Ask them which coach coaches what positions or how much the head coach is involved in the everyday process and how much the assistant coach does... Ask them how many underclassmen are at YOUR position... The coach might tell you one thing and then you can check it against what the players tell you. The players don't have any reason to lie about anything. If you are a good player they are going to want you to join them... But if the coach tells you there are only 2 midfielders (or whatever position) returning and you ask Tommy Smith who is a sophomore going to be a junior next year and he tells you, oh man, we are loaded at that position with six guys coming back... You then need to ask the coach, "Hey, by the way, I talked to a couple of the players (I wouldn't tell him who – don't put that player in a tough spot with the coach) and they said you guys have six midfielders returning?... Just see what his explanation is to why the numbers were different from what he told you. The last thing you need is to make a commitment to a program that doesn't have plans for you.

The academics – in my eyes – is an easier deal to learn and find out about. They are going to treat you just like any of their other students on campus. You can dig in and find out all that you need to know about the academics at any time during the recruiting process. You don't need to go through any of the coaches, or anything else if you don't want to. They might have a person that deals with academics for their specific program (soccer) but you might also see if that athletics academic person can get you in touch with some professors or advisors on campus as well... You might check and see if there is an athletic person who can get you connected with some of the academic people so you have an easier way to communicate and less hoops to jump through. But actually speaking to academic people and people with clubs and on-campus activities that isn't as necessary as you getting that time and one-on-one attention with the coaches and players on your brief visit to campus.

But don't get me wrong, you need to make sure and speak to the right people and ask the appropriate questions about academics just like you do with athletics. But a lot of that can be done over the phone as well, and **looked up on the Internet** where you can't exactly get a good feel for a teammate over the phone. What I'm trying to say is **this two-day window is essential for you making a soccer decision about coaches, facilities, teammates, etc. Even seeing the dorms, campus, those kinds of things are what this visit is most important about.** It would have to work just right for you to be able to see and meet with people in your academic field during your brief visit. And also remember, these coaches give tours and talk about the academic side of things each time they have a recruit on campus. So they will be answering a ton of questions before you can ask them because they are used to answering what recruits want to know... Also, don't be afraid to ask some of the players what seems to be different from what they thought when they were coming out of high school... You have to remember, all of those players were in your shoes at one time or another. And all of them were thinking and wondering the same thing you were... Ask them, what is one bit of advice you would give me? See what they say... It never hurts to ask questions... This is a huge decision... As my first college coach once told me... This is one of the three biggest decisions you will ever make in your lifetime... he was right... Here is what he told me:

The three biggest decisions you will make in your lifetime:

1. Where you will go to school.
2. Who you will marry.
3. What you are going to do for a living.

He was exactly right... Three of the biggest decisions you will ever make, and here is #1 for you.

Now about the house visit:

How do I, and my parents, bring up the idea of scholarship money during the house visit and how should we verbally approach the coach about it? What cues should I be looking for, and what questions should I be asking to get more money out of him? At what point does a scholarship offer become set in stone? I am currently communicating with just the assistant coach because the head coach isn't technologically inclined, so how serious can I take a scholarship offer from just the assistant head coach if he is the only one making the house visit? Should I ask to see if the head coach can come down, or leave that up to their discretion?

Good inquires about the house visit. First of all, this is a great situation for you. **NO ONE IN AMERICA schedules a house visit unless they are coming to offer you a scholarship.** If you told me that a coach from any school came and made a house visit and left without offering you a scholarship I WOULD BE SHOCKED. That is your time to sit back and basically let the coach make his sales pitch to you. That is what he is coming to do, sell you on their soccer. You sit back and just keep in your mind the other schools you are thinking about, the other schools that have offered you scholarship money, the other school's you have interest in you and your opportunities to play at those schools... But basically you need to be prepared for him to make a presentation to you as to why YOU should attend and play soccer at his school. So don't even worry about how or when you or your parents should ask about scholarship money. They will talk about that during their presentation. Another thing and this is more from the coach's side of things. **Discuss any and all questions that you and your mom and dad have before hand, and YOU MAKE SURE and ask these questions when the coach is there.** No coach wants mom or dad asking the questions for their son or daughter because they aren't there recruiting mom and dad; they are recruiting a young man or woman. They want to know that you can be an adult and come to them with questions down the road, so just start now with YOU asking questions on the house visit. If your mom or dad start asking questions they are going to be thinking, are these going to be problem parents and NO COLLEGE COACH deals with parents... period. If you aren't getting to play and your mom and dad are calling your college coach you are going to be the one who suffers. So just some friendly advice, you and your parents talk about what questions YOU ALL HAVE and then you can present them to the coach when he comes to visit. This will make you look very, very mature and he will appreciate it. Every coach knows the parents play a role, but the student-athlete needs to play the leading role and the parents need to be far in the distance.

I wouldn't expect to be trying to get more money out of them. If they have done their homework – have seen you play, talked to your coaches, and coaches who have seen you play that they trust – they know how badly they want you in their program and they also know the depth/lack of depth they have at your position.

But back to what I was saying. If they have done their homework they know in their heads that you are worth coming into their program. If they offer a certain percentage, I'm guessing that is going to be their offer. Now, things can get interesting. I don't know what other offers you have or what other programs you are interested in. So if you have other schools you are interested in and you don't just jump at their offer, they might tell you that offer is on the table for two weeks, one month, two months or until they tell you otherwise. But once they give you a time frame and you go past that time frame that offer can be taken away. So be careful that you don't play hardball and then end up turning them away when that is the school you really want to go to but you were just trying to get a little more money out of them. Usually an offer will be fair and the school and player have a good understanding of how the scholarship offer works. Usually a coach will make the offer, tell the recruit he wants them to think about it, talk it over with their parents and then let them know in a certain amount of time or as soon as they know either way.

The more they want you the more time they will give you. If they tell you they need an answer back in two days, they are probably looking at it as: *if we get him great, if not, we will move on to the next guy in line...* If they tell you just take your time and think about it and get back to them

with whatever questions you have and that there is no immediate time frame, then they want you pretty bad.

It is also good you are getting this started now. Because if this was May, they wouldn't let you sit there and think too long about it. They would need to know quick as they would then need to go find someone else quick if you said you weren't interested. But to answer your question about when does a scholarship become set in stone... It becomes set in stone once he makes the offer, but can be taken off the table as quickly as they give you a time frame they need an answer by.

Don't be concerned with communicating only with the assistant coach. Many, many, many programs – by far the majority of collegiate sports – there are “recruiting coordinators” who are hired to sign players and to help the head coach. Now, a head coach might have a final say if he has seen the two players that the school only has one scholarship for, but primarily the top assistant coach is the main recruiting person. Now, that doesn't mean you shouldn't get to know and spend time with the head coach. I'm guessing the recruiting coordinator – assistant coach – will make the house visit and then you will spend A LOT of time with the head coach on your visit. That is usually when the head coach seals the deal with the recruit, on the visit. Now, if the assistant coach is doing all of the work during the recruiting process, the home visit and then you make the visit to campus and still don't see the head coach, then there is a problem somewhere... because then what can happen is the assistant coach who is doing ALL OF THE WORK on recruiting, coaching, etc., leaves for another job (higher level assistant job or for a head coaching position) you signed a letter of intent to play for that program, not that assistant coach. So that is why it isn't a big deal if the assistant coach does a lot of the leg work while recruiting you, but you need to have a good feel, good relationship with the head coach as well. That is essential when it is all said and done.

But don't worry if just the assistant coach makes the visit, and yes, take that offer as if the head coach was the one making it to you. That is a BIG part of that assistant coaches job is recruiting... And don't think that he hasn't given the head coach every last detail about you as they made the decision together on making the amount of scholarship offer to you. So just because he isn't sitting in your living room don't feel that the head coach isn't directly involved, because he is. As soon as that assistant leaves your house he will be making a phone call to the head coach letting him know how it all went and what his feelings are from the visit.

How should I discuss academic scholarships? Is that something that I should or should not discuss with the soccer coach? What is the best source for finding this information out?

DEFINITELY address the academic scholarship situation with the coach. This is a golden opportunity for them if they can find a student-athlete who is a good player and also will be able to receive academic money which could help get your total scholarship money to a full-ride... Also, don't make a mistake that many recruits will make by looking at athletic money differently than academic money. You have to realize, if you are getting a 100% total scholarship to attend school and have a good opportunity to play on the soccer team it shouldn't matter if 85% of the money is academic and only 15% of the money is from soccer... That doesn't matter... And to be honest, those coaches need to worry about their “PROGRAM” first, and one way of doing that is to get the best players possible and if they can get one and use a lot of scholarship funds for academics, that leaves them more soccer scholarship money to give to other players (who don't qualify academically for scholarship money) to make their team better... Now, I'm not saying for a second that you should be ok with a 35% academic scholarship and nothing from soccer because the coaches are basically saying, well there is 35% there for you...

That would be a good deal if you have NO other schools interested in you and you want to give soccer a try and know that is where you are going anyway... That is when that works just fine. But you have options, and that isn't the case.... What I'm saying, is if you can get almost a full-ride with your academic, then soccer can just top it off or make whatever percentage work to

where you don't have to worry about anything, if that is the case. But definitely talk with them about your grades (I'm sure they know already) and how and what academic scholarships are available.

My point is, if your grades/academics can get you a 60% scholarship then it wouldn't make sense for soccer to make an offer over 40%, because they would basically just be leaving academic money on the table. Do you see what I mean? Let me know if you have questions on this one because this is key with how good of a student you are... I didn't have academic options coming out of high school, but if I would have that could have given me a lot more money and less to pay on the bottom line.

Do we prepare a meal for the coach? I understand that I should dress appropriately, but does that mean business casual, nice shirt and jeans, etc.? What sort of activities should we engage in during the house visit? Only discussion?

It would be a good idea to ask the coach how much time he has available on the visit and if he would like to eat dinner. This can go either way to be honest. If a coach is squeezing in the visit and can just get there for an hour, it is much more important to just sit and talk and offer something to drink... If he says I have all the time in the world, dinner would be a nice touch and a chance to have some general conversation to help break the ice once he arrives and then you guys can talk scholarship and specifics after dinner. During dinner see if you can just talk more about how your season went, how the season went, maybe talk about what plans you and your family have for the Holiday's and ask the coach about his family or maybe where he is from, or whatever... Save the business talk for when you guys can sit down and he can really lay out his presentation and mom and dad aren't reaching in front of the coach for the mashed potatoes. □

Definitely don't get more dressed up than the coach... You don't want him to feel under dressed. I would definitely go with a nice collar shirt with a nice pair of jeans and some dress shoes... No holes in the jeans, by the way.

That makes you look good and it doesn't make you too over dressed. The last thing you want is the coach walking in with a wind-suit on and feeling like he went to the White House and needs to go pick up a sports coat before dinner... That way if you have on a nice shirt and jeans and he does walk in with a wind-suit he won't feel out of place... And then on your visit, I would just ask the coach what would be best for you to wear. I would bet the same type of outfit would be perfect... But I also don't want to tell you that and then you go there and all of their recruits are expected to wear khaki pants or something like that. He will know what their typical recruit wears on a visit.

The only other thing I can tell you – and this is coming from someone who used to do this as a coach – as soon as you get an offer that you know you are not interested in, please do all involved a favor and just make the call to the coach that offered you the scholarship and let them know it is just not the right fit for you. That way they can move on and offer that scholarship to someone else who is interested and both you and them can move forward... The biggest problem coaches have with recruits is making an offer and then the kids just sits on it and never calls back but also never says they aren't interested... because then that scholarship money is tied up until they tell the recruit they only have XX more days to consider... So that is my #1 bit of advice for once an offer is made.

Now that doesn't mean once the coach offers you that you tell him YES before he walks out of the door... You should take some time (1-2 weeks if needed), make your visit, ask questions, make sure you and your parents have a good vibe, good feel about everything and then let them know your decision.