



## College Basics with Sam Snow

One of the most important choices a student will make up to now is where to go to college. Whether attending college for strictly academics, and or pursuing aspirations to play a sport at the collegiate level, organizing your search, understanding academic and athletic standards, and knowing exactly what options are available to you are a key focus.

When beginning your college search, think about the following items that may influence your decision to attend a particular school, or not:

- Local vs. Distance
- Urban vs. Rural
- Commuting vs. Residential
- Large Campus vs. Small Campus
- Student life – campus activities
- Meeting admission standards
- Majors - area of academic interest
- Expense

Cast a wide net when considering the types of colleges and universities that might be available, this is especially important as a high school freshman or sophomore. As you progress through your high school career and refine what it is you do want in a college, you will find your idea of the perfect college fit becomes more concrete, and your list of schools more concentrated. By the time you are a senior, you most likely will have a defined list of 5 to 7 serious schools of interest.

### **Consider the different types of Colleges and Universities available**

- Public
- Private
- Service Academy
- Military
- Junior College

**Here is a link showing NSCAA schools that sponsor soccer -**

**<http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/players/NCAASoccerSchools/>**

### **Tip # 1**

As you begin to cultivate a list of prospective colleges, keep your search in perspective – this means academics should be the first priority above all else, regardless of if you play college soccer or not. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What happens if I don't get along with the coach?
- I become injured and can no longer play?
- I find other activities I prefer to be involved in?
- I lose my athletic scholarship?
- The University eliminates soccer from their athletic program?
- **Would I still attend a particular college if I no longer played on the team?**

Your answer should be - yes.

There are many factors that can impact your college experience, with some that you can control and others you can't. Playing college soccer is a great experience, but it should not dictate your decision to attend a particular university or not. At the end of the day, earning a college degree is much more important to your future than playing a sport.

### **Tip # 2**

Think about where you would fit best in an athletic program. Are you DIV I material, or are you best suited for a DIV II or a DIV III program. Do you want to play right away, or are you OK with sitting the bench your freshman or maybe even sophomore year? Have you thought about the NAIA, USCAA, or NJCAA? Do you have the time management skills to juggle college soccer and studies?

Depending on the program, these variables can have a big impact on your decision to pursue a particular program or not. Understand all the athletic affiliations that are available, the divisions within each, and determine which one might be the best bet for you. Consider the following:

- NCAA
- NAIA
- NJCAA
- USCAA
- NCCAA

### **Tip # 3**

Every college coach gives clues about what he or she may be looking for in a potential prospect and there is no better place to begin your research than to visit the athletic web site of each program of interest. Here are a few things you can review to see if you "measure up" to what a coach may be looking for in a recruit:

- Coach's biography – Learn about where he or she played in college, the style of play they utilize in a game situation, how successful the program has been under their guidance, and the expectations they have for the program going forward. These details will help you understand their coaching philosophy.
- Roster – Size yourself up and see if you model the type of player the coach recruits. Look at physical characteristics of the players, the pedigree of the players (what level they may have played at during high school), the area/state(s) players are being recruited from and potential number of graduating seniors on the roster (this will give you an idea of the roster holes that need to be filled for the next season).
- Conference and record – Look at the conference the school competes in to determine how competitive the program currently is, where the team may need help from an

impact player(s), and if there is good opportunity for incoming freshman to fill important positions.

Although these are just a few considerations, being well informed about the program you are pursuing, is half the battle.

#### **Tip #4**

Everyone wants a full ride when it comes to athletic scholarships, but the truth of the matter is that very few athletes receive one. Not all soccer programs are created equal and when it comes to scholarship dollars, amounts can vary across the board from one college to the next.

Review scholarship limitations for each athletic affiliation to see what could be available for those programs you might be interested in. Remember, that although a Div I college may be able to offer up to 9.9 scholarships for men's soccer, not all will have the full funding to do so base on allocated funds. Find out from each coach what might be available for your specific situation regarding athletic scholarship opportunities.

#### **Tip #5**

If you haven't created a player resume and cover letter, it's time to get started. Refer to the examples on the US Youth Soccer College Planning page.

An introduction of yourself via a cover letter along with your player profile is ideal. If you are participating in an upcoming showcase or tournament where college coaches may be attending, provide your game schedule as soon as possible. This gives those attending coaches you contact a good indication of your interest in their school, an opportunity to see you play, watch you develop as a player, and determine if your abilities could fit well with their program.

If participating in a showcase(s), be sure to review the list of attending colleges coaches and connect with those who have what you are seeking both academically and athletically in a college program. An email introduction with 3 to 4 paragraphs about yourself if sufficient, be sure to include your game schedule, and attached your player profile/resume as well.

Follow up with any replies or phone calls from coaches after the showcase in a timely manner, and begin to establish a dialogue. If your and their interest persists, consider scheduling a campus visit, see if there is opportunity to work out with the team and even spend the night. This will help you determine if this could possibly be your perfect college fit.

#### **Tip #6**

Keep your eye on the ball when it comes to your high school GPA. You could be a great athlete but if you aren't making the grades, you won't be playing college soccer.

Consider taking Honors, AP, or Dual Credit classes when you can. These types of classes can go a long way when a coach evaluates not only our athletic ability, but if you will be able to stand of up the academic challenges of college coursework. Coaches need student-athletes who can not only handle it on the field, but in the classroom too.

In addition, these types of classes are what college admissions like to see on a student's transcript. The overall idea is to have a student who has challenged themselves with rigorous classwork, even if they received a lower GPA because of it. It is often a good indicator to admissions of the type of student you are and could be at their college or university campus.

### **Tip #7**

Know the 4 components that college coaches look for in a recruit:

- Tactical ability
- Technical ability
- Physical ability
- **Psychological ability**

**(These have all been outlined on the US Youth Soccer web site, not sure if you wanted to utilize some of the content you have provided already)**

It's essential to be excellent in at least one component if you want to garner the attention of a college coach at any level.

### **Tip #8**

Take the time to attend a college game and watch the team in action for those programs you are considering. This is a great way to view the team in a game situation, see how the coach conducts him or herself on the sidelines, and to see if you have the ability to contribute and make an impact to the program should you play there.

If you can't make it to a game during the season, visit the college web site and see what games might be streamed live and or if there are any games that have been recorded and archived for viewing. If the college web site does not have any taped games available, check out YouTube or any number of social media sites to see if there might be game tape for viewing through these outlets.

### **Tip #9**

Don't get stuck or focus on schools where the coach has shown no interest in you as a recruit.

Too often players will latch on to a college or university because it has always been their dream to play for that particular program or they feel pressured to pursue it because a parent or relative may have attended and played a sport there. Although it's good to have aspirations to play say, for the top Division I program in the nation, if you aren't what the coach is looking for, you need to move on. Most coaches will let you know exactly where you stand in their recruiting hierarchy and if you are a consideration for their roster, or not.

### **Tip #10**

Arrange for a campus visit and see if there is a chance to spend the night with the team. The length of your visit may be based upon the athletic affiliation the school is tied to. The coach from the program you are visiting will give you specific details on how long your visit can be.

You'll have a chance to talk to rostered players, develop a rapport, and gain valuable insight into the program from a players' perspective. You'll also get to experience campus social life and get a good feel for what you could expect as an attending student.

**Tip # 11**

Always respond to a coach who has reached out to you and initiated the recruitment process. Why? You never know when your college search could change course, and a program you might not have considered as an option initially, could well become your first choice.

It also goes without saying that once you have made a decision to commit, to let those coaches who were also recruiting you, know so. Thanking them for their time and interest is not only the right thing to do; you may find they are willing to keep the door and line of communication open should things change for you in the future.

**Tip #12**

Be sure to update your player profile on a regular basis to reflect any changes that may have happened recently.

These should include your most recent GPA, SAT and ACT scores if applicable, AP or Honors courses, volunteer work, jobs, accolades both academic and athletic, coaches information (both high school and club), club affiliation and level of play.

Keep your resume to one page only and include only relevant information and events from grade 9<sup>th</sup> going forward.