

NINE KEYS TO BEING RECRUITED

1. **Academics, Academics, Academics**

This needs to be the most important priority for both the high school and college athlete. Why? Less than 1% of college volleyball players will have the opportunity to play at the professional level either in the U.S. or around the world. Put simply, there is just not as much opportunity in volleyball as there is in other sports. We know and understand the importance of playing volleyball competitively for as long as possible. In the end, you will need your academic background and interests when you graduate from college. By excelling in academics at both the high school and collegiate levels you will be giving yourself more choices and opportunities to succeed in life after college. We stress academics a great deal and also put a great deal of emphasis on thinking about long term goals as well as short term goals.

2. **Attitude, Work Ethic and Coachability**

These qualities are very important. A coach can tell what type of desire and attitude you have by the way you act, practice and the effort you put forth while on the court. This typically is not an issue with players who have decided to pursue a college playing career. It can be a problem if you don't take it serious enough. A player's attitude and work ethic is usually derived from family structure, self-discipline and how badly you want something. Also, don't be afraid to be coached. Ask questions and try and learn something new each day. It's not about soaking up all the great comments you get. It's about how well you accept constructive criticism from coaches who want to help you succeed as a player. No player is without mistakes, and every player has room for improvement.

3. **Individual Skill Development**

Never think you are good enough to the point where you don't work hard and decide you cannot improve any more. Each player can improve in all areas of their game. Continually work with your coaches as well as on an individual level. Work to improve athleticism, on-court training and skills. Not one player has reached their full potential yet, and by continuing to put forth maximum effort you will improve and become a better player. Attitude and work ethic are a big part of succeeding in this area. Don't be satisfied with where you are and be content. You love the game of volleyball, competition and being with your teammates. Create some individual goals that you would like to meet that are realistic and take the steps necessary to meet them. Feel free to share your goals with your coach. They will be glad to discuss them with you and not only offer suggestions, but also be willing to help you meet these goals.

4. **Don't Assume Anything**

Volleyball recruiting is highly aggressive and competitive. Just because you get a letter or a questionnaire from a school does not make you a recruit. It is one of the first steps in the recruiting process. Take each contact from coaches seriously and respond back. Don't assume that since you have heard from them before that you will in the future. There are too many qualified student-athletes across the country working to attain the same goals and results as you. If you let yourself become passive and do not follow through, you can be placing yourself in a difficult situation. Instead of assuming things during the recruiting process, take the time to communicate your thoughts and questions to coaches. This way you will be getting needed answers and creating dialogue with coaches. If you are not sure, ask and communicate.

5. **Be Aggressive, Be Pro-Active and Be Realistic**

Being Aggressive: You should take an aggressive approach towards your collegiate future, both academically and athletically. Don't become content but rather keep communicating and researching schools and programs to find new opportunities that meet your needs. Become the recruiter in a sense. If you receive information from colleges, respond and ask questions. Let them know the interest you have in their program and school. Think about it this way; Most times the team that is more aggressive, focused has a set plan and executes all parts of that plan will come out on top. Take the same physical and mental attributes you use in games and incorporate them into your recruiting plan and you will get great results.

Being Pro-Active: This correlates directly into being aggressive. Don't sit back and wait for things to happen. Believe it or not, many college coaches start contacting and learning about "prospective student-athletes" during freshman and sophomore years. With many college coaches actually looking 2-3 years ahead, it is vitally important that you understand the importance of starting early. Getting recognized and communicating with coaches early is a tremendous advantage to waiting until your senior year.

Be Realistic: Quite simply you must know and understand your ability and what level of play you can compete successfully. Everyone wants to play at the Division I level. Unfortunately not everyone can. There are great opportunities at the D2, D3 and NAIA levels. All levels of collegiate play are competitive and have great players. Discuss with your coaches your ability, skill development, etc. to figure out where you will be best suited. Also take a look at who is already showing interest. Maybe you work hard and increase your approach jump thanks to aggressive training as well as grow an inch. Because of these physical and skill development changes, maybe you just went from a D3 to a D2 player. Keep evaluating yourself, communicate with your coaches. Keep an open mind about wanting to learn about new choices and opportunities. No matter what level of play you are, be assured you will find every level of college play exciting and rewarding.

6. Think Long Term, Not Just Short Term

This goes back to academics. When looking at schools, look at other aspects of a college as well and not just the volleyball program. Things to look at include: a) does the college have your academic major of choice 2) size of school 3) location or region of the country 4) other groups or organizations you may be interested in on campus 5) size of classes 6) graduation rates 7) school retention rate of returning students 8) campus life and living conditions, social life and any other areas important to you. Many of you will probably meet your future best friends in college and create great memories. By choosing a school that meets your academic needs, you will be working towards becoming successful in life after college.

7. Understand the Recruiting Process

This is one of our biggest priorities. The very first step is to give the player and parents the necessary education relating to the recruitment process. 99% of families don't have a great deal of understanding of all that is involved. We spend time going over recruiting, academic standards and criteria, definitions, timelines, etc. so they are better informed and will be better prepared for what is to come. Getting a firm grasp on how the process will happen will start you on the right path towards your academic and athletic career.

8. Be Responsive, Communicate with Coaches

This is an area that is many times taken for granted by prospective student-athletes. I have asked several college coaches to share some of the biggest mistakes a high school student-athlete makes during the recruiting process. Many coaches have responded that student-athletes don't respond to mailings and questionnaires, don't ask enough questions, neglect to state their interests, the list goes on. We understand the recruiting process can be intimidating and nerve racking. We stress to players to ask as many questions as you can. By asking questions regarding any topic, the answers you get will give you the valuable information you need to make the best informed decision possible for your future. After all, this is YOUR FUTURE we are talking about. Coaches want your feedback. They want to communicate and learn more about you. Before making quick decisions about colleges, research them in many areas of interest; Respond to coaches' inquiries and letters. By not responding, it may tell the coach you are not interested. Instead of possibly throwing away an opportunity, take time to learn more about the college and volleyball program as a whole, not just by the name of the school. Far too often we see student-athletes make quick judgments because they have never heard of a particular school. There are over 1,200 colleges and universities that have volleyball programs. You aren't going to know about the majority of them. Take the time to learn about potential opportunities before you decide to not respond.

9. **Be Accountable**

This is another very important aspect of the recruitment process. Be accountable for everything involved in the recruiting process. Everything from individual skill development to returning college letters to communicating with coaches is your responsibility when everything is said and done. If you get ten contacts in one month and don't take the time to learn more about the colleges and fail to respond and/or communicate with the coaches, you and you alone are responsible for letting ten opportunities slip away. Just like when practicing and playing volleyball, if you decide you are going to take it easy for a week or two, your coaches will notice, your teammates will notice, and your skill set development will slow. Yes, the recruitment process takes lots of time and effort. The thing to remember is all the time you invest now is going towards giving you the best collegiate and athletic future.

As you can see, every one of these nine attributes go hand-in-hand with the others. You really must concentrate on all these areas to get maximum results and opportunities. If you don't take your academics seriously, you will lose out on opportunities. If you don't respond and communicate you cannot learn about colleges and opportunities. If you don't work hard and improve your skills you will not become a better player. You must incorporate all these attributes to gain maximum results, choices and opportunities.