pro-active recruiting
Written by 2 former DIVISION I COLLEGE ATHLETES

Taking OWNERSHIP of your recruiting process = the ATTENTION of college coaches

Steve & Julia O’Brien
Meet the Authors

Steve O’Brien

Steve O’Brien played college hockey at the University of New Hampshire (UNH) from 1995-1999. Steve was team captain in his senior year leading the team to the Hockey East Regular Season Championship. Steve was named top defensive defenseman in Hockey East ('99) and participated in The Frozen Four two consecutive years ('98 and '99). Steve played professionally for 7 years in North America and Europe.

Steve has worked for leading global software companies, including Oracle and SAP. His primary role has been to research large corporations, strategically connect with company executives via phone and email to engage and understand if their business’ needs align with his company’s offerings.

Steve graduated from UNH’s Whittemore School of Business and Economics and received his MBA from Coventry University (UK) as a Merit graduate.
Meet the Authors

Julia (Delich) O’Brien

Julia grew up in Fernie, British Columbia, Canada in the heart of the Rocky Mountains. An avid skier from an early age, Julia was first a member of the British Columbia Ski Team (’95-'97) and then the Canadian National Ski Team (’97-'98).

Julia participated in the World Junior Championships in Schladming, Austria in 1997 and was a Nor-Am winner. In 1999, Julia received a scholarship at the University of Denver where she was a 4-time Division 1 All-American, 3-time Division 1 NCAA National Champion (team), Academic All-American and NCAA postgraduate scholarship winner. Julia is a graduate of the Yale School of Management and currently works at Cambridge Associates as an Investment Director.

Steve and Julia live with their two sons and daughter in the Boston area.

Steve and Julia are also the creators of Goal: College Athlete (www.goalcollegeathlete.com). The website was created to 1) inspire young athletes to reach their full potential and play collegiate sports at the highest level possible and 2) give young athletes a better understanding of why reaching that potential will positively enrich their lives.

Please visit our website at www.goalcollegeathlete.com
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INTRODUCTION
Why We Wrote This Guide

My name is Steve O’Brien. I played hockey at the University of New Hampshire (UNH) from 1995-1999. My wife, Julia (Delich) O’Brien, skied at the University of Denver from 1998-2002. We played on great teams, received an excellent education and built tremendous friendships. In short, we had an amazing experience athletically, academically and socially. It was one of the best periods of our lives. Playing collegiate sports, no matter what level or sport, is something few people get to experience, and one that can never be taken away from you.

We wrote this guide to help you—the young athlete who wants to be recruited to play his or her sport at the college level. This guide provides in-depth strategies and a step-by-step plan to help you attract college coaches’ attention, engage them, and get you on their recruiting lists. If you can be successful doing this with multiple coaches and schools, the chances of getting the best offer possible and finding the school that fits YOU best greatly increases.

The guide provides strategies and tips to help young athletes in the recruiting process. These tips include:

- **Example emails** that get coaches’ attention.
- **Call scripts** when calling coaches and leaving voicemails.
- A **self-evaluation technique** to assess your athletic and academic abilities to determine what level of college sports is best for you to pursue.
- **Instructions** on how to build an effective “**target list**” of schools.
- **“Be Pro-Active”**—Learn why and how you must be pro-active and pleasantly persistent with coaches.
“Be Professional”—Learn why your recruiting process should be treated with the same level of dedication, focus, time, effort and maturity as you put into your sport and studies.

“It’s a Numbers Game”—Understand why you have to reach out to many coaches and programs multiple times and stick to your recruiting strategy through the good and the bad, no matter what.

We wrote this guide to let you and other young athletes know that if you want to be successful in your recruiting process, you have to OWN IT, take a professional approach, and drive the process yourself. This is what college coaches want to see from the individual athlete, not from their parents and recruiting agencies.

How to Read This Guide
There is no one way to read this guide. For some it might be best to go through every section one-by-one and execute everything step-by-step. For others you might cut right to different sections like “Why You Should Set Up a Dedicated Email Account,” “Utilizing YouTube” or “Facebook and Social Media: Start Cleaning It Up” to help you in your current recruiting strategies. Some sections will be more valuable to some potential recruits than others. Utilize the guide the best way you see fit.

What You Should Take Away
Regardless if you read the whole guide or only a few sections, there is some important information that you need to take away. First of all, the majority of athletes trying to play college sports must be pro-active in their recruiting efforts. Pro-Active means being pleasantly persistent with the coaches on your list, sticking to your plan (no matter what) and executing the strategy yourself. Executing the strategies and processes in this guide will not only help you get coaches’ attentions but will provide coaches with a more professional and serious
impression of YOU, thus positioning you as a more attractive recruit. Use the examples and tips within the guide to help you think “outside the box” when it comes to your recruiting strategy. Points of emphasis in the guide, including “Sending RELEVANT emails/messages” and “It’s about THEM (the coaches and schools) and not YOU,” will help set you apart from everyone else.

There are a lot of people and “experts” out there telling you to “reach out” and “connect” with college coaches, but no one is telling you exactly how to do that in the proper way. This guide fills that void and gives you a great start in your goal of playing college sports.

The Recruiting Process is Important and Deserves Your Dedicated Focus

Today there are plenty of articles, websites and blogs providing advice and best practices to high school athletes and their parents, helping them in the recruiting process with the ultimate goal of playing sports at the college level. Most of these articles provide valuable tips including understanding NCAA guidelines, knowing core courses needed, building a list of schools, contacting coaches, creating a video, etc. Indeed, every athlete aspiring to play in college should know those tips. This guide is different, though, because we dig a little deeper and describe specifically the attention to detail, aggressiveness and persistence (albeit with a tremendous level of respect and professionalism) you need to not only get the chance to be recruited by a school of your choice but to also give you more opportunity and leverage to get the best offer possible. Your recruiting process is very important and needs dedicated time, planning, research and execution every step of the way—**the same level of dedication you put into your sport and school work.**

If YOU are dedicated to this process, college coaches WILL take notice. Although there are some great recruiting agencies that may have your interests at heart,
NO ONE can provide the time, effort and passion needed to give you more options and opportunities to be recruited than YOU.

Selecting the right college and team is extremely important. In some ways it will, either directly or indirectly, dictate your career options, the network you build, where you may live, and your success long-term. This process can also be stressful on families. You want very badly to play the sport you love at the college you want, and your parents want what is best for you. Trying to attain this can be difficult, so we want to provide some action items to focus more on DOING and less on WORRYING.

“Focus more on DOING and less on WORRYING.”

You should see this process as a great opportunity. If you consistently keep a positive mindset and implement the strategies provided, you WILL differentiate yourself from other potential recruits and give yourself a better chance in receiving your ideal offer. The coaches WANT to see young athletes be pro-active in this process. Give them what they want, have fun with it and seize the opportunity!
SECTION OVERVIEW
We will break this process down for you in 4 main sections:

1. Building the Proper List of Schools to Target
2. Optimizing Your Personal Brand
3. Pro-Active Recruiting Strategy: Planning and Execution to Get Attention and Be Recruited
4. Making the Best Impression and Negotiating Offers

SECTION 1: Building the Proper List of Schools to Target
This section will help you focus on targeting the right schools in your recruiting efforts. This includes a thorough self-evaluation of your athletic and academic abilities, which will enable you to pro-actively and efficiently focus on the best schools for you and give you the best chance to get attention from and engage with coaches. Topics include:

- Validation—How Good Am I?
- Comparing Yourself to Other Athletes
- What Do Others Think of Your Athletic Ability?
- Asking Others about Your Athletic Ability | Strategy Change
- Academic Evaluation
- Creating and Organizing your Target List of Schools
SECTION 2: Optimizing Your Personal Brand

In this section, I will talk about cleaning up and optimizing your personal brand to help you be recruited. Topics include:

- Your Facebook and Social Media Presence: Start Cleaning It Up
- Utilizing YouTube
- What Types of Recruiting Videos Should You Create?
- Creating an Online Athletic Profile
- Why You Should Set Up a Dedicated Email Account
- Creating an Email Signature—What It Should Look Like
- NCAA Eligibility Center—Get It Done

SECTION 3: Pro-Active Recruiting Strategy—Planning & Execution to Get Attention & Be Recruited

This is the major section of the guide. The goal of this section is to provide you with knowledge of the best practices to help you get on a coach’s radar, engage with him or her, and schedule a next step (i.e. call, meeting, unofficial visit, meeting at a camp, etc.). You will have to do this with as many coaches and programs on your target list as possible, so this is essential to understand. Topics include:

- Being Pro-Active Is a Good Thing
- The Strategy and Process Needed to Be Recruited
- Do It YOURSELF
• It’s About Them (The Coaches and Their Programs) Not You
• Don’t Assume You Know What Coaches are Thinking
• Why You Need to Understand the Evolution of Role Players
• Learn the Program and Coach’s Background
• What Do You Want to Study? Have a Clue.
• Why Should You Do All this Research? To Be Recruited.
• Why Email is Crucial to be Recruited
• Examples of Relevant Emails to Send to College Coaches
• Remember: It’s a Numbers Game
• The Best Time to Send Emails to Coaches
• Pro-Active Follow Up
• Calling Coaches

SECTION 4: Making the Best Impression & Negotiating Offers

Topics covered in this final section include showing the proper respect to coaches, how you present yourself when meeting coaches, how to have honest and open communication, and what mentality you need to negotiate offers and make the best decisions. Topics include:

• Be Respectful to College Coaches and Schools
• Be in Shape When You Meet Coaches

• Dress Accordingly to Be Recruited

• Negotiate Offers and Take Control of the Process

• Don’t Be Rushed

• Taking Your Emotions Out of the Process

• Honest Communication and Creating the Bidding War

• Go with Your Gut

Now that we have reviewed the 4 major sections, let’s dive in with Section 1:

Building the Proper List of Schools to Target.
SECTION 1

Building the Proper List of Schools to Target
The ultimate goal of this guide is to help you engage with coaches and get the best offer for YOU. Why is building the proper list of schools important?

Well, a carefully thought out list will provide you with target schools that are realistic from an academic, athletic and “fit” perspective. This will increase your chances of gaining coaches’ attention, getting on more recruiting lists, and hopefully receiving multiple offers. A proper list will also help you focus your time and energy on the right schools. If you have a list of schools that are unrealistic from an ability and “fit” perspective, you are taking your time and energy away from the schools that are actively looking for a player like you.

To help you build your target list of schools, we will discuss:

- Validation—How Good Am I?
- Comparing Yourself to Other Athletes
- What Do Others Think of Your Athletic Ability?
- Academic Evaluation
- Building and Organizing Your Target List of Schools

Let’s get started with Validation.
“You must be honest with yourself and find out where you stand in terms of ability.”

Validation—How Good Am I?

Prior to starting any planning you must be honest with yourself. Find out where you stand in terms of ability and what level of college sports is realistic for you to participate in from an athletic and academic standpoint. This might take some pride swallowing, but in the end, it will save you a lot of time and enable you to be more focused on the planning and execution of your recruiting strategy.

As a pre-cursor to the steps below, if schools are pro-actively trying to recruit you, you should have a good feeling that you can play at the level and division of the schools that are interested. The next question you want to ask yourself is: Do I want to play at a higher level than the schools that are interested? If the answer is YES, you should follow the guidelines I have set forth below.

Comparing Yourself to Other Athletes

Do an honest self-evaluation of yourself and the type of player you represent. Compare yourself to players you played against who currently play college or compare yourself to high school players you play with who have already committed to a school. How does your ability compare to these players? Are you at the same level in terms of skill, strength, speed and intelligence as a player? Do you bring more or less than these athletes in terms of leadership, attitude and work ethic? These are some of things you have to ask yourself in order to come up with a better sample of schools to pursue. Again: BE HONEST WITH YOURSELF.
What Do Others Think of Your Athletic Ability?

Ask people you respect, including your coaches, teammates, former teammates that are playing college now, their parents, coaches that you have gotten to know at camps, and coaches you play against two questions:

- Do you think I have the potential to be recruited at the college level?
- What level do you think I am capable of playing?

Ask for an honest answer (see Comments—Asking Others about Your Ability). Now, people are human so you might get a range of answers, which is the reason you have to ask multiple people. Some might say there is no way that you will play college, others might say you will be a professional, and others might be somewhere in between. You have to analyze these answers as a whole and go with your gut. By asking other people, you are trying to decipher if the level or division you believe you can play is in the same ballpark as what others think overall. For example, maybe others think you are a Division 1 level player but at a lower level Division 1 school, and you think you are more a mid-to-high Division 1 level player. If this is the case, you are in the ballpark and on the right track in building a list of schools to target. If everyone says you are a Division 3 level player and you think you are a Division 1 player, you may have to look yourself in the mirror and change your strategy (see Comments—Strategy Change). I never want to tell an athlete comments

Asking Others about Your Ability

I know asking other people to tell you what they think of you as a player can be awkward. Sometimes you won’t like the answers you hear, but more often than not reaching out to a range of coaches, players who play college currently and others who know your skills will only help give you more information. These people know you are serious about this process, so they may be able to give you great advice on next steps or refer you to a coach or school. It is really just another great way to build out your network within your sport. Believe me, the higher level you play at, it seems, everyone knows everybody; it is a small world.
something is unattainable especially those with a huge passion for their sport who work their tails off every day. However, if you are in this position, you may have to change direction.

Academic Evaluation

You have to get an overall perspective from where you stand with schools from an academic perspective. Schedule a meeting with your guidance counselor to go over your academic records (GPA, SATs, standardized test scores, etc.) and organize them for your personal academic profile. Get your counselor’s opinion on what schools would be easy for you to get into, what schools would be 50/50 and what schools are a stretch. This is very important for a couple of reasons. If there are schools that are 50/50 or a bit of a stretch, but you really would like to go to one of those schools, your athletic ability might be what tips the scales in your favor to get you admitted. Also, some strong and reputable academic institutions need players on their rosters to raise the overall team’s academic index and profile. If you are a great student, this might give you additional opportunities and a greater chance to play at a great school due to your hard work both in the classroom and on the field. Remember, no matter what division or sport, coaches want winning and competitive programs, and they will do what they can recruiting-wise (academically and athletically, within reason) to field that competitive team year in and year out.
Creating and Organizing Your Target List Of Schools

After you complete the steps above (self-evaluation, ask others what level they believe you can play at, going over your academic profile, taking into consideration schools that are already interested) you should be able to build a list of schools to pro-actively prospect and follow up with, informing them of your desire to be a part of their program and academic institution. Building this list should be done in an organized way, and you should have a minimum of 15 schools on this list (the more the better at the start). To get this list started, go to each school’s athletic website and identify the names, titles, emails and phone numbers of each head and assistant coach in your sport. An excel spreadsheet is a great way to organize this information.

Second, add notes to schools on your list where you have a personal connection. Maybe you have played with a player currently on the team, maybe you have a family member who played for the team in the past or is an alumnus of the school, or maybe you attended a camp that the assistant coach was working. Whatever personal connections you can think of, jot them down. They might prove valuable in drawing attention to you down the road. Save and file this spreadsheet for now. We will get back to it.

Now that you have built your target list of schools, you are ready for the next section, which is Optimizing Your Personal Brand.
SECTION 2
Optimizing
Your Personal Brand
“Use social media to your advantage... it provides the perfect platform to show coaches exactly what you want them to see.”

Now that you have *Built the Proper Target List of Schools*, you are ready to start **Optimizing Your Personal Brand**. What does it mean to optimize your personal brand and why is it important?

Many of you realize that coaches will likely search your name on Google, Facebook, Twitter and other social networks if they are seriously considering recruiting you. The first reaction that most of you may have is fear. What if a compromising picture of me is out there? What if somebody posted something inappropriate on my wall? What if I posted something inappropriate on somebody else’s wall?

Why not turn this around and use **social media to your advantage**?

If you think about it, Facebook and an Online Athletic Profile provide the perfect platforms to show coaches exactly what you want them to see. You can create your own brand and highlight and delete anything you want because everything is 100% in your control. To help you make the most of your personal brand, we will discuss:

- Facebook—how to use it to your advantage
- YouTube—how to best use it
- Video Creation—this includes skill, game highlights and reference videos
- Online Athletic Profile
- Email
- Dedicated email account for your recruiting process
- Professional username
- Powerful Email Signature
- NCAA Eligibility Center
Let’s get started with Facebook.

Facebook and Social Media: Start Cleaning It Up

Before you contact a school or coach, you must take care of your personal brand. When I was trying to get recruited to play hockey in the mid-90s, we didn’t even talk about personal brand. Basically, if a coach wanted you to be a part of his or her program, all your high school coach had to say was that you were a good kid. As long as your coach didn’t say you were a jerk or a cancer to the team, the college coach took his or her word for it and kept the process rolling.

Today with Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and the entire blogosphere in general, you need to be careful about what information and photographs of you are on the web. You are crazy to think that any college coach who is thinking about recruiting you is not going to Google your name and search for you on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other social networks where teenagers are “hanging out.” You must do a serious web audit of your online image. Your Facebook profile and Twitter account must be cleared of all content and photos that have the potential to negatively impact your image. I am a former college athlete who graduated in 1999. I would say the majority of head coaches (and many assistants as well) are either around my age or older. We went to high school and through most of college before the internet or mobile phones were mainstream. From my observations and interactions with teenagers today, I feel there is a pretty wide disconnect between what information/messages/photos/video teens view as appropriate to share in public and what information/messages/photos/video people my age and older believe to be appropriate. Right or wrong, the problem for you high school athletes is that the coaches are the ones who make the decision on whether you get recruited to their schools. You have to play by their rules and make sure you only have personal content that they deem appropriate so they will not cross you off the list.
I recommend taking the ultra-conservative route when it comes to your personal brand and social media presence. Clear out the content and images that could be perceived as negative during the recruiting process and add academic and athletic content that highlights your achievements, abilities and character. Don’t try to hide your social media presence; use it to your advantage to be recruited!

“Don’t try to hide your social media presence, use it to your advantage to be recruited.”
Utilize YouTube: Highlight Athletic Ability and Character With Video

YouTube and video are very important in your strategy to be recruited. Why? They are great tools to help grab a coach’s attention and get him or her to engage with you. This further engagement could be a phone call, a meeting, a school visit, letting them know you will be attending their camp, or anything that gives you a next step and more exposure to the coach and program.

Why use YouTube? First, after you upload a video to YouTube, a link is created to access that specific video and you will also be provided a link of all videos on your YouTube channel. This is very valuable within your email strategy, which I will describe later. You will be able to send these coaches a link to your video(s) or YouTube Channel. Now a coach is one click away from seeing you in action and gaining a better understanding of what you can do as a player. Also, there is a greater probability of a coach clicking on a link to a video rather than getting a packet in the mail, opening it and inserting the video into his or her computer or DVD player. Many of those packets sit in coaches’ offices and never get opened. That’s a fact. Another reason for utilizing YouTube and creating your own channel is that you can upload multiple videos, giving coaches one central place to click through and watch all of your videos. Finally, YouTube videos can be easily integrated into web pages. For example, you could easily embed your YouTube recruiting videos on a recruiting profile page, your Facebook page, a personal website, or your high school’s sports website.

In short, the purpose of utilizing YouTube is to make it easy for coaches to view your videos, giving you a better chance to be noticed.
What Types of Recruiting Videos Should You Create?

I believe you should create a range of videos focused on your athletic abilities and character. I recommend creating these videos:

- Personal video
- Individual Skill video
- Game Highlights video
- Reference videos from:
  - Current High School or Club Coach
  - Current Teammates
  - Parents
  - Opponent Coach
  - Teacher/School Administrator

Let’s get started by talking about the Personal Video.
**Personal Video**

You should create a short video (2-3 minutes) that will allow coaches to see you and get to know you. It should just be you in front of the camera. Here are some things you could mention:

- Your name
- Sport
- High School
- Year of Graduation
- GPA and Test Scores (academic awards)
- Athletic highlights (stats, times, awards)
- What qualities you can bring to a program

“Videos personalized to a particular program can be extremely powerful in getting you on a coach’s recruiting list.”

If you want to take the Personal Video a step further, you can create videos personalized to particular programs. In upcoming sections, I mention the research you should do on your target schools. You can utilize this research to create specific videos for specific coaches and schools where you reference what they are looking for based on your research and what you can bring to the program. These videos can be extremely powerful in getting you on a coach’s recruiting list.

You will be sending this video via email, so you can also mention that you would like to schedule a call, meeting or school visit. Provide your contact details (phone and email) in the email you send them so they can get in touch with you if they want to coordinate a date and time to meet.
**Individual Skill Video**

This should be no more than a 3-minute video showing off your skills. It can be you just free styling. It doesn’t have to be anything crazy. Record something similar to these suggestions for your sport:

- Basketball player: running, dribbling, passing or shooting
- Track & Field: running form or event
- Lacrosse player: running, passing, shooting, or stick skills
- Hockey player: skating, stick-handling, or shooting
- Skiing: use training or race video taken by your coach

You want to give the coach assurance that you are in fact a legitimate athlete. You are not going to prove the world to them in this video, nor should you. I will say if you can do something special that other athletes can’t, put it in the video. The goal is to get a little more exposure and get a coach to respond, engage and set up a next step.

**Game Highlights Video**

If your high school games are being taped and you can get access to those recordings, you should also create a 3-4 minute highlight tape. You don’t have to show great plays all the time (although don’t leave any out). You can also show the little things you do well that college coaches love. For example:

- Football: throwing a block
- Hockey: winning face-offs
- Soccer: consistent quality corner kicks

I am not an expert in every sport, but you get the point.
Reference Videos

I actually think reference videos could be more important than any highlight or skill video. Reference videos have others highlighting your athletic and academic abilities as well as other positive characteristics including your character. Your coaches, teammates, teachers, parents, opponents, or other teams’ coaches could all be potential reference videos for you. Why do I think this is important? As the old saying goes, “Self-praise is no praise at all.” If you have others praising you, though, it will hold more weight with college coaches.

You can provide these individuals with some questions as a guide, but let them expand and talk about you naturally especially if they have a lot of good stuff to say.

Questions you could have individuals answer on a video may include (let’s say in this example the athletes name is John Smith):

**Current High School Or Club Coach**

- What qualities as an athlete and a member of your team come to mind when you think of John Smith?

- Can you provide some details about John Smith’s work ethic and coachability?

- Can you provide some insight on John Smith’s leadership qualities, relationship with teammates and overall character?

**Current Teammates**

Current teammates are great ones to create a video with because if they are trying to be recruited as well you could record videos for each other.

- What qualities as an athlete come to mind when you think of John Smith?
• Can you provide some details around John Smith’s work ethic?

• Can you provide some insight on John Smith’s leadership qualities, character and being a teammate?

“Coaches are often concerned about over the top parents who are way too involved in every detail of a potential recruit’s career.”

Parents
You might think it is crazy to create a video of your parents talking about you, but coaches are often concerned about “over the top” parents who are way too involved in every detail of a potential recruit’s career. If you can create a video of your parents that shows their support while communicating that they are normal, grounded people, this will only be a positive for you. All things being equal, if it were to come down to you and an athlete whose parents were potentially “over-the-top” and “pushy,” the coach is going to be much more willing to give you an offer. Coaches don’t want the additional stresses and difficulties some parents can add to their jobs and programs by being overbearing. Questions for your parents might include:

• In what type of program and school would you like to see John?

• Over the years what has most impressed you about John as an athlete?

• What qualities do you think John will bring to a college team?

• What is your best memory of John playing sports?
Opponent Coach

If you can get a coach of one of your opponents to do a video for you, this could be extremely valuable. If an opponent’s coach knows about your skill/level of play and is willing to talk about it in a positive way, this can be very powerful in hitting a cord with college coaches. College coaches know what it is like to strategize and try to contain a quality opponent. Having a coach talk about you in that way is a big statement about you as an athlete. Questions for an opponent’s coach might include:

- What comes to mind when you think of John Smith as a player?
- Would he be the type of player your team would acknowledge and strategize against prior to a game?
- How does he rate among the best players in the conference?

**Remember, you can edit these videos before posting.

Teacher/School Administrator

Having a teacher or school administrator do a reference video for you could help a college coach better understand how important academics are to you as well as give credibility to your character outside the athletic environment. Coaches want to know they are recruiting good people and not just good athletes. Questions you could have a teacher or school administrator answer may include:

- What comes to mind when you think of John as a student and member of your high school community?
- Can you give some background of John’s academic work ethic and preparation when it comes to exams/projects?
- Would you please describe John’s character and attitude outside athletics?
Remember, these questions are just a guide. If you can think of some better questions that may provide better answers to position you in a better light for college coaches, you should use them.

I would try to keep these questions at a very high level (not overly specific), and let the individual talk and expand his or her answer naturally. These videos should not be long: 2-3 minutes per video tops. These coaches do not have the time to watch long videos nor do they want to watch them. Remember that the goal of these videos is to engage with coaches and schedule a next step (i.e. visit, meeting, phone call, etc.), not to tell your life story.
How to Create These Videos

Skill Video: I think the skill video should be professionally done (if you can afford it) or done with camera that will provide a clear, professional looking video. You could have your parents, brother, sister or teammates do the filming.

Another good idea is to ask your audio/visual department at school to come to practice and do some individual filming of you and your teammates (if they are trying to be recruited as well). They would probably do a great job, cut you a nice video and maybe create your YouTube Channel for you! You never know unless you ask.

Highlight Video: If your current coaches film games and breakdown video, you could ask them to try to produce a highlight video of you. Around 10-12 positive clips should make for a nice highlight video.

Reference Video: First, you have to ask the individual (i.e. coach, parents, teammates, etc.) if they are willing to do the video. If they agree, send them the questions I mentioned above as a guide and get them thinking of how they want to answer. In terms of the recording, there are a couple of different inexpensive ways to do this. They could record the video from a laptop or PC that has a webcam. This way they can do it in private and make sure they get it right before sending it to you. You could also record these videos via a mobile or smart phone. These videos don’t have to look as professional as your skills video. Obviously, if you have access to a video camera, this might be the easiest thing to do.

“Creating an online athletic profile page is one of the most important tools to maximize your exposure to coaches.”
You can take these videos and upload them to your YouTube Channel, online athletic profile (next section), Facebook page, school websites or anywhere that might give you increased exposure. In upcoming sections, I will discuss how videos and your YouTube Channel will complement your email strategy to gain the attention of the most college coaches on your list possible.

Create an Online Athletic Profile

Creating an online athletic profile page is one of the most important tools to maximize your exposure to coaches. An online athletic profile is basically a webpage highlighting your athletic and academic achievements. It gives you the ability to promote yourself, show coaches how serious you are about playing college sports, and illustrate the passion you would bring to their programs. It also provides details of your academic record and standardized test scores. Similar to creating a YouTube Channel, an online athletic profile provides you with a link to your profile that you can use in your email strategy, a topic I will discuss in greater detail in the following sections. When coaches receive your email, they can simply click on the link to your profile and get a much better understanding of who you are as a student-athlete and person.

Your email strategy and your online athletic profile go hand and hand. You are not creating an online athletic profile to somehow be found by a coach searching the web. No matter what some recruiting services and websites say, this does not happen. Athletes create this profile to use in relevant emails sent to college coaches to get their attention and hopefully create a next step in the recruiting process.

How do you setup an online athletic profile?

There are many websites that offer this service (both paid and free). “Goal: College Athlete” (GCA) gives high school athletes the ability to create a FREE Online Athletic Profile. We are very excited to offer this service to aspiring
college athletes and feel if they combine the profile with the strategies in this guide, they will be perceived more positively by college coaches, engage in a recruiting process with these coaches, and put themselves in a strong position to ultimately be recruited.

If you would like to **Create a Free Profile** at goalcollegeathlete.com, just paste this link into your web browser to be taken to the Sign-Up Page:

http://www.goalcollegeathlete.com/online-athletic-profile-register/

When you setup your online athletic profile, here is some information you may want to include:

- **General Details**: name, sport, age, year, high school, club team, city, state, contact information (phone and email), photo
- **Athletic Details**: height, weight, position/event, statistics/times, awards
- **Academic Details**: GPA, SAT scores, ACT scores, major you may want to pursue
- Short statement on what you want to achieve. Example: “My goal is to join a competitive women’s soccer team with a tremendous liberal arts program.”
- NCAA Clearinghouse ID
- References (athletic and academic) and their contact information
- Video (The service you choose should allow you to upload videos or integrate your YouTube channel)
- Game schedule or camps you will be attending (when and where they are)
• Links to newspaper articles you were highlighted in during your high school career

• Student-body and community service efforts

As I mentioned, creating an online athletic profile is a MUST if you want to implement the strategies in this guide most effectively. Combining your profile with the email strategy I will provide in Section 3 will maximize your effectiveness in connecting with coaches, giving you a better chance to be recruited.

“Creating an online athletic profile is a MUST if you want to implement the strategies in this guide most effectively.”

Why You Should Set Up a Dedicated Email Account

Your email strategy (Section 3: Pro-Active Recruiting Strategy: Planning and Execution to Get Attention and Be Recruited) is probably the most important part of this process and will make or break whether you engage in recruiting discussions with college coaches. You should have a dedicated email account for your recruiting process. Here are some reasons why:

• Organization is Key

• Your Email Username Should Look Professional
Organization is Key
You have to be very well organized. Creating a new email account separate from your personal account will help you be more organized and efficient during your recruitment process. You can manage all of your recruiting emails from one dedicated inbox, which will be easier when sifting through your emails. You also won’t be distracted or thrown off track by personal emails. Keep focused and organized; get your own dedicated email account!

Your Email Username Should Look Professional
Your username should look professional and should not have any nicknames or numbers in it. These types of usernames can look like spam in a coach’s inbox, and your messages may get deleted before they are even opened. Also, using nicknames and numbers within your username comes off as being immature. You could have created the account and username years ago for fun, but when you are sending emails to coaches they probably won’t get the “inside joke” or see the humor in it. The emails you are sending will usually provide the coach with a first impression of you, and I would hate to see the coach get a negative impression based on an email username. Take the conservative approach here. Sign up for a new account and keep it simple and professional. For example, if I were going to set up an account in Gmail, I would try to set up an account with the username: steveobrien@gmail.com. If the account is already taken, try some variations. For example: steve.obrien@gmail.com or use your middle initial stevetobrien@gmail.com. You should be able to find a simple yet professional username. If you are really struggling, try some variations using your last name before your first name. I highly recommend not using numbers in your username.

“Your email strategy is probably the most important part of this (whole) process.”
Email Signature

You should also have a dedicated email account so you can insert a strategic email signature into all of your emails sent to coaches. Why do you need an email signature? First, it makes your emails look more professional, and it is also another symbol to coaches that you are serious about this process.

Most email service providers (i.e. Gmail, Yahoo, Hotmail, etc.) enable you to create and add an email signature to your emails. You should add information and links to the signature that you think are relevant to coaches. This information could include your name; year of graduation; position; high school (or club team); GPA, SAT and ACT scores; link to your online profile; link to your YouTube Channel; link to game schedules; etc.

Let’s do an example. Jennifer Smith is a junior point guard at Lexington High School in Lexington, Massachusetts. She is graduating in 2017. Her email signature might look something like this:

Jennifer Smith ’17
Junior | Point Guard | Lexington High School
GPA: 3.3 | SAT: 1010 | ACT: 86
Athletic Profile: www.myprofilepage.com (add link to YOUR Profile)
Video: www.myvideo.com (if on YouTube, add YouTube link)
Phone: 888-555-1212

This signature would appear at the bottom of all of Jennifer’s pro-active emails to college coaches. It is just another way for coaches to quickly learn more about you and hopefully take action to engage with you in the recruiting process.
NCAA Eligibility Center/Clearinghouse

To play sports at the college level, a pre-requisite for all student-athletes is to register at the NCAA Eligibility Center to make sure you meet the academic requirements to play in the NCAA. The NCAA Eligibility Center certifies the academic and amateur credentials of all college-bound student-athletes who wish to compete in NCAA Division 1 or 2 athletics. This is a MUST and should be done as soon as possible. You can create an account and complete your online registration at the start of your junior year of high school.

As you enter into the recruiting process, one of the first questions coaches are going to ask you is if you are cleared to play NCAA athletics through the Eligibility Center. The best answer is “Yes,” but if your grades and test scores are not quite there yet the coaches are going to want to hear that you are signed up at the Eligibility Center and you are currently working toward achieving eligibility. If you haven’t registered with the NCAA Eligibility Center, a coach may feel you are not serious about this process and cross you off the list. More information on the NCAA Eligibility Center can be found here:

http://web1.ncaa.org/ECWR2/NCAA_EMS/NCAA.jsp

Now that you have Built the Proper List of Schools to Target and Optimized Your Personal Brand, you are ready to start your

Pro-Active Recruiting Strategy: Planning and Execution to Get Attention and Be Recruited.
SECTION 3

Pro-Active Recruiting Strategy—Planning and Execution to Get Attention and Be Recruited
“Now is where the real work starts—getting the attention of college coaches.”

You have now **Built the Proper List of Schools to Target** and **Optimized Your Personal Brand**. Now is where the real work starts—getting the attention of college coaches. This is the key part of the guide and therefore the most important piece of your whole recruiting process: a pro-active, step-by-step plan to initiate conversations and engage with the coaches on your target list. In addition to concrete steps, I also discuss the importance of YOU (the recruit) driving this process and the mentality and confidence you need to “stay the course” and complete the entire plan. In this section we will discuss:

- Being Pro-Active is a Good Thing
- The Strategy and Process Needed to Be Recruited
- Do It YOURSELF
- It’s about THEM (The Coaches and Programs) not YOU
- Don’t Assume You Know What Coaches Are Thinking
- Why You Need to Understand the Evolution of “Role Players” in College Sports
- What Do You Want to Study? Have a Clue.
- Why Should You Do All This Research? To Be Recruited.
- Why Email Is Crucial to Be Recruited
- Examples of Relevant Emails to Be Recruited
- Remember: It’s a Numbers Game
- The Best Time to Send Emails to Coaches
- Pro-Active Follow-Up
- Calling Coaches—Phone Script Examples
Let’s start with why Being Pro-Active is a Good Thing.

“I want you to have the mindset that this process is business, not personal, and your experience when you get there will be the opposite.”

Being Pro-Active is a Good Thing

I read a statistic that close to 90% of college athletes had to be pro-active in their recruiting efforts in order to play for and get admitted to the university they currently attend. You see these high school basketball and football press conferences and All-American games where young athletes stand up and tell the media where they are going to sign after a process of being heavily recruited by several Division 1 programs. This is not the norm for most young athletes trying to get recruited.

I want you to know that being pro-active is what most athletes HAVE to do, and I want you to embrace the process. I want you to take it as a challenge and set goals. I want you to follow through and be extremely positive even when things don’t go your way. I want you to be persistent (albeit pleasantly). I want you to realize right now, this is a NUMBERS GAME. I want you to go after the schools you think that are out of reach and also the ones you think you are too good for you. Treat them ALL with respect. I want you to be extremely professional and prepared. I want you to have the mindset that this process is business, not personal. I want you to realize the importance of this process and that the school you choose will have lifelong effects. I want you to have fun with it! No matter what the results, if you give everything you have to this process it will only be a positive experience, no matter what school you end up choosing.
Putting yourself out there can be difficult because it feels uncomfortable, but this is how you are going to get ahead. Everyone feels uncomfortable because it is hard to sell yourself. Push yourself to be pro-active and you will undoubtedly be rewarded.

The Strategy and Process Needed to be Recruited

There are plenty of blogs and websites out there that tell you to be pro-active and contact coaches to get noticed. They will tell you to email the coach, mail a packet with video, and follow up with a call to make sure they received it. This is all well and good, but what most young athletes need is more details and tactics (i.e. A STRATEGY) to help them get the results they are seeking. I think without direction this can lead to frustration, lack of motivation in pursuing the process, fewer options, and, in the end, a feeling that no one thinks you are good enough. I want to share with you a plan that will help you get the results you are looking for, get coaches’ attentions, keep you motivated and give you, not the coaches, more control of the process.

“A plan that will help you get the results you are looking for, get coaches attention, keep you motivated and give you, not the coaches, more control of the process.”
The biggest piece of executing this strategy and process is the person driving it."

Do It YOURSELF

The biggest piece of executing this strategy and process is the person driving it. If you want to get noticed by these coaches and programs YOU MUST BE THE PERSON DRIVING THE PROCESS. Not your parents, not your coach, not a recruiting agency…YOU! The one common theme I hear from all coaches in regards to recruiting is that they want the actual high school athlete contacting them, not their parents. They WANT to know that you WANT to be a part of their programs. This is a BIG DEAL and not one to be overlooked or to say, “It doesn’t really matter.” Picking the right recruits is one of all coaches’ biggest and toughest jobs. If he or she is not hearing from you, they really can’t measure how much you want to be a part of their team and will probably select someone else who is showing that passion and determination for their program.

“You must be the person driving the process. Not your parents, not your coach, not a recruiting agency…YOU!”

If a coach receives a compelling and relevant email or voicemail from a high school student-athlete who wants to be a part of their program, it can be extremely powerful and hold a lot more weight than someone else doing the work on your behalf. I can’t be more adamant about anything in this guide: Execute this strategy and process yourself. Yes, you should take guidance from your parents, coaches, teammates and maybe even a recruiting agency, but YOU have to DRIVE the process.
It’s About Them (The Coaches and Their Programs) Not You

Before you contact a coach you have to do your homework. **You have to start thinking about the coach’s needs before your own.** Most young athletes trying to get recruited send emails, leave voicemails and email videos that are all about themselves and never mention anything about the university, the specific athletic program or the coach. Before you attempt to send any messages (calls, emails, video or direct mail) make sure you know something about the program. Make sure you have a clear, concise message on why you would like to play for that program and **how they will benefit from what you can bring to the team.**

I detailed how to build out a list with a minimum of 15 schools to target. I would prefer to see you have 20-30 (this will also depend on what sport you play and what level of academic institution you would like to attend). As I said before, this is a numbers game and the more schools you target, the more options it will give you when it is time to negotiate and make a decision on a school.

First, make sure to Google the coaches on your target list and search for them on Twitter and YouTube to find information on their programs and coaching philosophy. Next, I mentioned to write down any personal connections you may have at schools on your target list. If you don’t have personal connections at a specific school, try to get in touch with current or former players (possibly via Facebook or LinkedIn). Ask them if they have a few minutes to talk about their experiences with the program. Athletes usually like helping out other athletes.

Get in touch with these people and ask questions like the following:

- What type of player is attractive to the coach?
• Does the coach emphasize a certain system or strategy?
  o If Yes, what is that particular system?
• Does the coach value a strong work ethic?
• Is the coach a big advocate of strength and conditioning?
• Is the coach looking for top students?
• Is the coach looking for a player with speed or physical play at a certain position?
• Is the coach more of an offensive-type of coach or defensive?
• How much authority do the assistant coaches have? Do they make final decisions on recruits?
• Does the coach value character players?
• Does the coach value team players and ones that get along with their teammates?

Add questions that might be relevant to your sport. Take notes on the answers and feedback you receive. You will be using those notes in your email strategy, which I will discuss in more detail later in this guide.

Don’t Assume You Know What Coaches are Thinking

It’s easy to think that all college coaches want the same type of players—good players, right!—and they all think the same way. This is a dangerous misperception many young athletes and their parents have about college coaches. I do understand the reason for this mentality. At the high school varsity level, stronger, faster and better athletes usually stand head and shoulders above the rest of the competition and their own teammates. These players are always the go-to players on their teams, heavily relied upon, and their performance usually
dictates whether their team wins or loses. It’s not the same in college sports. The players on your college team and the other teams were ALL go-to players on their high school teams. No longer are the stronger, faster and better players head and shoulders above their teammates and the competition. The difference in talent and ability is minimized greatly, competition becomes fierce and the level of play rises. College athletes must evolve and adapt to this different situation or risk failure (see Comments—The Evolution and Your Career). These athletes start specializing their skills and focusing on specific aspects of the game/sport where they can provide value to their teams. In other words, role players are born and are an integral part of all college sports. Here are some examples:

**Basketball:** A player may not have the scoring prowess they had in high school but instead now focuses on becoming a shutdown defensive player and rebounder.

**Football:** Big sport of transition where many successful high school running backs transition to playing fullback, safety and linebacker. (I would imagine at least half the NFL played running back in high school.)

**Hockey:** Top scorers in high school and junior hockey transform their games and focus on being more physical, penalty killing and winning face-offs.

**Gymnastics:** Top all-around gymnasts in high school start focusing their attention on one or a couple of events to make the overall team better.

**Track & Field/Cross-Country:** Runners/sprinters who won every event in high school start focusing and training for specific events (longer or shorter) to not only help their team but sometimes just to beat out their teammates and compete at meets.

**Soccer:** A star on a high school or club team adapts to coming off the bench in the late minutes while maintaining performance and focus at a high level.

**Skiing (Alpine):** A strong slalom skier who may have had a tendency to DNF (Did Not Finish) now focuses more on finishing races in order to score team points.
Why You Need to Understand the Evolution of Role Players in College Sports

The reason I wanted to describe the evolution of role players is because college coaches NEED them desperately to build and maintain a successful program. They are their program’s lifeblood, and coaches are searching for them constantly. Coaches also value role players differently. Some coaches want a great leader who is selfless and will do anything for his teammates while others want players who are extremely coachable and will follow the systems and strategy to a T. One coach might need an impeccable student while another might be looking for a player who does one thing really well (even if they lack heavily in other areas). You really never know unless you ask, so make sure you leverage your personal connections and find out as much as you can about the mentality of the coach and the culture of the program.

“College coaches NEED role players desperately to build and maintain a successful program. They are their program’s lifeblood and coaches are searching for them constantly.”

Finally, even if you do not have a personal connection, you can find a way to connect with current or recently graduated players to find the answer to these questions. If you can’t get a phone number or email, send a friendly note via Facebook or LinkedIn telling them who you are and what you are looking to find out. People like helping people, especially athletes, and as I have said before it will only give you more information, build new relationships and broaden your network.

Most of you might be thinking, “I am going to be the go-to player in college as well, not a role player!” I hope you have this mentality. It shows that you are a competitive person and have great pride in your ability. I hope you join a team.
and are the best player or athlete they have ever seen in the program. I hope you win Team MVP all 4 years and become an All-American.

The focus of this guide, though, is to be as relevant as possible to coaches and schools you want to target in your recruiting. **This is the primary goal: joining the program at the school you want.** I could be wrong but I don’t believe telling coaches how great you are is the best strategy. **This is what everyone else is doing and you need to differentiate yourself.** Be relevant to the coaching staff and send the proper messages to get their attention. In addition, putting in the extra work in the beginning to find out what a specific coach is looking for will help you find a better match for yourself, which increases your chances of being happy in a program and wanting to play all four years.

**Learn the Program and Coach’s Backgrounds**

In addition to finding out the mentality of the coaching staff and culture of the program, you should read the bios of the entire coaching staff (maybe you’ll find out you know someone who has played with a coach to get a personal introduction), research the history of the program, see how they are doing this season, and

**comments**

**The Evolution and Your Career**

The evolution of role players is something you should keep in the back of your mind. I hope you are ultra-successful right out of the gate as a freshman, but for most, this is not the case. For the first time in their lives, some athletes realize they are not one of the better athletes and can’t handle it mentally. It happens every year at every program in college sports, and some players give up on a season (sometimes a career) because they can’t handle this new situation. They start making excuses, blaming the coaches and their work ethic, and focus suffers. This is what separates many college athletes from the people that don’t make it. You must learn that this is not going to be easy (nothing worth anything ever is). You may have to change your role and stay as positive as possible no matter where you stand on the team or how much playing time you get. Your college career is a marathon, not a sprint. There will be ups and downs, but the ability to remain focused, work hard and smart every day, and maintain a positive outlook is crucial to being successful.
also review the roster of players on the current team. This will be part of your strategic messaging to coaches and can also come in handy when you are having conversations with coaches later in the process.

What Do You Want to Study? Have a Clue.
The last research homework I want you to do is write down why academically you would want to attend a particular school. Now, some of you may know exactly what you want to study or major in when you get to college. If you do, write it down and why. Then find out the name of that particular course of study. For example, the business school at the University of New Hampshire is called the Whittemore School of Business and Economics. If you are not quite sure (don’t worry, most 15-18 year olds are not), do some research into what courses of study your target schools offer and see if any draw your attention and interest. No, you don’t have to know your major or what you are going to study right this minute, but before you even try to engage with a school or a coach you should have a general understanding of what the school offers from an academic perspective. Trust me, if you do end up meeting with the coaches they will ask you, “What are you thinking about studying?” Giving them an indication that you know what the school offers academically sounds a lot more professional than, “Uh, I don’t know.”

Why Should You Do All This Research? To Be Recruited.
You are probably saying to yourself, “Wow, that’s a lot of research!” Well, it’s really not that much research. It could take you less than 30 minutes to read the coaches’ bios, program history and current roster. Once you have a hold of some of your personal connections or players/current graduates of the team, it will only take a 10-15 minute conversation to get a general feel for the mentality of the coach and culture of the program, information you are going to want anyway before you make a decision on a school. Another question you are probably asking
yourself is, “Why am I doing all this research?” The answer is because you want to be MUCH more RELEVANT in your emails, calls and videos than every other athlete trying to get a coach’s attention. You want these messages to grab their attention and make them stop and think and hopefully respond to you. College coaches get hundreds, if not thousands, of calls, emails, direct mail, video, etc. and you must separate yourself from the pack to get their attention. BE RELEVANT and remember: It’s about THEM not YOU.

"BE RELEVANT and remember: It’s about THEM not YOU."

Why Email is Crucial to Be Recruited

One of the biggest things I want you to take away from this guide is how important your email strategy is in your recruiting process. It is HUGE. Why? It is the only way coaches in the majority of all college sports and divisions can communicate with you before your senior year of high school. For most sports, coaches can’t call you over the phone until your senior year, but they can start communicating with you via email (and Facebook, social networks, etc.) starting the first day of classes of your junior year.

The more effective you are at communicating via email the better chance you have of getting on a coach’s recruiting list and the better chance you have of getting an offer. This is a great opportunity because I believe the majority of emails coaches get from athletes are “All about Me” emails that are irrelevant, thus get deleted quickly. This is your chance to create quality emails that are relevant, attention grabbing ones that will trigger a response and get you engaged with more schools and programs.
"The more effective you are at communicating via email, the better chance you have of getting on a coach’s recruiting list and the better chance you have of getting an offer."

You can utilize email in so many ways to schedule a next step or gain exposure with coaches:

- Schedule calls with coaches (they can ask you to call them)
- Schedule unofficial visits
- Let coaches know you will be attending their camps or others in the area
- Let coaches know what showcases/tournaments you will be participating in
- Send coaches a link to your online profile/videos
- Make coaches aware of your grades/test scores

The key to reaching these next steps is creating relevant, attention grabbing emails. Utilize the research you have done to hit a cord with coaches in a more personal way.

In the next section, I will walk through examples of relevant, attention grabbing emails that will give you a better chance of getting a coach to respond. Use these emails as a guide in helping you “think outside the box” when you start to compose your emails, and remember: It’s about THEM not YOU.
Examples of Relevant Emails to Send to Coaches

Now let’s walk through an example of how we could target a coach and his staff with a relevant email. For the example let’s say you are a men’s basketball player and you have some Division 2 programs in the mid-west on your target list, one of them being the University of Southern Indiana. You want to get their attention and are ready to send them an email letting them know of your interest. During the research process you learned that the head coach, Rodney Watson, and his staff highly value players who:

- Take pride in their defense
- Abide by and execute the team system consistently
- Are great students

Prior to emailing the coaches, do a Google search of the head and assistant coaches. When I Googled “Rodney Watson recruiting,” I came across this article, among many other articles, interviews and videos of Coach Watson:

http://www.evansvilleliving.com/city-view/articles/rebuilding-strong

I made note of this part of the article:

“What impressed me about last year was how everyone changed their roles. Guys went from being second line players to the front line; they moved up on every opponent’s scouting report,” Watson says. This year’s team, ranked in the Division 2 top 10, features Brandon Hogg, a senior from Edwardsville, Ill., and Lawrence Thomas, a sophomore from Springfield, Ill., transitioning from second line to front line players. “They’ve stayed together, played for the right reasons,” Watson says. “We all need to have goals, and they have only one common goal: to win the game first.”
Rebuilding Strong

NCAA probation and tragedy behind them, the USI Screaming Eagles stay true to their mission

BY MARK MATHIS

A continued string of good players, some patience, much persistence, and a lot of perspective have gone into the first three years of Rodney Watson’s tenure as the men’s basketball coach at the University of Southern Indiana.

USI was reeling from an NCAA investigation that stemmed from what the school called “irregularities in its athletics program” that led to former men’s basketball coach Rick Herdes’ resignation in 2009. The NCAA found that a former USI assistant coach had arranged for improper academic credit for a player, provided improper benefits for another, then gave misleading testimony during the investigation.

That was a far fall for a program that reached the NCAA Division II national championship game in 2004 and won the title in 1995.
Your email should have 3 points to offer the coach:

- Purpose
- Benefit
- Request

The email should also be short and to the point, and I will continue to reference PBR or Purpose, Benefit, Request.

Now if you are looking to grab Coach Rodney Watson’s attention you could send a relevant email referencing the article and Coach Watson’s quotes.

**EXAMPLE EMAIL: Referencing a Coach’s Quote**

**Subject:** Coach Watson: Your Quote in Evansvilleliving.com

Coach Watson,

I wanted to connect with you after I came across this quote from you on Evansvilleliving.com: “What impressed me about last year was how everyone changed their roles. Guys went from being second line players to the front line; they moved up on every opponent’s scouting report.”

My name is Steve O’Brien and I am very interested in becoming part of your program. Much like your current players did for you this year, I pride myself in being a team player, abiding by the team system and doing whatever it takes to win. I am a junior point guard in the top 15% of my class academically at Braintree High School in Braintree, MA. I want to major in Business and have been researching USI’s College of Business program.

Please see my full profile (stats, grades, video, referrals): www.steveobrien.com

Coach Watson, I will be visiting the Southern Indiana campus in late May and was hoping you (or one of your assistants) would have some time to meet with me.
I would also be open to scheduling a call prior to that meeting at your convenience. Please let me know if this is possible.

I appreciate your time, and I am very eager to learn more about your program and what type of student-athlete best fits your system.

Regards,

Steve
Steve O’Brien ‘17
Junior | Point Guard | Braintree High School
GPA: 3.2 | SAT: 1510 | ACT: 22
Athletic Profile: www.linktomyprofile.com
Video: www.linktomyvideo.com
Phone: 888-555-1212

Now let’s breakdown this email:

**Subject Line**—This is critical. You need a subject line that is going to not only grab the coach’s attention but also get him or her to open it. Some athletes think just because they send an email, the coach will read it. Trust me, coaches delete or disregard many more emails than they actually read. They do not have enough time in the day to read every single one. Furthermore, many coaches will see your email using their mobile phones. Most people, statistically, only read the subject line and the first line of an email from their mobile phones before they decide to keep reading or disregard, making the subject line that much more critical. If the subject line is not attention grabbing, your email might go into the coach’s abyss of email, never

>“If the subject line is not attention-grabbing, your email might go into the coach’s abyss of email, never to be read again.”
to be read again. You NEED an attention grabbing subject line. In the example, by referencing a quote Coach Watson had in a particular article (www.evansvilleliving.com), you greatly increase your chances of the coach opening the email. Put yourself in the coach’s shoes. If someone sent you an email and in the subject referenced an article that you were quoted in, wouldn’t you open it? Of course you would. It is human curiosity and everyone likes to read something that is positive about him or herself.

“Referencing a quote... greatly increases your chances of the coach opening the email”

**Email Body**—Here is the breakdown of the Purpose, Benefit and Request.

**Purpose:** I wanted to connect with you after I came across this quote from you on Evansvilleliving.com: “What impressed me about last year was how everyone changed their roles. Guys went from being second line players to the front line; they moved up on every opponent’s scouting report.”

You are letting the coach know exactly why you are emailing him. In the example, you are saying you read his quote on the Evansvilleliving.com website and were compelled to reach out to him. Now, is this a little far-fetched? Of course, but the main thing you are doing is subtlety showing the coach that you have a genuine interest in his program. This is already way ahead of the generic emails he is getting from other athletes.

**Benefit:** My name is Steve O’Brien and I am very interested in becoming part of your program. Much like your current players did for you this year, I pride myself in being a team player, abiding by the team system and doing whatever it takes to win. I am a junior point guard in the top 15% of my class academically at Braintree High School in Braintree, MA. I want to major in Business and have been researching USI’s College of Business program.

Please see my full profile (stats, grades, video, referrals): www.steveobrien.com (Add hyperlink to profile)
Here you are showing what benefit you could potentially bring to Coach Watson’s program. Furthermore, you are describing benefits that are relevant to him that you found in your research (i.e. team player, abiding by the system, etc.). Finally, showing you have an interest in a specific academic program at the university demonstrates to the coach that you are taking a comprehensive view of the overall process, which will be perceived as a sign of maturity, another great benefit to any coach.

Request: I will be visiting the Southern Indiana campus in late May and was hoping you (or one of your assistants) would have some time to meet with me. I would also be open to scheduling a call prior to that meeting at your convenience. Please let me know if this is possible.

The request needs to be respectful, clear, and straight to the point. It also needs to show you are serious about THIS coach’s program and school. Don’t say something like “I am thinking about visiting your campus” or “I’ll be visiting some schools in May and was wondering if you had some time” or “I am only available to talk in the evening.” If you are serious about this process you will:

- Visit the campus and accommodate the coach’s schedule to make the meeting/visit happen
- Be open to speaking with the coach anytime (within reason of your current school and athletic requirements; i.e. exams, practice, games, etc.)
Most importantly, this is your first impression to show a coach how seriously you are taking the school and program. You must make clear that you want to be a part of the program BADLY.

“Coaches HAVE to genuinely feel that you WANT to be a part of their program.”

Of course, you are going to want to be a part of some schools more than others, but you have to set the right precedent with every school you are pursuing. Coaches have to genuinely feel that you want to be a part of their program. You have to exude that passion with every school if you want to make the most of this process and get the best offer for YOU. You never know what school will ultimately be best for you. You may have a top choice, but another school might actually be the better fit for you—you just don’t know. So at this point, treat them all equally in order to get the most out of the process.
**Last Line**—I appreciate your time, and I am very eager to learn more about your program and what type of student-athlete best fits your system.

Here I believe you are differentiating yourself because you are not just saying, “Hey if you are interested in me, give me a call back.” You are being more mature than that. You are telling them you would like to learn more to see if you and the program are a good match for each other. You are also showing you are genuinely interested in where the coach wants to take the program. This should give the coach a more positive impression of you (especially if the alternative is sending a generic email) and give him or her more incentive to respond to you, which is the primary goal of the email.

This is only one email example of how to grab a coach’s attention and hopefully prompt a response from him or her. I am not saying my examples are the BE ALL and END ALL or the ONLY way you should be sending emails. I want to bring these example emails to your attention to get you thinking “outside the box” in this process about how you can differentiate yourself from other athletes who are sending coaches the same self-promoting generic emails that typically get ignored.
Below are some more examples of other introductory emails I have put together to give you more ideas when you start to compose your own emails.

“[Start] thinking
“outside the box” in this process
and about how you can differentiate
yourself from other athletes . . .”

**EXAMPLE EMAIL: Referencing the Program’s Losses to Graduation**

**Example Scenario:** Your name is John Doe. You are currently a junior at ABC High School (in Springfield, IL.) and play men’s soccer. You are a midfielder. You are researching the men’s soccer program at XYZ University. You realize that the team has 8 juniors, 3 of them being midfielders, who will graduate the same year you will be graduating from high school (2017) and entering college as a freshman. You could send the coaches (assistants and head coach) an email like this one:

**Subject:** Coach Smith: I noticed the team was graduating 8 players at the end of 2017

**Body:** Hi Coach Smith,

**Purpose:** I was researching your program and noticed that at the end of next year (2017) you will be graduating 8 members of your team including 3 midfielders. I have been following your program for many years and feel I could help fill the void that will be left when your 2017 class graduates.

**Benefit:** My name is John Doe. I am a junior midfielder at ABC High School in Springfield, IL. I have the ability to play at the Division 2 level and have the academics in place to be accepted by XYZ’s admissions.
Please see my full profile (stats, grades, video, referrals): www.johndoe.com (Add hyperlink to profile)

**Request:** Coach Smith, I am planning on visiting campus next month and was hoping you had some time to meet with me to discuss your program and what types of student-athletes fit your system. I would also be happy to speak by phone prior. I appreciate your time and please let me know if we can set something up.

Regards,

John
John Doe‘17
Junior | Midfielder | ABC High School
GPA: 3.3 | SAT: 1510 | ACT: 22
Athletic Profile: www.myprofile.com
Video: www.myhighlightvideo.com
Phone: 888-555-1212.

The previous email is **short, relevant** and **asks** for a next step. I feel that this subject line is very compelling for any coach, and it will get them to open the email. You are showing the coach that you are doing solid due diligence in knowing what their current roster looks like, who will be graduating and when. It shows you are doing the research and want to be a part of their program. **Most importantly:** This is your first impression to show them how seriously you take their school and program and that being a part of their program is something you WANT BADLY.
**EXAMPLE EMAIL: You Played with Someone on the Current Team**

**Example Scenario:** You are a women’s lacrosse player (Julia Pierce) trying to get recruited by a team where one of your former teammates or friends (let’s say her name is Janet Kelly) is currently playing. Your position is attacker. First, hopefully your friend is trying to help you with the coach internally by telling the coach of your interest and putting in a good word for you. You should also have a good conversation with Janet about the school and program to get a solid understanding of what the coach wants to see in a student-athlete. In this example, let’s say Janet told you the coach loves team leaders and athletes who consistently work hard at practice day in and day out. If you have not yet engaged with the coaching staff and want to, you could then send an email like this (Remember PBR):

**Subject:** Janet Kelly

**Body:** Hi Coach Smith,

**Purpose:** My name is Julia Pierce. I was a high school teammate of Janet Kelly at XYZ High School in Weymouth, MA. Janet has told me a lot about the team and university, and I would really like to be a part of a program like yours.

**Benefit:** I am junior attacker at XYZ High School. I am an assistant captain as a junior and an accomplished high school scorer. I am one of those “last players to leave” who constantly works on their game, always bringing my teammates with me.

Please see my full profile (stats, grades, video, referrals): www.juliapierce.com (Add hyperlink to profile)

**Request:** I will be on campus November 10th to watch your game (and see Janet play) and was hoping you would have some time to meet before or after the game. I would also be happy to schedule a call prior. I appreciate your time and please let me know if you are able to meet with me.

**DISCLAIMER:**
The words Purpose, Benefit, Request are a guide for you the reader. **Do NOT insert these words in your actual emails!!**
Regards,

Julia
Julia Pearce ’17
Junior | Attacker | XYZ High School
GPA: 3.3 | SAT: 1510 | ACT: 22
Athletic Profile: www.myathleticprofile.com
Video: www.myhighlightvideo.com
Phone: 888-555-1212

“If a coach sees one of their players names in the subject line, they are probably going to open up the email out of general curiosity.”

In this example, I like the subject line just being Janet Kelly. If a coach sees one of their player’s names in the subject line, they are probably going to open up the email out of general curiosity. In the benefit piece, using the information your friend gave you should prove relevant to the coach and hit a cord because you are letting them know you are already doing things they care about and value in a student-athlete. In the request, stating you are coming to see Janet play makes it more personal, which is always better.
**EXAMPLE EMAIL: The Team Just Won a Game/Event**

You should keep tabs of the teams on your target list of schools to see how they are doing during the current season. If you are trying to engage with a coach, you could send them an email after a big win.

**Example Scenario:** You are a senior third baseman playing baseball for ABC High School in Tacoma, WA. You notice that one of the schools on your target list just beat its rival (let’s call them College University) in a big game. *(Remember PBR):*

**Subject:** Coach Smith—Congratulations on your big win yesterday against College University!

**Body:** Hi Coach Smith,

**Purpose:** I was reading online about your big win against College University. Congratulations! I wanted to connect because I would love to be a part of this type of competitive atmosphere when I play college ball.

**Benefit:** My name is Steve O’Brien and I am a senior 3rd baseman at ABC High School in Tacoma, WA. I am currently in the Top 5 in league batting average and carry a 3.0 GPA. I have been admiring your program, and I think my skills and character would be a great addition to your club. Please see my full profile (stats, grades, video, referrals): www.steveobrien.com *(Add hyperlink to profile)*

**Request:** Coach Smith, I will be coming to campus at the end of this month and was hoping you would have some time to meet with me to discuss your program and what you are looking for in a potential recruit. Also, I will be playing in the Washington High School All-Star weekend on June 13th-15th. I am not sure if you will be attending, but if you will be, I would love to touch base with you there. I appreciate your time and please let me know if you have some time to meet when I come to campus.
Regards,

Steve
Steve O’Brien ‘16
Senior | Third Baseman | Tacoma High School
GPA: 3.3 | SAT: 1510 | ACT: 22
Athletic Profile: www.myathleticprofile.com
Video: www.myhighlightvideo.com
Phone: 888-555-1212

In this example, I think the coach will definitely open the email because of the subject line. Who wouldn’t open up an email with a positive subject line like that? Not too many people. The email shows that you are paying attention and keeping tabs on the program, demonstrating that you are doing a lot more than the average high school athlete trying to get recruited. Also, you mention how you want to be a part of a big game and that type of atmosphere. It signals to the coach that you understand what competition is all about and there is more to it than just showing up to the field and worrying about your batting average (i.e. personal stats).

**EXAMPLE EMAIL: Assistant Coaches**

You should be sending assistant coaches emails in addition to the head coach. Most programs have one assistant coach dedicated as “recruiting coordinator.” The head coaches might have the final say in whether or not they make you an offer, but the assistant coaches can be just as important (sometimes more so) when it comes to getting on a program’s radar. You want to be as personalized and relevant as possible with the assistant coaches, but you can still use the same information you used for the head coach in your emails to the assistants. In the email example below, you could change the subject line to “Coach Watson’s Quote in Evansvilleliving.com” and then keep the same message in the body, but tailor it toward the assistant coach.
I have put the tweaks in bold for assistant coaches in the next example.

**Body:** Hi Coach Smith,

**Purpose:** I wanted to connect with you after I came across Coach Watson’s quote on EvansvilleLiving.com: “What impressed me about last year was how everyone changed their roles. Guys went from being second line players to the front line; they moved up on every opponent’s scouting report.”

**Benefit:** My name is Steve O’Brien and I am very interested in becoming part of the **Southern Indiana basketball program**. Much like your current players did for the program this year, I pride myself in being a team player, abiding by the team system and doing whatever it takes to win. I am a junior point guard in the top 15% of my class academically at Braintree High School in Braintree, MA. I want to major in Business and have been researching USI’s College of Business program.

Please see my full profile (stats, grades, video, referrals): www.steveobrien.com (Add hyperlink to profile)

**Request:** Coach Smith, I will be visiting the Southern Indiana campus in late October and was hoping you would have some time to meet with me. I would also be open to scheduling a call prior to that meeting at your convenience. Please let me know if this is possible.

I appreciate your time, and I am very eager to meet and learn more about what you are looking for in a student-athlete and the overall goals of the program.

Regards,

Steve
Steve O’Brien ‘17
Junior | Point Guard | Braintree High School
GPA: 3.3 | SAT: 1510 | ACT: 22
Athletic Profile: www.myathleticprofile.com
Video: www.myhighlightvideo.com
Phone: 888-555-1212

You should be sending assistant coaches emails, in addition to the head coach.
Remember: It’s a Numbers Game

We have gone over some strategic, attention grabbing emails to send to coaches. I want to re-iterate (which I have and will continue to do several times in this guide) the mindset you have to have early on in this process. Your mindset should revolve around two words that are the core of this process: “NUMBERS GAME.” What I mean by “Numbers Game” is you have to try to connect with many schools and coaches, and you have to try and connect with individual coaches multiple times.

More activity (pro-active emails and phone calls)

↓

More engagement with more coaches

↓

More potential offers

A Numbers Game mentality means taking your emotions out of the process when it comes to not receiving a response back and sticking to the strategy and plan no matter what. You could write the best, most relevant email the coach has ever seen and they still might not respond. The ONE thing you CAN’T do if you want to be successful in this process and get the best offer possible is SLOW DOWN or STOP being pro-active when contacting all of the coaches on your list. I know, not hearing back from a coach, especially if you send them a great email that you put time into, can be discouraging. It is a rejection; it is a NO and it can be tough to take. Remember, though, when you don’t hear

“The ONE thing you CAN’T do if you want to be successful in this process and get the best offer possible is SLOW DOWN or STOP being proactive.”
back from a coach, keep thinking “NUMBERS GAME” and continue to be pro-active and pleasantly persistent. If you are realistic with the schools you are targeting (i.e. you did the proper self-evaluation in Section 1), the “Numbers Game” mindset combined with relevant, attention grabbing messaging will give you a much better chance of scheduling meetings/visits with these coaches, putting you in a better position to get the offer you want.

On the flipside, if you get some responses and interest from coaches, DO NOT stop being pro-active either. Make sure you continue the process through every school on your list. It is easy to get interest (i.e. “feel the love”) from a couple of schools and think, “Okay, I’ll just choose one of these schools.” If you do that, you are doing yourself a disservice. Getting as many schools into the mix will not only allow you to get a better understanding of more schools, but it will also help you find the coach and program that is the absolute best fit for you. Plus it will also give you more chips at the negotiating table. It doesn’t matter if you are a recruit negotiating a full scholarship or just trying to get your books paid for; having many interested schools gives you more control (and confidence) when negotiating offers. If you only have one or two schools presenting an offer, you have a lot less leverage than if you have five or six. Remember “NUMBERS GAME” and keep being pro-active and relevant!

“Having many interested schools gives you more control (and confidence) when negotiating offers.”

The Best Time to Send Emails to Coaches
You are putting all of this effort into creating relevant, attention grabbing emails to send to coaches, so you must be strategic when sending these emails. This is important. Think about it. I have asked coaches when they most frequently get emails from athletes trying to be recruited. Overall, they say mostly nights
and weekends are when they receive the majority of their emails from potential recruits. Don’t be like most of these athletes trying to get attention! They are emailing the coach when they (the athlete) are free; i.e. when it is best for them, not the coach. I go back to it’s about THEM, not about YOU. Think about the coach’s schedule. During the week, most coaches practice (or have a game or event) in the afternoon. In the evening, they do look at email, but they also spend a lot of time speaking with potential recruits, parents and high school coaches among other things. On the weekends is when most sports have games/events, and this is usually an all-day affair for a coach and team (especially if they are the away team and travelling). Also, coaches have lives outside of their sports! They are human beings just like the rest of us and spend time with their families, friends, husbands, wives, girlfriends and boyfriends, usually on the weekends. After taking this into consideration, the majority of coaches (not all) are sitting at their desks between 9:30AM and lunchtime going through their emails, recruiting, putting practice plans together, watching videos, etc. This is probably the best time to send your email.

Why?

• Coaches are most likely sitting at their desks in front of their laptop or computer.

• Coaches are not “on the go,” so they are settled and have a bit more time.

• The majority of other potential recruits/young athletes are not sending their emails at this time.

You might be saying, “I am at school; I don’t have the time to send emails on weekday mornings.” There are a couple of ways around this. After you draft your emails, you can have them scheduled to be sent out at a time that you choose, preferably for coaches between 9:30-10:30am. There are services like Boomerang for Gmail, which is a plug-in/extension you can download for free to make this
very simple. Second, if you have a study hall or gym class in the morning, maybe you can explain to your teacher what you are trying to accomplish and that you would like to spend the class time sending out emails to universities you would possibly like to attend. This is a reasonable request. I would think most teachers would understand. I would have the emails drafted completely so you are just sending emails and not editing and writing during this limited time.

I have another piece of advice when it comes to sending emails to coaches. Make sure to check their game/event schedules (you can find them on the school’s athletic website). I would recommend not sending a coach an email on a game day. Coaches are pre-occupied focusing on the game that day and getting their team as prepared as possible. Also, coaches might be playing an away game and have a road trip, giving them even less time. Overall, most coaches are not focused on recruiting the day of a game/event; they are focused on their current team, so I don’t suggest emailing or calling them on these days. You should also be checking when a coach’s season is over. For the most part, the few weeks after the season, the coaches are probably going to try to take their minds off of the sport, and if they do any recruiting, it will probably be with recruits they have already been in contact with and have pre-scheduled calls and meetings. This is my opinion, and it will be different from coach to coach, but I just want you to spend your time and energy at the right time to give you the best possible chance at a response.

“I would recommend not sending a coach an email on a game day.”
Pro-Active Follow Up

Now you have sent out relevant, attention grabbing emails to the head and assistant coaches at one of your target schools. What do you do next? First give the coaches 48 to 72 hours to get back to you. If you do not hear from them within that time frame, you should send them another email (again at a strategic time). Go to your “Sent” box within your email. You should forward the last email you sent to them so the subject line is the same with the “FW:” just before. Why should you forward your previous email? If you created a compelling and relevant subject line and email, the chances of the coach reading that email, even if they did not respond the first time, are very high. In contrast, a generic “all about me” email that most young athletes are sending has a much less chance of even getting read. In short, you want to remind the coach of the great email you sent a few days ago. You might be asking, “If I sent such a great email, why didn’t the coach respond?” Young athletes honestly believe the only reason the coach did not get back to them after the first email is because the coach is not interested or the coach did not think they were good enough. Could this be the reason? Yes. Is it the only reason a coach doesn’t respond to a young athlete’s email or voicemail? Absolutely not! I go back to it again: Think about THEM (the coaches) not YOU. Put yourself in their shoes. College coaches are extremely busy people. Think about all the stuff they are doing: practices, games, video, travel, recruiting, speaking engagements, community events, camps, university administration, current players (on and off field issues), and more. Coaches are always on the move, and just like anyone else (maybe even yourself) they skim through email, often on their mobile phones, and don’t respond to every one of them. You may have grabbed their attention for a moment, but they were in the middle of something and didn’t immediately respond. If they didn’t set up a reminder for themselves, your email may get buried, never

“ They didn’t immediately respond…
don’t take it personally.
Be realistic about it and follow-up again.”
to be returned. This happens all the time, so don’t take it personally. Be realistic about it and follow-up again.

You have to be pleasantly persistent throughout this process and “remind” the coach of your great email. As I mentioned, go to your “Sent” box and forward your previous email. Now, in the body (above the first email), you want to be short and concise. If “Coach Watson” (Example Email, P. 64) did not get back to me, my follow up email would look like the following:

**DO NOT re-write the subject line. Leave the FW: and the old subject line.**

People/Coaches are much more likely to open up an email that has been forwarded and leaving the subject line will remind them of your original email.

**Subject:** FW: Coach Watson: Your Quote in Evansvilleliving.com

Coach Watson,

I wanted to follow up on the email I sent below. Please let me know if you would have some time to meet me in late October when I am visiting the Southern Indiana campus or if you would like to schedule a call to speak.

I appreciate your time and look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,

Steve

**Then keep your original email below the Follow Up email.**

Steve O’Brien ’14
Junior | Point Guard | Braintree High School
GPA: 3.2 | SAT: 1510 | ACT: 22
Steve O’Brien Basketball Profile (Add Hyperlink to Your Online Athletic Profile)
Video: Highlights and References (Add Hyperlink to YouTube Channel or Videos)
Phone: 888-555-1212
Now if you do get a positive response after the first or second email, i.e. the coach would like to speak with you or invites you to meet on campus, make sure to respond properly. You don’t have to respond instantly. You may have to take some time to check your schedule or your parent’s before committing to a call or meeting. You should respond within 24 hours, though (12 would be best depending on the time of day they emailed you), and make sure to show respect for the coach’s time (i.e. “Thanks for the response”, “I appreciate your time”, “I look forward to coming to campus to meet you and the coaching staff”). I am not going to tell you exactly what to write because you have to be yourself, but I want to emphasize the need to respond promptly with respect and appreciation.

You should **respond within 24 hours** . . . and make sure to show respect for their time.

You may get a negative response like, “Thanks for your email, but we are all set in our recruiting for next year.” I know it’s not easy to hear, but try not to take it personally and remember: “NUMBERS GAME.” Stick to the strategy and process you have laid out. Also, in no way does it mean you are done in your efforts in trying to be recruited by this school. Many things change and develop over time: one of their slated recruits changes their mind, one of their current player’s leaves school or decides to transfer, another is deemed academically ineligible, the school awards the team additional scholarship money, etc. If you really want to be a part of a particular program and they say “No” at first, give it 6 weeks and then you can follow up with a “check-in” email letting them know you are still interested and want to see if anything has changed. You will never know unless you continue to follow up.
Calling Coaches and Scripts on What to Say

If you have sent two emails and have not heard back after 72 hours of the 2nd email, it is time to place a call. Prior to calling you should put together 2 short scripts to guide you. One script if the coach picks up the phone, the other if you have to leave a voicemail. This will help you be clear with your message, help the coach identify you (and your email), and set yourself up to make a request. In the script you should leverage your original email and still abide by the PBR model I illustrated in the email examples. For instance, if I were going to give Coach Watson (example email, p. 41) a call, my script would read something like this (the portion in italics is the student-athlete’s part):

**CALL SCRIPT: Coach Picks Up Phone**

“Hi Coach Watson,

My name is Steve O’Brien and I am a point guard at Braintree High School. Did I catch you at a bad time?” (Show respect for their time; you are calling them unplanned).

If they say it is a bad time or they are busy. Immediately say: “I completely understand, would there be a good time today or tomorrow to give you a call back?” Then stop talking and do not say a word until the coach responds. The coach might say, “What is this regarding?” If the coach says this, continue on with the script below. If the coach gives you a time, write it down, tell the coach thank you and that you will call him or her back at that time (make sure you call back at that time!). When you call back, use the script below.

**Purpose:** “I am following up on an email I sent earlier in the week (or last week) regarding your article in evansvilleliving.com on how your players changed their roles and raised their level of play throughout the past season. I wanted to see if you got a chance to look at my email and profile I sent you on Tuesday.” (say the exact day)

**If Yes:** Benefit is known because the coach has looked at email and profile
Request: “Great, I have been a big fan of your program and would love to be a part of it (or anything relevant: maybe you know one of his or her players, went to one of their camps, etc). I will be visiting the Southern Indiana campus the week of October 21st (for example) and wanted to know if you had some time to meet and discuss your program and the recruiting process.” Stop talking and do not say a word until the coach speaks.

If the coach:

- **Gives you a date and time:** Schedule the meeting and thank him or her for the time. I would also send them a calendar invite (you can do this via Google calendar) and inside the body of the invite, thank them for the time and let them know you are looking forward to it.

- **Says it is not a good week:** Ask them when would be a good week (date and time) and you would be happy to adjust your schedule accordingly to meet.

- **Says they are not interested or are all set from a recruiting perspective:** If this is a program you want to be a part of badly ask the coach what alternative routes you could potentially take to be a part of the program (i.e. Club/Junior team? Post-graduate year? Junior College?). The coach might give you an inside view of how they have recruited some athletes not directly from high school. You could possibly pursue this route if you wanted to be a part of this program.

Regardless, thank the coach for his or her time and if anything changes in the future to contact you. You can still “check-in” with the coach in 6-8 weeks to see if anything has changed. The pursuit is not over. Also, if he or she did give you some advice on alternative routes and you looked into them, you could always send a thank you email to him or her with your progress and potential questions. This will show you are serious, that you really want to be part of the program, and it will keep you connected with the coach.
If the coach has NOT seen your email or profile: Ask them if they are in front of a computer (hopefully they are at their desk). If they are, tell them you are re-sending the email now, have them take a look and point out the highlights in the profile, and then walk them through the script above (i.e. requesting a meeting, school visit or whatever the best way for you to engage). Continue the script to try and schedule a time. If they are not in front of a computer and have not seen the email, tell them you will re-send the email for them to have a look when they get a chance. Continue on with the script to see if you can get a meeting. When you send the original email to them again make sure you reference the call, i.e. “Thanks for taking the time today. My original email and profile are below.”

CALL SCRIPT: Voicemail

**Remember: (PBR) Purpose, Benefit, Request

Hi Coach Watson,

Purpose: I am following up on an email I sent earlier in the week (or last week) regarding your article in evansvilleliving.com on how your players changed their roles and raised their level of play throughout the past season. I wanted to call and find out if you had a chance to look at the email and the link to my profile page.

Benefit: My name is Steve O’Brien. I am a junior point guard at Braintree High School. I carry those characteristics you are looking for in a player and would love to be part of your program in the future.

Request: I will be visiting the Southern Indiana campus the week of May 21st (for example) and wanted to know if you had some time to meet and discuss your program and the recruiting process. I would also welcome the opportunity to speak with you or one of your assistants prior. Please let me know.

Coach Watson, I can be reached at 555-555-1212. Again, it’s Steve O’Brien at 555-555-1212. I look forward to hearing from you. Thanks Coach.
A couple of points I want to highlight on this voicemail script:

**Length:** This script is short and concise. I just timed myself practicing this script. Speaking at a regular pace (not rushed), it took me a little under 45 seconds. You do not want this to be long. People do not even like checking their voicemails anymore, let alone listening to a long message, so keep it short.

**Introduction:** Notice how I started the script. I referenced the details of the email first. I did not say start with, “Hi Coach, This is Steve O’Brien. I am a point guard from ABC High School....” This is another way to differentiate yourself from the norm by being more relevant to the coach and putting the focus on HIS program and not solely on YOU.

By this point in the guide you should have accomplished these 4 keys tasks in the process:

- Picked the proper list of target schools based on your self-evaluation (athletically and academically)
- Cleaned up your personal brand (i.e. Facebook, social networks)
- Created your online athletic profile, videos and email account
- Sent the proper messaging (doing your research and guided by my examples) to all head and assistant coaches at your target schools (2 emails and a call). If no response, wait a month and do the process again (possibly with new messaging).
I feel that if you have worked hard at these 4 tasks, then you have pro-actively planned and executed your strategy to get the attention of coaches in order to be recruited. Through this process you have likely given yourself a far greater chance to catch coaches’ attentions and get yourself a meeting (or some kind of next step), which is one of the biggest hurdles to overcome in being recruited by any program. In other words, by this point you have done most of the heavy lifting. Once you get that “foot in the door,” coaches can get to know you (and you can get to know them) to see if a program is the best fit for you.

After the planning and execution, you are ready to move on to the final section: **Making the Best Impression and Negotiating Offers.**
SECTION 4
Making the Best Impression and Negotiating Offers
The previous sections have helped you get the attention and engage with multiple coaches. Hopefully you are now on several recruiting lists, enabling you to engage further in the recruiting process and ultimately get offers from schools and teams that would be a great fit for you.

The first step in getting a coach’s attention can be difficult, but if you are successful there is still a lot of work to do—which is good news. Now I can’t tell you exactly how to act or what to do as the recruiting process continues because you ultimately need to be yourself, but I did want to add some helpful tips and best practices, based on my experiences, to help you make a good impression on coaches:

- Be Respectful to the Coaches and School
- Be in Shape When You Meet Coaches
- Dress Accordingly to Be Recruited
- Negotiate Offers and Take Control of the Process
- Don’t Be Rushed
- Honest Communication and Creating a Bidding War
- Go with Your Gut
You want all feedback to come back positive from any visit or meeting you have... show respect to every individual you meet.

Be Respectful to the Coaches and School

This might sound like a no-brainer, but make sure you are respectful to everyone you meet at a particular school: all coaches, all players, equipment guys, student-interns who helps the team, school officials—everyone. The reason is not just because you should be but also because anything can get back to the coaching staff or the person who will be making the decision on whether you get an offer or not. You want all feedback to come back positive from any visit or meeting you have, and the one way you can do that is to be polite and show respect to every individual you meet.

Being respectful also means responding to coaches promptly during the recruiting process. The absolute longest amount of time you should ever take to respond to a coach’s email or voicemail is 24 hours. Anything longer shows the coaching staff at that school you are not ALL IN and being recruited by them doesn’t mean that much to you. Also, if you make a decision on a school, you should call back all the other schools/coaches that were trying to recruit you and invested time with you to let them know of your decision. You owe them that, and if you don’t and the school you chose is local or in the same conference of the school you did not pick, rest-assured that information will get back to your future head coach. Coaches within conferences not only talk, most are good friends. Finally, you should be the one making the call, not your parents or a recruiting agency. You owe it to those schools and coaches who put effort and time into trying to recruit you.
Honesty goes hand in hand with being respectful. Being honest and upfront is the best way to go through the process. Be honest about your grades, test scores, eligibility, statistics, awards, other schools you are speaking with, etc. You owe it to the coaches recruiting you (and they owe it to you as well). Also, if a coaching staff finds out you have been dishonest (even if it is only something small), you will lose all your credibility and your character will be questioned. If you want an offer, you don’t want either of these things to happen. Being honest DOES NOT mean letting coaches and programs control the recruiting process, and in my upcoming Negotiation section, I will show you how being honest can help you get a better offer.

My final piece on being respectful is a bit old school, but I believe it is a great thing to do in showing your respect. Make sure to mail (yes, hard copy mail) hand written letters to EVERY PERSON at a school who sits down and spends time with you to give you more information about the team, school or recruiting process. This is a very thoughtful and respectful thing to do that shows these individuals that their time meant something to you and was appreciated. Showing a sign of appreciation like this can also get these individuals talking about you in a positive way, which can only help you when coaches are trying to make a decision on who will receive an offer. (*When I was interviewing for my first real job it was between me and another person. After I got the job, a couple members of the team told me the boss let the team decide who to hire. These team members told me I got the job because they really appreciated the hand written thank you cards I had sent them.)

“Being honest and upfront is the best way to go throughout the process.”
Be in Shape When You Meet Coaches
When you meet with coaches it is very important that you are in great shape. If you are an athlete looking to get an offer to play a sport at the college level, then there is no excuse for you not to be in shape. If you appear overweight or unfit you are giving the coaches the perception that you do not take your sport seriously. The coaches, then, may not take you seriously. On the other hand, you will leave a great first impression on the coaches if you appear to be in great physical condition. If I was a coach and met a potential recruit who was overweight, I would think, “Why should I recruit you when you obviously don’t take care of yourself and aren’t doing the things within your control to make yourself a better athlete?” Other athletes are doing these things. If you want to play college sports, get in the best shape of your life. No excuses.

“’If you want to play college sports, get in the best shape of your life. No excuses.”

Dress Accordingly to Be Recruited
Any opportunity to meet a member of the coaching staff or school official is an opportunity to make a positive impression. Don’t ruin it by not dressing accordingly. Different situations call for different attire, but there are some things that you should not be wearing at this point in the recruiting process including hats, tank tops, flip flops, worn sneakers or ripped clothing just to name a few.

This is your chance to play your sport at the college level. Why make a bad impression and look immature or unprofessional when you don’t have to? You might say, “It only matters how good I am as an athlete, not what I wear.” My answer would be, why risk it? I would recommend dressing conservatively and just a notch above what the situation calls for. Remember, it’s the little things
that might make the difference between you and a similar recruit getting an offer. **The goal is to get multiple offers, so take every part of the process with every team/school seriously and with professionalism.**

**Negotiate Offers and Take Control of the Process**

The focus of this guide is to get the attention of college coaches and engage in a recruiting process with multiple schools on your target list. I do want to take a moment to take it a step further and offer some thoughts and best practices as you get deeper into this process. Your sole mission, and the reason you put in so much time and effort into the strategies I mention in this guide, is to get the best offer at the best school for YOU. The best way to do this is to put yourself in a position where you have interest from multiple schools, and this is why you were and continue to be persistent and relentlessly pro-active with your target list. This will give you more leverage and control in this process to receive the best offer possible. If you only have one school interested, it really limits your power to negotiate and get a better offer from a program.

As I mentioned earlier, it does not matter what type of offer you are negotiating. Some athletes might be offered a 3-year scholarship and try to negotiate to get a full-ride while others might simply try to negotiate getting their books paid for in full. **Every situation is different, but YOUR situation is the most important and you want to get the best offer for YOU.** If you want the best offer, you have to take on a BUSINESS MENTALITY ([see Comments—Taking Your Emotions Out of the Process](#)) and not make it personal. Having a business mentality means being honest and transparent with the coaches, but at the same time not letting your emotions get in the way. It means being thoughtful about the right actions to take and making the best decisions for you but not worrying about coaches’ feelings or what they might think of you.
Don’t Be Rushed

There are a couple of different ways that an athlete can feel rushed in this process. First, a coach and/or program could have great interest in you and do everything right in the recruiting process to show you how much they want you to be a part of the school and program. You could start to “feel the love.” When I say, “feel the love,” I mean you start to build a relationship with that particular school and program, you really like the fact that they really want you, and you feel like this might be a place you would really like to go. When most coaches “show you the love,” they are genuine and want you to be a part of the program. They then may make you an offer to be a part of the program. Many athletes, because they are “feeling the love,” jump at the first offer made to them without counter-offering or talking to other schools and programs. This is not the worst thing in the world, but I think if you are going to put in all this time and effort to get coaches’ attentions, you owe it to yourself to be patient and learn about all the opportunities that might be available to you.

A potential recruit can also feel rushed if the coach or program puts a timetable or expiration date on the offer. For example, a coach might make you an offer but say, “We have to make a decision by a week from today or it is off the table.” Now if you are not talking to any other schools, you may feel rushed to make a decision. I would say, in most cases, if the coaches really want you, the timetable will not matter. It is a strategy to try to get you to commit to the offer. The coaches have every right to do this. They have to do certain things to get the right student-athletes within their allotted budgets and resources to build the best team possible for their programs. They are taking a BUSINESS MENTALITY to this process, and since they are taking a business mentality you should act and negotiate accordingly to get the best offer possible for you. This may mean counter-offering, asking for more time, or just letting them know you are going to think about it and talk to other schools at the same time.
Taking Your Emotions Out of the Process

I talk about treating the negotiation process with a Business Mentality and taking your emotions out of it. This is not the easiest thing to do. This decision is a big one, and you and your family have so much invested and at stake. It is essential, though, for you to take on a business mentality and be professional in order to get the best offer for YOU. When you start meeting and talking to coaches, players and people from a particular school and program, you can start to build an attachment. If you are made an offer from a program that you feel made an impact because the recruiting process was positive, you might have mixed emotions and feel like you will:

- Miss out on the offer if you don’t accept right away or at the deadline
- Disappoint the coaches because they have been so great through the process
- Be disloyal if you start or continue talking to other schools
- Accept an offer that is not good enough only because you love the coaches and the school and they have told you that was the best they could offer

Although not easy, all 4 of these feelings and others like them have to be suppressed so that they do not affect your strategy and decision-making process. You can overcome some of this by having supreme honesty and integrity within the process. For example:

- **You feel you are being rushed into an offer**: Tell them openly you don’t feel comfortable to make your decision by that date and you need more time. Trust me, if they want you, they will give you more time. If they don’t, this particular program might not be a good fit for you.

- **You feel you will disappoint the coaches because they have been so great through the process**: In anything in life, you can’t make the best decisions for YOU if you are worried more about how it will affect others. You can be upfront with all coaches from the start, stating that in the end you will be making the best decision for yourself and your career. You should also continuously tell those coaches who have treated you well how much you appreciate their time and effort and that you think highly of their programs because you do.

- **You may feel some disloyalty if you start or continue talking to other schools**: The coaches are 100% most definitely talking to other players during your recruiting process, so you should be doing the same by talking to other schools throughout the process. Be upfront with all coaches about who you are talking to and offers that have been made.
You may feel the offer is not good enough, but you love the coaches and school and they have told you that was the best they could offer: Be honest; tell the coaches you appreciate the offer and understand their situation, but you feel that the offer is not enough for you to make a commitment. Have a counter offer for them (one that you would accept if they came back and offered it... you have to keep your word on offers you make). Also, don’t give in after you have made a counter offer. For example, if a school is offering you a one-year scholarship and you counter offer with 2.5 years, don’t tell them 5 minutes later or the next day, “But actually I would take 1.5 years.” You are shooting yourself in the foot at the negotiating table. Hold firm and see what they come back with.

You must take your emotional feelings out of the recruiting process and keep focused with a “Business Mentality” to finish the process properly and make the best decision. This is not easy. The whole recruiting process will most likely be an emotional roller coaster for you and your family, but you have put too much time and effort into this process and throughout your life with your sport to make a rash, quick decision. You owe it to yourself to make the best decision for YOU.

**Honest Communication and Creating the Bidding War**

As I have remarked throughout the entire guide, your goal when implementing this strategy is to get the attention of multiple college coaches on your target list to engage in a recruiting process in the hopes of receiving multiple offers. These offers will give you more leverage in the process in order to make the best choice for YOU. In other words, after you have executed the strategy, the ideal situation would be for you to have created a bidding war among multiple coaches and schools, allowing you to receive the best offer for YOU. The question now is: What do I do when I get to that point?

As I mentioned before, take your emotion out of it (as best you can) and be upfront and honest throughout the process. Do not be afraid to tell coaches about all the offers you have on the table and ask them if they can do better (always being professional and respectful). Don’t be afraid to ask for more time. Don’t be afraid
to counter offer. You have earned this control and have to use it to get the offer you want.

Be honest with the coaches. Don’t lie about other offers (you will probably get caught and may ruin your chances with many coaches). If you gave a coach your word that you would make a decision by a certain date/time (whether that is a yes or no), stick to your word. If you counter-offer and say that if the program can make that offer good you will accept, stick to your word. If you commit to a school, stick to it. If you say you are going to do something, stick to it. You are only as good as your word. All coaches will have more respect for you (whether you join their team or not) if you show respect and are upfront and honest with them throughout the recruiting process.

“Take your emotion out of it (as best you can) and be upfront and honest throughout.”

Go with Your Gut

When it is all said and done in your recruiting process, the best advice I can give you when trying to accept an offer is “Go with your gut.” Make the decision that feels best for you and no one else. Don’t let your parents, coaches, teammates, or friends influence your decision in a major way. This is your life; this is a big decision. Go with the one that feels best for YOU.

“Make the decision that feels best for you and no one else.”
CONCLUSION
Thanks for taking the time to read Pro-Active Recruiting. Whether you read a couple of sections or the entire guide, I hope you have taken away some items that will help you in your recruiting process.

In closing, the most important thing I want you to realize is how important the recruiting process is and how it can affect your life. Playing collegiate sports (no matter what level or what sport) is an unbelievable experience that few get, and it is an experience that can never be replaced. You get to play on a team for 4 years with extremely like-minded people (you all chose the same sport and school) and not only do you play and practice with them, you also go to school and live with them. The situation can create experiences, relationships and bonds that are special and unforgettable. This is a unique experience an athlete who loves their sport does not want to miss.

Don’t let this opportunity pass you by. You have worked your whole life to get to this point. Take control of YOUR recruiting process and get the offer YOU deserve. I wish you the best of luck!
Thank you!

We hope you’ve enjoyed Pro-Active Recruiting.

We appreciate you purchasing the book and taking time out of your day or evening to read this, and if you have an extra second, we would love to hear what you think about it. Please drop us a note at http://www.goalcollegeathlete.com/contact-us/ or, if you prefer email, at steve@goalcollegeathlete.com. We read each and every single note and email, so don’t be afraid to say hello!

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Thanks again, and we wish you all the best with your recruiting process!

Steve & Julia O’Brien
steve@goalcollegeathlete.com
julia@goalcollegeathlete.com