

“College Selection Guide”

To Look Up College Programs On The Internet

- Go to www.soccerinfo.com/recruiting/
- Click on “Colleges With Soccer Programs”

✓ First Consideration Should Be Academic

(only sample questions, not all inclusive)

- **Major**
 - Identify your most probable major or primary field of study
- **College Size**
 - Do you prefer a large college (>15,000 students)?
 - Do you prefer a medium size college (5-15,000 students)?
 - Do you prefer a small college (<5,000 students)?
- **Location**
 - Do you prefer a local college (<50 miles)?
 - Do you prefer a regional college (50 - 250 miles)?
 - Do you prefer a distant college (>250 miles)?
- **College Environment**
 - Do you prefer a private college or state university?
 - Do you prefer a specific religious affiliation?

Based On Your Answers, Identify ~ 10 Colleges That Meet Your Academic Preferences

✓ Now Consider College Soccer Programs

(only sample questions, not all inclusive)

- **College Division**
 - Do you prefer Division 1, 2, 3, or NAIA?
- **Soccer Program**
 - What “style of play” do you prefer?
 - What do you know about the coaching staff & players?
 - Does the program need players at your position?
- **Assessing Your Potential To Make The Team**
 - Can you be competitive at the collegiate program preferred?
 - What’s your chance of making the team (*consult with your coach*)?
 - What is your potential to contribute to the program & when?

Based On Your Answers, Identify ~ 3 - 5 Colleges That Meet Your Academic & Soccer Preferences

(Make sure you would like those colleges even if you were not playing college soccer)

✓ Now Contact Those Coaches Via Email!

Good Luck With Your Search!

Recruiting Timeline & Check List

Freshman Year (Focus on training & academics)

- Work on improving your GPA
- Work hard during your high school soccer season, talk with your coach & find out what you need to work on to play better next season.
- Participate on a top level club soccer team with top level training
- Participate in top quality tournaments with your club team
- Participate in Olympic Development Programs (ODP) with your state association

Sophomore Year (Focus on training & academics --- start researching potential colleges)

- Sign up for PSAT's to gain experience for SAT's
- STUDY, STUDY, STUDY and continue working on improving your GPA!
- Continue with a top level club soccer team, attending quality tournaments & participating in ODP
- Meet with your high school & club coach to discuss your soccer development & college opportunities
- Attend all "College Night" sessions & gather information on potential colleges
- Obtain information about potential colleges via the internet, college guides, school counselor, etc.
- Begin assembling your "Potential College List", 8 - 10 colleges you may be interested in attending
- You may send initial emails to "Potential College" coaches stating your interest in their program

Junior Year (Begin the recruiting process --- coaches start looking at potential recruits)

- Check with your school counselor for SAT & ACT registration deadlines & take SAT / ACT tests
- Using the attached "College Selection Guide" develop your "Preferred College List", 5 - 7 colleges
- Be Proactive! - - send emails* to "Preferred College" coaches stating your interest in their program
- Send "Preferred College" coaches your tournament & league game schedules
- Obtain "Letters of Recommendation" & develop a "Reference" list
- Follow-up with "Preferred College" coaches by completing any questionnaires, resumes, etc.
- Continue with a top level club soccer team, attending quality tournaments & participating in ODP
- Arrange for spring / summer visits to preferred colleges
- Retake SAT / ACT tests, if appropriate
- Attend college soccer games, Division I, II, & III if possible
- Register with NCAA National Clearinghouse at end of 2nd semester (See counselor for Student Release Form)

* Note: There are no NCAA restrictions on email correspondence between potential players & college coaches - - so use email proactively.

Also, the player may call the coach at any time & talk- - the coach, however, may not call the player back until 7/1.

Senior Year (Coaches & players make decisions)

- College coaches can make contact with you after July 1 between your Junior & Senior year
- Narrow your "Preferred College List" to about 3 - 5 colleges & continue talking to those coaches!
- Arrange for official college visits & interviews
- Apply to at least 3 schools for possible admissions & inform your school counselor
- Review acceptances & offers - - - **then choose the college you wish to attend!**
- Notify the college you have chosen & notify other colleges of your decision
- Sign "National Letter of Intent" - - - signing begins the 1st Wednesday in February
- Note - - File Financial Aid forms by ~January 1st (required in order to receive a soccer scholarship)

Starting Your College Search

(Nancy Nitardy)

How to begin the college search process is a dilemma many high school students and their parents encounter. Whether you are a highly recruited scholar athlete, with every Top 10 team in the country knocking on your door, or you are the average student athlete interested in finding a college to compete at, the following ideas can help you organize the process.

Begin with a self assessment. Stop and think for a moment about who you are, why you want to go to college, and what you want out of your college experience. This is an important first step because the whole search is about finding the best match for you. A good choice for your best friend is not necessarily the right choice for you. Likewise, your parents' alma mater may be a great pick; but then again it may not. So, stop for a moment and think about YOU. What makes you tick? What successes have you had and why do you think you succeeded? What type of environment do you think you work best in? What do you want in your future? A great book that can help you do a self assessment is *College Match* by Steven R. Antonoff and Marie A. Friedemann.

Do an academic assessment. Knowing your academic picture will help you determine which colleges are within your reach for acceptance and which ones may be a long shot. The criteria you need to access is your Grade Point Average (GPA), your Class Rank, and your SAT and/or ACT test scores. Your guidance counselor can figure out your GPA after your freshman year.

Class rank is an important piece of the admissions puzzle. Some schools require that you rank in the top 10% of your class, others prefer top 30% and still others top 50%. The higher your class rank, the greater number of colleges you will have to choose from. Find out from your guidance counselor your class rank.

The PSAT test is given prior to your senior year. This test is used as a warm up to the SAT. Most colleges require the SAT or ACT test scores. Different colleges require different test scores.

It is highly recommended you take the SAT and ACT exams in the winter or spring of your junior year. Then retake them in the fall of your senior year. Many students improve their scores the second and third time around.

Also, do an athletic assessment. Your coach is usually the best person to help you assess your athletic abilities. Other sources are camp coaches, your opponents coach and national team tryouts. Have your coach help you determine what level of college athletics you should consider Division I, II, III, NAIA, or Junior College. To find out more about the different levels of college athletics contact the NCAA by phone at 913-339-1906 or on the Internet at www.ncaa.org.

You now have a picture of yourself academically and athletically which can now be applied to your college search. There are thousands of colleges to choose from and, ideally, you should be able to come up with at least 3-5 different ones you would be happy to attend.

The next step is determining your key areas of consideration. To help get you started here are five main areas to consider: 1) Academic Interests, 2) Athletic Role, 3) Location, 4) School Size and College Division, and 5) Finances. Determine your highest & lowest priorities.

Make a list of questions for each area. For example: Does the school have the major your interested in? Does it have your second choice of major? What are the requirements to get into the programs? How will you fit into the team? How many current team members play your position? How does the program differ from what you're use to? Is the college located in a hot or cold climate? Snowy or rainy climate? Near water or mountains? How far from home? How large is the college? Is it in a city or small college town? Do I need a scholarship? Will you qualify for athletic aid or any other financial aid? These are just a few questions you can ask yourself.

Now that you are ready to start searching, there are a variety of resources available to you. Head to your guidance counselor's office, the library or the bookstore and you will find guides to colleges. The following are excellent guide books: *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges* by Barron's Educational Series, *The College Handbook* by The College Board, and *Peterson's Four Year Colleges* by the Princeton Review. You will find facts, such as school enrollment size, academic requirements, sports offered, cost to attend, etc.

If you have access to the Internet, look up www.ncaa.org and you can find out which colleges offer your sport at each level. You may even be able to click onto each college's web site from the NCAA site. Other web sites to check out are www.collegeboard.org, www.kaplan.com, www.petersons.com, and www.review.com. These sites have lots of helpful information about colleges in general.

Additional resources include your guidance counselor, coaches, friends, neighbors, and family members. Anyone who has been to college and gone through the whole search process may have some good advice and ideas that can help you. Also, College Fair Night at your high school is a chance for you to meet with a representative from various colleges across the country.

Keep in mind, choosing which college to attend is the first major adult decision you will get to make. This decision will have an effect on the rest of their life. So, do some research, make a well-informed decision and choose the college that best fits YOUR expectations.

Plan Ahead For The Recruiting Game

(Nancy Nitardy)

Athletes and their parents can make the college search process less stressful and more enjoyable by planning ahead academically, athletically and financially.

Prior to your senior year in high school you have opportunities to help yourselves become a better recruit to college coaches. Strong academics can give an athlete an added advantage with admissions departments and coaches.

Plan to challenge yourself academically throughout high school. If you are aiming to be the best in your sport, you are continually pushing yourself against tougher competition. The same goes for the classroom.

If your high school offers Honors or Advanced Placement Courses, and you are capable of handling the challenge, sign-up.

Know the academic requirements for perspective college athletes. The NCAA provides free literature for the College Bound Student Athlete. Call the NCAA at 913-339-1906 and ask for your copy of the free literature or check out their web site at www.ncaa.org.

Be sure to meet with your high school guidance counselor and have a game plan. Know what courses you need to take each year and what additional opportunities may be available to you as far as extracurricular activities and volunteer work. Yes, volunteer work. Not only can volunteer work help your college application, but it can be a great life experiences for a student athlete.

Many Admission Directors are looking favorably at those perspective students who have been involved in their community. If you are involved now you will most likely be involved later in college campus activities. In addition, many good application essays have come from volunteer experiences.

Athletically, play, play, play, go to camp and play some more. The more you play the better you will most likely become at your sport. Camps are the big summer activity that can be fun and rewarding. Ideally, attending a camp on a college campus or where college coaches are coaching would be the best option.

Camps are a chance for athletes to gain exposure to college coaches. Many college coaches find their recruits at camps. The other place to be observed by college coaches is at the state, regional, and national level playing against the best in your sport. Many college coaches have limited budgets, thus they attend major tournaments where they can evaluate a number of athletes at one stop.

Take the time to visit college campuses while traveling to the many tournaments you participate in across the state, region and nation. Visiting college campuses may not be a priority for a freshman or sophomore in high school, but if you are near by, it can't hurt to check it out. Be sure to do some research on the college prior to the visit. Have an idea of what to expect.

Have a financial plan. If you haven't already done so, figure out what you can do financially to be better prepared for supporting a college education. Good reading material is "Don't Miss Out" by Anna and Robert Leider (Octameron) or check out www.finaid.org on the internet. If you look now, you will find there are a number of possibilities and a variety of options for financing an education.

When the time comes (January 1st of the students senior year), fill in the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form no matter what you think you will or will not qualify for.

Try not to eliminate any one college based on the cost only. Most colleges have a pool of money that they use to award grants and scholarships. The money is not necessarily awarded on a need basis, but often on merit or on other criteria.

In addition, many companies and corporations today offer scholarships for various reasons with all sorts of criteria attached. The Women's Sports Foundation (800-227-3988) is a great resource for young female athletes. The Foundation awards scholarships and grants annually and can provide a list of colleges offering athletic scholarships.

Plan ahead, be prepared and you will have choices in your future.

College Coaches and Admissions Directors are looking for those student-athletes that have pushed themselves on and off the field. Remember to give yourself a chance to compete academically and athletically at the highest level. YOU can be better!

The NCAA Eligibility Rules - - Easily Explained

In its quest to ensure that student athletes are just as much students as athletes, the NCAA requires coaches and recruits to follow strict guidelines.

In order to play ball as a freshman, you will need to meet the following requirements. We've also thrown in some recruiting guidelines, because we want you to be playing during your freshman year.

For more detailed information, you can locate an extensive list of all eligibility requirements at the [NCAA website](http://www.ncaa.org) (www.ncaa.org). Also, we recommend that you meet with your high school guidance counselor to review these rules and regulations.

The NCAA Clearinghouse

All high school student athletes who plan to participate as freshmen in Division I or Division II Athletics must register with the NCAA Initial Eligibility Clearinghouse. Your high school guidance counselor can provide the registration materials and directions for registration. A \$25 registration fee is required, though the fee can be waived if you can show financial need.

We recommend that you apply for registration after completion of your junior year in high school. Once filed, coaches and Universities that plan to recruit you may request your eligibility status through the Clearinghouse. You may not request that Clearinghouse materials be sent to a coach or University.

Division I & Division II Recruiting

Telephone Calls:

- A college coach (or faculty member) is allowed to make one phone call to you per week beginning July 1 after your junior year. Exceptions to the one call per week rule include the five day period prior to your official visit to that university, the day of a coach's off-campus contact with you, and the first three days of the National Letter of Intent signing period.

Contacts:

- Contacts are any off campus 'face-to-face' interactions between a coach and you or members of your family. Coaches are limited to three such contacts.

Evaluations:

- An evaluation is any off-campus activity used to assess your academic qualifications or athletics ability, including a visit to your high school (even if no contact occurs) or watching you practice or compete at any site. Institutions are limited to seven contacts or evaluations, combined (though no more than three contacts). Evaluations done over consecutive days at tournaments are considered a single evaluation. Once you have signed a National Letter of Intent, coaches are free to evaluate you as often as they choose.

Official Visits:

- During your senior year in high school, you may have one expense paid official visit to each University. You may have up to five official visits to different institutions, regardless of the number of sports you are being recruited for. Prior to an official visit, you must provide the institution (or NCAA Clearinghouse) your PSAT/SAT/ACT test score and a copy of your transcript.
- During the official visit, which may not exceed 48 hours, you may receive round-trip transportation between your home and the campus, and you may receive meals, lodging and complimentary admissions to campus athletics events. Your host may spend up to \$30 on entertainment for you.

Division III Recruiting

- Division III coaches may contact you on an unlimited basis anytime after completion of your junior year in high school.
- You can visit a college campus any time at your own expense.

On such a visit, you may receive three complimentary admissions to a game on that campus, a tour of off-campus practice and competition sites in your sport and other college facilities within 30 miles of the campus, a meal in the college's on-campus student dining facilities and housing, if it is available to all visiting prospective students.

- As a senior, you may make an expense-paid official visit to any particular campus. There is no limit to the number of schools you may officially visit, as long as you enroll initially in a Division III program.
- During your official visit (which may not exceed 48 hours), you may receive round-trip transportation between your home and the campus, meals, lodging, and complimentary admissions to campus athletics events. All meals provided to you on an official visit must occur in an on-campus dining facility that the college's students normally use. If dining facilities are closed, the college is permitted to take you off-campus for meals. In addition, a student host may help you become acquainted with campus life. The host may spend \$20 per day to cover all costs of entertaining you.

National Letter of Intent

The National Letter of Intent is a contract between a high school senior and a college or university that commits the student to attend that school for at least one year, and commits the school to provide at least one year's athletic scholarship to the student.

The agreement is, of course, pursuant on the student meeting all NCAA eligibility requirements and meeting the school's enrollment standards.

Furthermore, once a student signs a NLI, other coaches and schools are bound to respect the contract and cease recruitment negotiations with the student.

Division I Academic Eligibility Requirements

- Graduate from High School
- Successfully complete a core curriculum in at least 13 courses as follows:
 - 4 years of English
 - 2 years of Mathematics
 - 2 years of Natural or Physical Sciences
 - 2 years of Social Science
 - 1 year of additional English, Mathematics or Science
 - 2 years of courses in any of the above or Foreign Language, Computer Science, Philosophy or Nondoctrinal Religion
 - Meet a minimum requirement on the SAT or ACT tests

Division II Academic Eligibility Requirements

- Graduate from High School
- Have a minimum 2.0 GPA in a completed core curriculum of at least 13 of the following courses:
 - 3 years of English
 - 2 years of Mathematics
 - 2 years of Natural or Physical Science
 - 2 years of additional courses in English, Mathematics or Sciences
 - 2 years of Social Science
 - 2 years of courses in any of the above or Foreign Language, Computer Science, Philosophy or Nondoctrinal Religion
 - Meet a minimum requirement on the SAT or ACT tests

Division III Academic Eligibility Requirements

Eligibility for financial aid, practice and competition is governed by institutional and conference regulations, and there are not minimum standards set by the NCAA for Division III schools.

Note: A "core course" is defined as a recognized academic course that offers fundamental instruction in a specific area of study. Courses taught below your high school's regular academic instructional level (e.g., remedial or compensatory) can't be considered core courses regardless of the content of the courses.

Taken from www.ncaa.org -- refer to this website for any updates or changes.

How to Get Noticed by College Coaches

(Nancy Nitardy)

*If you want a college coach to notice you -- then you make it happen!
Here are the top 3 ways high school players can get noticed by college coaches.*

#1 -- WRITE THE COACH!

Almost every college coach in this country, regardless of what level (NCAA Division I, II, III, NAIA, and Junior College) will respond to a personal letter from a high school athlete. That response will either be a "Thanks you for your interest - - - please fill in the enclosed questionnaire", or "Thank you for your interest - - - at this time we are recruiting {whatever level} players only." Or, it might be, "At this time we would welcome you as a walk-on in our program." The important part is that YOU will have an answer to whether you can/or can not fit into that schools program, or what it will take to get recruited by that coach.

#2 -- Attend camps hosted by the colleges you may want to attend

This is an excellent way for the college coach to get to meet you and see you play. It is also a great way for YOU to get to know the coach and possibly some of the players on the college team. Many college athletes work the camps hosted by their coach. Attending camps provides you an opportunity to see the campuses. Depending on the camp, you may also get some additional exposure if coaches from other colleges are working the camp. Be sure to ask the coaches what they think of your ability and what level they think you should consider competing at.

#3 -- Compete at the events college coaches attend to view their future players

Play in USYSA State and Regional Championships - - participate in ODP programs - - play in Blue Chip Showcase events when possible - - compete in major national tournaments. For example: Surf Cup in San Diego, Miami Orange Bowl, and the Raleigh Shootout to mention a few.

Be sure to include your game schedule with your initial letter so the coach will know at which events to look for you. It is recommended that you let them know your jersey number ahead of time. If a coach is interested in you, he/she will take the time to watch you. But, if they don't know about you they may miss you. So, WRITE to coaches now!

Your Initial Letter to College Coaches

(Nancy Nitardy)

Making an initial contact with college coaches at schools you are interested in is the number one step towards becoming a recruited athlete. Athletes who are interested in playing in college should take the initiative and contact coaches rather than wait to be contacted.

Three very good reasons YOU should take the initiative:

- Your personal letter is an indication to a coach that their program is of interested to you.

- Almost every coach in the country, regardless of level (NCAA Div. I, II, III, NAIA, and Junior College) will respond to you with information on whether you can or can not make their team. Or, they may tell you what it will take to make the team.

- If you're a prospect, the coach will add you to their recruiting list and watch you at future competitions.

All you need to send is a one-page letter introducing yourself with the above information. Academics and athletics are the two key areas every coach want to know about. What are your grades and test scores? And, what level are you competing at?

Additional information to include in your letter would be; your address, phone number, e-mail, coaches name and number, anticipated major, and a request for information on their program and university.

Most coaches will send you a letter telling you whether you are a perspective student athlete for them or not. If you are a possible candidate, the coach will probably send you a questionnaire asking you to fill it in and return it. If you are interested in that college, you need to return the questionnaire. For the most part, the returning of the questionnaire tells the coach you are really interested in their school. If you choose not to return the questionnaire, the coach might not recruit you. So, if you have the slightest interest in a school, return the questionnaire.

Also, if for any reason you do not get a response from one of the schools you send your initial letter to, do not automatically assume the coach is not interested in you. If you want that school bad enough, recontact the coach.

And note, the sooner you contact the coach the sooner they will put you on their recruiting list and watch you compete - - - and the sooner YOU will know what it takes to make it in that program.

Sample Email to Begin the Recruiting Process

The following is recommended content for an email to begin the process for selecting a college and its soccer program.

Remember you must “**Be Proactive**” and “**Recruit the School!**” College programs will not routinely recruit you. At best, you may receive correspondence that lets you know you’ve been noticed by a particular coach or school.

Follow-up is up to you. For most schools, YOU must initiate the dialogue to let them know you’re interested in their school and program - - - and that it’s worth their time following up with you.

KEY Point: Coaches want personalized email & letters. Players should include all the information listed below; however, it should be written so each letter is personal and does not “feel” like a form letter. *Also, show in some way that you have researched the college & know something about the school & soccer program.*

Recommended Structure and Content of Emails and Letters:

Coaches Name: *(make sure you have this correct)* **Date:**
University:
Address, State, Zip:

Dear Coach:

• **Introduction:**

- *Your name, address, grade, graduation year, telephone #, high school, & email address*

• **Reason for Email:**

- *Explore the possibility of playing soccer for your school*
- *Visit the campus and meet the coach*
- *Visit with an academic advisor or financial aid officer*

• **Playing Background:**

- *Club*
- *ODP*
- *High School*
- *Playing honors*
- *Other*

• **Academic Background:**

- *ACT / SAT*
- *Grade point / Class rank*
- *AP / Honors classes*
- *Intended major*

• **Include Your Team’s Tournament Schedule:** *(invite the coach to watch one of your games, if appropriate)*

• **Attach Player Profile** *(see attached profile sample)*

• **Closing:**

- *Thank you for reviewing my credentials. I look forward to hearing from you and possibly setting up a visit.*

Respectfully,

Your Name

Misconceptions About The Recruiting Process

(Tim Nash)

To many high school student-athletes, the recruiting process can be mysterious and confusing. There are a lot of misconceptions about how to be recruited and what you, as a student-athlete, can do to help the process along.

Several of top college coaches in the country offer some sound advice. First of all, learn as much as you can about the schools you are interested in attending. Second, know how much scholarship money is available, and third, don't just sit by your phone and assume it will ring. Here are five common misconceptions student-athletes have about the recruiting process.

Everybody Has 9.9 Scholarships Every Year

The NCAA allows a Division I men's soccer program 9.9 scholarships (women allowed 12.0). That does not mean that every year, a coach can give away 9.9 scholarships. In fact, unless it is a first-year program or if all the scholarship players decide to transfer at the same time, no coach will ever have his full allotment of scholarship money in any given year. "A lot of kids think that everybody is getting scholarships," says former Virginia coach and current D.C. United boss Bruce Arena.

"That's not the case. They have to look at where the program is and what their needs are." Adds Maryland coach Sasho Cirovski, "Really, we are lucky if we have three or four to give a year."

University of Massachusetts women's coach Jim Rudy says, "Sometimes, the kids and the parents think I'm kidding when I tell them we don't have 11 full rides."

One year, a coach may give three scholarships - - and some years they will be shared by four or five players. The next year, he may give two more. Coaches believe they are making the best use of their money if they spread the scholarships out equally between freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors.

Division I Is Always The Best

"Some kids have don't have a good understanding of what Division I is," says Bruce Arena. "They might say 'I want to play Division I.' But I could recommend a good D-II or D-III school. There are some Division I programs that are no better than some Division II or III programs." Cirovski agrees. "A lot of people have a misconception about the level of play at some universities," says Cirovski who has recruited and signed some of the best high school players in the country since taking over the Maryland program two years ago.

All Programs Are The Same

Often, players will contact a college coach about attending their school and know nothing about the soccer team, the players, the coach or the style of play.

If you are a left midfielder, and the team has three sophomore left midfielders, chances are good that is not the school for you. If another school may have a graduating senior and a junior at your position, your more likely to get playing time sooner.

"If you are interested in a particular school, I recommend going and watching that teams play," Cirovski. "Watching one game will answer a lot of your questions."

Cirovski recommends that student-athletes make a list of five schools they are interested in and then find out as much as they can about each school.

I Can't Call The Coach

The NCAA rules regarding recruiting are more difficult to understand than any foreign language class that you are required to take in school. There are rules regarding visits to a university, gifts from a coach, pickup games while you are on your recruiting visits and contact with the coach.

Many student-athletes are worried they will break the rules and somehow risk their college soccer career. However, as University of South Carolina coach Mark Berson points out, most of those rules pertain to the coach and not the player.

"A lot of kids don't think they are able to call a coach on the phone," he says. "They can call the coach any time they want."

Coaches are restricted as to when they can call a player. When the player is a junior, the coach can write him letters. When the player is a senior, the coach can return phone calls to him. But at any time, the player can call or write the coach.

What A College Coach Looks For In A Player

(Anson Dorrance)

I'm asked this question all the time: "What do you look for in a player?" It is almost an impossible question to answer. If I answer it in one way, I would be eliminating a whole group of players of interest to me.

The way I answer the question is by telling the story about a Supreme Court Judge in Southern California who was asked to define pornography. He had to write a statute and he took twelve months trying to sort out an appropriate definition of pornography. After a whole year, this very intelligent man could not write the statute. So they asked him, "How you know what pornography is?" He said, "I know it when I see it."

It's basically the same with players. I can tell you a player needs certain technical, tactical, physical, and psychological levels, and yet I can find a player who has won either a world championship or gold medal who doesn't have a dimension that I'm saying you require. What you need is some kind of balance.

But rest assured, it's critical to be extraordinary in at least one area. Then you will have an impact. If you have world-class speed, you can have an impact. If you can out-head everybody in the world but can trap a ball farther than you can kick it, you can have an impact. If you are a psychological rock but have no tactical awareness, you can have an impact.

The great players, obviously, are extraordinary in more than one area, and the greatest players are extraordinary in all areas. It's based on a mix of all these different qualities. I would say the most important of all these is your psychological strength, because the quality that separates winners is the ability to constantly reach down to find something deep inside them to make the commitment other people are not willing to make. With that in mind, here are the four dimensions that I believe are necessary.

Psychological

This is the capacity to be able to deal with all kinds of adversity. It is also the capacity to be so hard that in your duels with opposing players, you are not intimidated. In great duels, there are defining moments. There is the moment when you get a sense of the other person's hardness. It may be a physical risk issue or a fitness issue.

When you are competing, you measure your capacity to take physical risks, your capacity to push through pain threshold, and your capacity to not back down psychologically from someone. Those defining moments are constant in contact sports. If two players are running for the same ball, the one with the weaker psychological dimension is going to time it so she gets to the ball late. In other words, she is going to time it so she misses the confrontation with the other player. That's the defining moment of that duel - - who is going to slow down and who isn't.

Physical

A lot of this is inherited - - your quickness, your speed, your agility, and your strength. But some of it can be developed. You can improve your quickness, your endurance, and to a certain extent, you can develop speed. The person who fills the physical dimension is the one who has an intelligent and consistent work ethic to improve all the physical qualities. The reason I say "intelligent" is that most people don't have the understanding that all these things work against each other.

For instance, the process of developing speed actually retards agility. If you are developing a good cardiovascular base, it actually hurts your speed development. If you are running 20 or 30 minutes over miles and miles, it actually detracts from your capacity to sprint. You need to develop a balance of all these qualities.

Technical

Speed of play is the critical element in a player's technical development. Speed of play is your ability to do things quickly with a soccer ball. A four-year-old can trap a ball. But this four-year-old can't trap a ball on a full run when another player is trying to cut him/her off at the kneecaps.

As you go from one level to the next technically, you are required to be able to do things so much faster - - shoot under pressure, do things with the ball without time and space, and do things with one touch, more efficiently. That's the ascension of your tactical growth.

Tactical

The tactical requirement actually has two parts. The first is being able to recognize what is happening on the field. The second is being able to make a decision that will help your team the most and hurt the other team the most. So your tactical requirements are having the awareness as to what is going on in the game by seeing it, then having the decision-making process to sort out what's best. And what is best is going to be determined by a lot of different factors - - what third of the field you're on, your match-up, time and space, and whether or not you have possession, etc.

What a high school recruit needs to know

High School players have a lot of questions when they reach their senior year. They're talking to coaches and making the all important decision of where to spend the next four years. Here are answers to 10 common questions from high school players and their parents.

BY DEAN CAPARAZ

1. When should I start the process of identifying the colleges I wish to apply to?

Start identifying the schools you are interested in late in your sophomore year in high school. The more you know, the earlier you know it, the better. Although you cannot directly contact college coaches yet, you can try to gather more information about a program - its location, its coaching staff; its playing personnel - by attending games in the fall or attending its coach's soccer camp in the summer.

2. How many colleges should I apply to? How many colleges should I consider before I decide which ones to apply to?

You should consider a number of schools - perhaps 20 - as a sophomore, narrow that list to around 10 at the end of your junior year and then apply to 5-7 schools. Again, the earlier you start paring down your choices means less stress for you later, especially if you're a young woman. The greater number of women's college programs, especially at the Division I level, means women have more schools to consider and may have a more difficult time narrowing down their options.

3. Are other extracurricular activities important or is playing soccer enough to get me into the college of my choice?

Many college programs look at a recruit's extracurricular activities because they want student athletes with well-rounded personalities. For example, a player can only increase his or her chances of getting into a Christian college if he or she has strong

religious ties or a strong record of community service. At the top programs, where coaches are battling for the elite players, ability is by far the most important factor in getting into a school.

4. How important is ODP or state team participation?

Each is important. They just give coaches who can attend such events another arena in which to evaluate talent. However, not every player can participate in ODP or state teams for financial reasons, injuries, roster limits or, sadly, political reasons. Club tournaments are more important to a lot of college coaches because they can be used to evaluate a broader spectrum of players.

5. How important is a recommendation from a high school coach or club coach?

Coaches at the top Division I programs, or at programs with big travel budgets for recruiting, do not place a lot of value in high school or club coach recommendations. Rather Division I coaches rely on their own or their staff's evaluations of players.

Recommendations are important when college coaches, such as those at first-year or young programs, don't have the time, money or other resources to see a player first hand.

6. It is a good idea to submit a videotape of me in action?

Yes. Coaches can use good videotapes to get an initial impression of players they have never seen, players from remote areas. And that's the important thing: Send a high quality videotape. Videotapes can turn off coaches if they are poorly done.

One Division I coach suggested a player send a tape that

includes about 10 minutes of highlights, a top-notch game and an itinerary or log of where you are and what you are doing at different points on the tape. Other suggestions include sending footage of small-sided games, so coaches are better able to see you, and buying tapes of your games done by professional services at big tournaments.

7. How often is it that a player is offered a full soccer scholarship? If not, what other common sources of funding are available to defray the cost of tuition and board?

On the men's side, full scholarships are rare and mostly reserved for special players, those with national team or professional potential.

At the men's Division I level, each program is allowed a maximum of 9.9 soccer scholarships.

Full rides at Division I women's programs - which have a maximum of 12 scholarships - are less rare, but they are still not the norm.

Other ways to fund a college education include work-study, student loans, financial aid, grants, academic scholarships and "remote" scholarships, such as those provided by alumni or a school's ethnic groups. Another way to get an athletic scholarship from a school is to play another sport there in addition to soccer.

These other forms of financial aid also come in handy in the Ivy League or at schools that do not offer athletic scholarships.

8. What are the major differences between NCAA Divisions I, II, III and NAIA?

Here are some of the primary restrictions:

NCAA Division III schools do not offer athletic scholarships.

NCAA Division I has, with a few exceptions, limits on the age at which a player can compete.

Transfer rules can vary, depending on the affiliation of the school the player is moving to, as well the rules of the



The boom in women's college soccer - Georgia began play in 1995 - means women's high school players have plenty of opportunities to play at the next level. Both male and female recruits should start thinking about schools to apply to as early as the end of their sophomore years in high school.

school's conference. They can be quite complicated or restrictive, both from a playing (layoff required) and academic (credits lost) perspective.

There is also a difference in the quality of play at each level, but how great that difference is depends on who you talk to.

Division I coaches are realistic: While the best Division II teams may be able to compete with DI teams, the best DI teams should win most matchups. Top DII teams are comparable to top NAIA teams in level of play, say NAIA coaches, but there are more quality programs in DII. The DII - DIII matchup is comparable to the DI - DII one: The top DIII teams can compete with and even beat all but the best DII teams.

9. What are the commitments for a player at a major college program like?

A typical week during the regular season at a major college program generally entails 15-20 hours devoted to soccer and about a 10 hour period devoted to study hall or the equivalent. That includes two-hour practices every day, except for game days and the day before a game, and about three hours per week in the

weight room.

During the spring, expect 8-12 hours per week devoted to soccer, with less time spent in practice (1.5 hours per session) and more time playing games. Weight training usually increases to about four hours a week.

During the summer coaches still expect players to spend some time with the hall and usually offer training regimens to their players.

In preseason, practice time usually increases to two and a half to three hours.

10. What other aspects of college life, besides soccer and academics, should I consider before making my decision?

Other things to consider include location (do you want to play close to home or experience life in a completely different area?), social life (do you want to go to a big university that offers plenty of activities, other sports, fraternities and sororities?), private school vs. public school (size is probably the biggest influence on differences in college life), and athletic facilities (can you handle playing on a field with artificial turf or is grass a necessity?).