

Blizzard College Recruiting Game Plan

As stated on our Blizzard website, providing players with exposure to college coaches is one of our main objectives. You would not be on this Blizzard team if you didn't have the desire to play at the college level. But just playing on a team or at tournaments hoping to be 'discovered' is not going to get you recruited; to help players and parents through this process, below are some thoughts and tips based on former player experiences and information received from talking with college coaches. There is no guarantee that you will be recruited, but this game plan should help.

Basic Comments:

1. In the majority of cases, there is more money available for academic scholarships than athletic. Getting good grades in HS is very important. It would be a better investment to spend your money on ACT or SAT prep courses to help you get a higher score, than on coaches' clinics or batting lessons. It is extremely rare to get a 'full' ride, considering coaches' scholarship budgets, recruiting budgets, number of players on team, etc.
2. Be realistic about your own athletic abilities and your level of commitment. Remember, you are going to college to prepare yourself for your future after you hang up your cleats. Find a college that you would be happy attending for 4-5 years if you could not play softball.
3. Don't waste your time on recruiting/athletic resume services. Comments from college coaches; "I will only use them when I am going into a new part of the country for the first time." Comments from players; "I wish I had used the money I spent on their services and took classes on how to prepare to take the ACT or SAT tests." Our recommendation is to avoid them at all costs.
4. Don't get hung up on your statistics. Most college coaches find them to be unreliable anyway. They are more interested in the level of competition you are playing at; i.e. ASA Nationals, AFA Nationals, Boulder tournament, etc. Also, if a coach comes to watch you, they are looking at other things besides your play on the field; i.e. hustle on/off the field, what you are doing in the dugout or between innings, how you interact with the coach and other players on the team.
5. You must be proactive, persistent, start early, don't put it off.

Game Plan:

Phase 1 – Fall of HS Junior Year

1. Determine college location.
 - a. How far away from home do you want to be; local = less than 50 miles, area = less than 350 miles or less than 5 hour drive, region = more than 350 miles or more than 5 hours away.
 - b. Think about getting homesick, everyone does and it does affect you right away if you have never spent time away from home.
 - c. Think about weather; college softball is played in spring. Spring in Kansas is far different than spring in Grand Forks, North Dakota or Duluth, MN
2. Determine type and size of school
 - a. What type of school – private, public, junior college (some JC's offer scholarships)
 - b. What size school – less than 2000, less than 5000, less than 10,000, over 10,000
 - c. What division – NCAA D1, D2, D3 or NAIA (they are a competitor to NCAA) (NAIA plays at about the same level as D2/D3 schools) (NAIA schools can offer athletic scholarships)
3. Go to NCAA and NAIA web pages and search out schools that offer softball at their school. The web addresses are www.ncaa.org and www.naia.org Both of these sites will allow you to run report listings based on different criteria.

4. Make sure you are taking the right classes in high school to be eligible to play sports in college. Go to the NCAA Clearinghouse to determine initial eligibility standards. The web site address is www.naaclearinghouse.net. NAIA does not have this requirement.
5. Determine a list of schools
 - a. Come up with an initial list of 25-30 schools that meet your requirements from above. This may require you to go to each school website. (this can be done from NCAA and NAIA website as the reports have links to each school)
 - b. The list can be/should be mixture of NCAA D1, D2, D3, NAIA schools
6. Make skills video tape
 - a. Tape should include introduction of who you are, what HS school you go to, what year you are in school, what summer team you play for, what position you play, how many years you have been playing (15-20 seconds)
 - b. Video of position skills (fielding, throwing, pitching) (5-6 minutes or less)
 - c. Hitting skills (5-6 minutes or less)
 - d. Remember, keep it short, "not many souls are saved after the first 10 minutes"
7. Take your ACT or SAT test
 - a. Take these tests as soon as you can to determine if you need prep courses to improve scores. (Some schools have minimum score requirements and academic scholarships based on scores)

Phase 2 – Winter of HS Junior Year

1. Narrow your list down
 - a. Go on-line to investigate all the schools on your list. Check out size of school, look at the softball team, determine if they may need a player at your position (keep in mind that you will be looking for players that are juniors or sophomores)
 - b. Check the schools for the various majors and minors you are interested. Keep in mind that a large percentage of students will change majors at least once while in college.
 - c. If you can start to narrow down your list, narrow it down to 10 schools that you want to attend or play ball at.
2. Contact the coach to express interest
 - a. Look at the team record, do they have a winning tradition over the last couple of years.
 - b. How long has the coach been there, what is there background?
 - c. If they have an on-line player profile/questionnaire that you can fill out, fill it out. This is how coaches build their list of recruits. In most cases the coach, if interested may send you a letter, it may be a form letter, it may also state that they can not talk to you until the summer of your junior/senior year because of NCAA rules. Don't get discouraged. NAIA coaches can talk to you; they don't have the same rules.
 - d. If you can email coach great, send an email expressing interest. Or send a letter to the coach. (A handwritten letter is better, typed written letter is OK, shows the coach that you took the time to write, make sure grammar and spelling is correct) If sending them a letter, make it short, don't send stats, send academic and athletic awards, names and cities of teams you have played against (win or loss), post season tournaments (if possible)
 - e. Request information from the college.
 - f. Do not send skills video tape unless coach has requested it.
 - g. See Appendix A for examples of email or letter expressing interest to the coach

3. Let them know about your dome ball schedule
 - a. Many college coaches may not know that we have dome ball seasons and that may give them a chance to come up to see you play.
4. If you have narrowed your list of schools, now may be a good time to start visiting the schools
 - a. Many schools may have 'open houses' for potential students go to them. Visit the schools.
 - b. If possible, contact the coach to let them know you will be visiting and ask if you can talk to them. If you visit with them, make you use proper manners, "Yes, sir, No, sir, Please, Thanks you, etc." After the visit, make sure that you send a letter or email thanking them for their valuable time.
 - c. Prepare a list of questions that you can ask the coach; i.e. 'What are my chances of starting as a freshmen", "Do you 'red-shirt' players", "What is your off-season training program like" What equipment is provided for and what do I have to pay for", etc. Don't be afraid to 'practice' your coaches' visit with your parents, siblings, or friends. (Coaches want players that show initiative, respect and maturity.)
 - d. If your visit has determined that you do want to attend that school, write a letter to the coach to let them know. They will have respect for you it and they may also talk to other coaches. Eliminate schools as quickly as possible; it will make your life easier.
 - e. See Appendix B for list of school criteria.(score the schools, this will help in determining which school fits you best, do it right away after the visit, while it is still fresh in mind)
 - f. Be tough on your scoring. Remember this is your future and softball can be very demanding.
5. Take ACT or SAT tests again, unless you are totally satisfied with your scores.
6. Register at the NCAA Clearinghouse, www.ncaaclearinghouse.net.

Phase 3 – Spring of HS Junior Year

1. Focus on narrowed down list
 - a. You should have your list narrowed down to 6-8 schools (or less). Remember you need to start to focus, too many schools makes it difficult to keep track of them.
 - b. By now you should have heard back from some of the coaches, if they ask for video send them one.
 - c. Continue to contact your coaches
2. Send coaches your HS schedule
 - a. By now you should know what your HS season schedule is. Email your schedule to them. But understand the coaches will be going on with their schedule and may or may not have time to write or come to watch.
3. Send coaches your summer schedule
 - a. By late spring you should know what your summer tournament schedule is. Email the schedule to the coach.
 - b. Let them know about the MN Blizzard website, they can see your picture, profile, summer schedule and what teams you are playing.
4. Take ACT or SAT tests again, unless you are totally satisfied with your scores.
5. Register at the NCAA Clearinghouse, www.ncaaclearinghouse.net.

Phase 4 – Summer of HS Junior/Senior Year

1. Continue to email coach with your results and upcoming tournaments. It is OK to give some stats, but keep it short.
2. Around middle of June or beginning of July, NCAA coaches will now be able to talk to you directly. NAIA coaches are not restricted by rules. NCAA coaches may wait until your team is finished with a tournament before coming up to talk.
3. Keep in mind that some coaches will not be behind the plate watching, they may be along the sidelines or in the outfield. Some coaches want to stay away from distractions so that they can remain focused on players.
4. If a coach has contacted you to let you know that they will be coming to watch or you notice that one of your coaches is at a game, please let one of the Blizzard coaches know. It is our policy to make very effort to let you play. (Please keep in mind that it should be a coach from one of the schools you are interested in attending and not just any coach. Your success is also dependant on the teams' success.)
5. Take ACT or SAT tests again, unless you are totally satisfied with your scores.

Phase 5 – Fall of HS Senior Year

1. Narrow your list down
 - a. By now you may already know which 2-3 schools are interested in you and you in them.
2. Plan on making visits to the school if you haven't done so already.
 - a. See Appendix B for list of school criteria. (score the schools, this will help in determining which school fits you best, do right away after visit while it is still fresh in mind)
 - b. Be tough on your scoring. Remember this is your future and softball can be very demanding.
 - c. Have your questions ready and be prepared to ask them.
 - d. If your visit has determined that you do want to attend that school, call or write a letter to the coach to let them know. They will have respect for you it and they may also talk to other coaches to let them know what kind of player you are. It is a small world of coaches and they do talk. They will also know what other schools you are interested in.
 - e. Eliminate schools as quickly as possible, it will make your life easier and will allow a coach to go after other players on their list. (Keep in mind you may not have been their first choice either.)
3. Let them know what you fall ball schedule is
 - a. Some coaches may still be looking for players, continue to email coaches with your fall ball schedule.
4. Take ACT or SAT tests again, unless you are totally satisfied with your scores.

Points to Remember

1. Remember choose the school first and softball second.
2. Start your search early, be proactive, and don't wait until the last minute.
3. There are more academic scholarships then athletic scholarships, good grades are important.
4. Quickly narrow down your list of schools and focus on them.
5. Contact the coach and let them know you are interested and send them your schedule.
6. Don't be afraid to ask questions.
7. Always be positive on the field or in the dugout; you never know who may be watching.

Appendix A

Dear Coach XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX,

I am writing in response to the letter and questionnaire that you sent to me. I am in the process of deciding where I want to go to college and continue playing softball. I am a pitcher but can play multiple positions including; catcher, 2nd base, shortstop and outfield. I am interested in pursuing a major in criminal justice but am open to other areas including; government or management that was displayed on the XXXXXXXXXXXX website. I will complete the questionnaire that you sent me but I thought you might be more interested in me if I sent some additional information. I hope that you will see that I have played at a very high level for several years and believe I am a student athlete that would continue to add to the success of the 'XXXXXXXXXXXX'.

Dear XXXXXXXX,

I am currently in the process of deciding where I might attend college and continue to play softball. I would like to attend a university or college where I believe my softball skills would add to the continued success of the XXXXXXXX.

I also wanted to let you know of some of the highlights from my 18U summer traveling team, the MN Blizzard.

- **Champions of the 18U ASA National Qualifier – Sioux Falls, SD**
 - o Record 4-0, victories against KC Mystics, KC Breeze (33rd Place ASA Nationals), Neb Firestix (49th Place ASA Nationals), and MN North St. Paul
 - o 3 additional scoreless innings pitched against – Oregon Reign (7th Place ASA Nationals)
 - o Gave KC Extreme (5th Place ASA Nationals) first loss of season
- **Champions of the 18U AFA National Qualifier – White Bear Lake, MN**
 - o Record 3-0, victories against MN Esko Ice, MN White Bear Lake, MN Northern Lights
- **Champions of the 18U MN State Qualifier**
- **2nd Place Finish 18U MN State Championship**
 - o Record 2-0, victories against Irondale and North St. Paul
 - o In total, pitched 22 innings and allowed 1 earned run and 2 unearned runs
- **25th Place Finish 18U ASA National Tournament**
 - o Record 2-1, victories against AZ Roadrunners (33rd Place ASA Nationals), Nashville Wild Things (33rd Place ASA Nationals), pitched four scoreless innings against Maryland Heartbreakers (9th Place ASA Nationals), and a loss against Illinois O'Brien Auto (17th Place ASA Nationals)
 - o In total, pitched 23 innings and allowed one earned run and 2 unearned runs

I do have a skills video available if you are interested!

Sincerely,

Your name
Address -
Home phone -
Email -
Web site - MNBlizzard.com

Appendix B

Criteria/College 5=Excellent 4=Good 3=Average 2=Poor 1=Unacceptable	College 1	College 2	College 3	College 4
Interested Major/Minor available?				
Size of Classes?				
Teacher/Student Ratio?				
Professors teach classes or GA?				
Availability of Professors?				
Tutoring Available/Study Hall?				
Counselors Availability?				
Other Guidance/Career Services?				
Attitude of admissions staff and faculty?				
Financial Aid Availability?				
Academic Scholarships?				
Student Work Programs?				
Off-campus jobs in community?				
Athletic Scholarships?				
Surrounding Community (clean/safe)?				
Off-campus entertainment/shopping?				
Off-campus housing cost & availability?				
Proximity to home?				
Transportation to home in-general?				
Appearance of Campus grounds?				
Campus Buildings maintained?				
Quality of Dorm rooms?				
Computer hook-up available?				
Dormitory security?				
Alcohol / smoking allowed?				
Visitation / curfew enforced?				
Laundry facilities available?				
Quality/selection of cafeteria food?				
Quality of athletic weight room?				
Softball Off-season training program?				
Team Travel (where, how much)?				
Travel Policy (school missed, faculty support)?				
Training, practice and game facilities?				
Coaches personality/attitude towards you?				
Head Coach make you feel wanted?				
Assistant Coach/es personality/attitude:				
Assistant Coach/es make you feel wanted?				
Opportunities for Freshmen to play/start?				
Players/team personality?				
Player Graduation Rates?				
Game transportation?				
School Total :	0	0	0	0