



Club Coaches and the College Process

How to help your athletes during the college recruiting and decision process

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Types of colleges

- ▶ Division 1- “the big division”
 - Minimums – sectional finals or above, preferably NCSA Junior Nationals
 - Mid-Major (CAA, AAC, WAC) vs. Big Five (ACC, SEC, Big 10, Big 12, Pac 12)
 - Separate National Championships, sometimes separate conference champs
- ▶ Division 2 – “Growing division”
 - Minimums – sectional level or above, although girls can be slightly slower
 - Can be state or private schools, and usually range dramatically in size
 - Combined National Championships, includes the 1000 free
- ▶ Division 3 – “no athletic scholarships”
 - Minimums – Zone level swimmers, sectional and above will get an extra look
 - Usually smaller liberal arts, academic schools with limited athletic budgets, but not always
 - Combined National Championships, with cuts usually falling near D1 B standards

Types of Colleges

- ▶ NAIA – “Division 2 – Version 2.0”
 - wide range of ability – great for the late bloomer with some State cuts
 - Looser academic requirements than the NCAA – separate Eligibility Center
 - Combined championships – usually cuts around the faster Sectional standard
- ▶ NJCAA – “Training Wheels”
 - also a great first step for late bloomers or swimmers academic issues
 - 2 year degree program allows for easy transition into NCAA programs
 - Combined championships – relatively easy time standards for participation
- ▶ Club Swim Teams – “fun swimming”
 - Great for any level of swimmer as well as any commitment level
 - No recruiting needed, just contact the club president, similar to Masters
 - Yearly championship in Atlanta, occasionally some training trips (CU-Boulder)

Selecting a college

Usually Feb/Mar of Junior Year

Student Interview – 10 questions to help narrow from 500+ options

1) What do you want to study?

- General areas of study are easy to work around & find schools
- Super specific majors require a more focused eye, and may limit spectrum

2) Combined or Separate or Gender-isolated program?

- combined programs – one head coach & staff over men's & women's
- separate programs – one head coach & staff over EACH gender
- gender isolated – school only offers program for one gender (usually women's)

Selecting a college

3) Football or No Football?

- Affects Title 9 compliance as well as general athletic funding/facilities
- Can be indicative of community support of athletes

4) Male or Female head coach?

- Some athletes work better with one gender or another

5) Commitment Preference – year round, Sept-May or seasonal?

- Year round – look D1 or top 10 D2 programs
- Sept-May – Mid Major D1 (those without full funding) or D2 or top D3
- Seasonal – lower end D2, D3 or club swimming

Selecting a college

6) Size of School Preference? Under 4000, 4-10K, 10-20K, Super School

Under 4000 – D3, D2, NAIA, NJCAA – this is generally HS sized

4-10K – D2, D1 (private), NJCAA – some D3 fall in here too

10-20K – most state schools fall in here

20K + - Ohio State, USC, Georgia, NCSU etc. BIG schools.

7) Type of experience? Walk-on, Recruited Walk-on, Partial, Full

Walk-on – zero contact with coach until admitted, then either tryout or JV team

Recruited Walk-on – Official/Unofficial visit, guaranteed spot on team, can have academic \$\$

Partial Scholarship – ranges from books (~1000) to 75% or more – guaranteed spot, usually what kids can expect from the athletic side of things, expected to score at conference/NCAAs

Full Scholarship – VERY VERY RARE. Must be the best kid in the history of the school. Usually expected to win/score high in multiple events at conference or NCAAs

Selecting a college

8) Finances?

- Parents need to be VERY clear with how much they can spend/want to spend
- scholarships are NOT a guarantee – positives and negatives
- combining athletic & academic aid is not always an option

9) Location?

- not to be used as a restricting agent, remind them to be open-minded
- depending on career path, may result in their future residence

10) Intangibles?

- What do they value in their relationship with the coach?
- What do they enjoy about their current team experience?
- What type of living environment do they prefer?

Selecting a college

What next? Evaluate your athlete.

Compile a chart of best times – if you're organized, by Fresh/Soph/Jr.

Identify the top 5 collegiate events for your athlete.

Know the order of events for championship meets

Day 1: 2 Relays – varies by conference (1000 Fr for D2)

Day 2: 500 Fr, 200 IM, 50 Fr; 200 FR/400 MR

Day 3: 400 IM, 100 Fly, 200 Fr, 100 Bk, 100 Brst; 200 MR/800 FR

Day 4: 1650 Fr, 200 BK, 100 Fr, 200 Fly, 200 Brst; 400 FR

Evaluate the school for where your swimmer fits

- 1) NCAA Results
- 2) Conference Results
- 3) Top Times Lists – individual colleges – if not top 3 in 3-5 events, it's not a fit
- 4) Rosters – where are swimmers from? Local/foreign/out-of-state
- 5) Academics – does the school offer what your swimmer is interested in?

Narrowing the field (spring break Jr Year)

20-25 Schools to fill out questionnaires (available on athletic sites)

3-5 “Safety” Schools – usually local, where the athlete could attend without swimming

5 Big Money Schools – where the athlete would be the “big fish” and draw a lot of attention from the coaching staff

10-15 Scholarship/RWO schools – athlete would be recruited, but may need to meet specific athletic/academic criteria for participation with the team

3-5 “Dream” Schools – schools where walk-on status would be hoped for.

Communication with these schools would hopefully result in time requirements and/or invitation to a JV squad.

Narrowing the Field (May-July)

Evaluate responses from top 25 schools

Narrow to 8-10 schools to continue communication, and pursue visits

1-2 schools should be local/nearby – ask for unofficial trips

3-6 schools should be schools where the athlete can contribute asap

1-3 schools should be schools that may be more of an “athletic” decision for future performance goals.

****Club coach should call/email head or recruiting assistant at colleges to assess interest in athlete at this point****

Basic Recruiting Rules

These vary between divisions – noted where important

There are a lot more detailed rules, so when in doubt, just ask the coach

- ▶ College Coach to Recruit
 - Initial Contact July 1 (D1); Feb 1 (D2); Soph Year (D3);
 - 1 call/contact per week initiated by coach – includes text messages
 - Email or Snail Mail is unlimited
 - No more than 5 total official visits. (D3 is different)
 - No more than 5 evaluations per athlete
- ▶ Recruit to College Coach
 - 5 unofficial, unplanned visits on campus (D2 & D3 are unlimited)
 - Unintentional, unavoidable, incidental contact permissible, where only a greeting is exchanged
- ▶ **Parents/family members are included in all of these rules.**
- ▶ When at a meet, college coaches may speak with an athlete AFTER their final swim and AWAY from the competition site – preferably not in sight of the pool. Lobby, outside seating area, hotel lobby are all good options. **The club coach can help facilitate a meeting place and time to best accommodate this rule.**



Final Five Schools

The next steps to finding the perfect school – or at least a pretty good one!

Preparing for trips

- ▶ NCAA Eligibility Center – make sure to have your athletes enroll and get transcripts and test scores sent there at the conclusion of their Junior Year. **
- ▶ Standardized Tests – to take trips, athletes must have standardized tests on file – PSAT, PLAN, ACT, SAT are all acceptable tests for taking trips. They will need to have ACT or SAT for enrollment **
- ▶ Communication with High Schools – make sure the school understands the recruiting process – communicate with teachers and administrators prior to trip for homework & tests.
- ▶ Workouts – Club coaches can request that athletes swim on their trips. Know your athletes and the likelihood of this happening. College coaches cannot run workouts for your athletes, but can make pool time available if they know in advance. Plan for 1.5 hr.

****These two things should be initiated at the beginning of the junior year, but they MUST be done prior to trips****

Club Coach Role

Once the 5 trips and/or schools have been chosen

1) Call the assistant in charge of recruiting

- Give an honest assessment of your athlete – avoid using “great team player,” “hard-worker,” “tons of potential”
- Get an honest assessment of your athlete’s value to the college program
- Limit how many calls you actually make – at most 2 phone calls.

2) Send a video of your athlete to the college staff

- Select a video that shows their build as well as their best strokes. Keep it short – no more than 1 minute

3) Send a chart of time progression and physical statistics

- Fresh/Soph/Jr year – highlight best times and note any that may have affected the season
- Height, Weight (boys only), Shoe size, Wing span. Swimming Journey

4) Be prepared for the difficult conversations

- Financial terms not working, coaches & parents not seeing eye-to-eye
- Help the college coach communicate with the parents better, especially if you think it’s a good fit for your athlete.

Helping Athletes Talk to Coaches

And not sound stupid

Talking on the Phone

- 20 question worksheet – see attached
- Have a notebook or folder with labeled sections for each school – literally nothing worse than using the wrong name or wrong school on a call or email

Recruiting Trips

- Before July 1st do a social media purge. Compromising photos, comments or tweets should be deleted. Coaches check and will find out what has been posted – it's almost worth a group meeting. Do not post photos from your trip online unless you want other schools to write you off
- Remind athletes to behave as representatives of family, team and coaches on recruiting trips. If you wouldn't want your mom to know you did it, don't do it, because the college coaches WILL find out.
- Handwritten or personalized thank you follow-ups from evaluations or visits



A Few more thoughts

College swimming is more than just a sport – it creates a team family that is with you for life.

Special circumstances

Where it helps to have a club coach

► Transfers

- Reasons Vary
- Family circumstances
- Coaching change
- Injury/Illness
- Poor Life Choices – needs fresh start

- Club coach can help facilitate college interest at new schools or gauge possible interest.

- Swimmers MUST obtain either a blanket release from their school or a school specific release. May result in sitting out a year.

► Late Bloomers/Severe Illness or Injury

- Contact colleges directly – usually think D2, Mid-Major or local D1
- Be honest with scenario and development
- It's only too late after July 1st at most state schools to get a rush admission – easier if the kid is smart.

► Sitting out a year due to academics/finances

- Contact coach around April to discuss looking a year out.
- Be honest with training plan and stick with the competition plan to help your athlete be more successful.
- Stay on top of academics – take classes at community college that will universally transfer.

The Preachy Part

How club teams can help College Teams

College swimming is an endangered species and it's partially our job to keep it alive and healthy.

- ▶ Take your athletes to local college meets – make it a team outing, contact local coach to let them know you're attending
- ▶ Watch college meets when they're live streamed, follow teams on Twitter/Facebook/Instagram/Vine/YouTube to get the latest and greatest news & link to your social media
- ▶ Talk about college swimming at ALL levels in practice. Celebrate each swimmer's signing and hold a team signing day.
- ▶ Participate in local college team fundraisers and/or promotions
- ▶ Volunteer Coach at a local college – they can always use extra hands and eyes on their athletes.

Valuable Links for college swimming

Social Media

- Great College Twitter Feeds:
@packswimdive
@collegeswimming
@FlaSwimNetwork
@TexasMSD
@CalWSwim

Websites

Ncaa.org – eligibility center

Naia.org – separate registration

CollegeSwimming.com

Sportsrecruitingusa.com – details rules a little simpler than ncaa rulebook

Q & A

- Contact Information

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cacstingrays.com – all content is available for download

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Disclaimer – I am by no means, a professional, but we take these steps with all our athletes – regardless of ability - and have had fairly decent success at finding the right school for everyone.

Sometimes, during this process, it becomes apparent that the athlete doesn't really want to swim in college, and we've used similar steps to help each swimmer find the school that fits his/her goals.