

Recruiting U: Me Time

by Brian Delaney | Special to Lacrosse Magazine Online

Like buying a car, selecting a college requires a lot of research before visiting dealers and taking vehicles out for test drives. Currently, some high school sophomores and juniors are beginning to feel the pressures of locking down a college, and that'd be true even without lacrosse in the mix.

The beginning stages of the recruiting process can feel daunting, so LM spoke with several coaches, players and one guidance counselor to help with some very important pregame prep.

Have I filled out my NCAA clearinghouse paperwork?

Michael Salladino, a guidance counselor and coach at Garnet Valley High School in Glen Mills, Pa., said this is one of the biggest snags he faces when advising students about the recruiting process. He suggests you fill out the paperwork with your counselor, so that you can be deemed eligible by the NCAA to play sports in college. Do this early in your junior year. Coaches keeping an eye on you will also be able to follow your progress as a student, giving them important information as the critical junior year moves forward.

I had a strong sophomore season with the varsity high school team and want to see where I stand with regard to college recruiting. What should I do next?

Chris Meade and Matt Wheeler of lacrosserecruits.com have a few questions to ask first. Have you been invited to any elite recruiting events? Do you play club ball in the offseason, and does that club play in national tournaments or showcases against teams from other parts of the country? How have you stacked up against those types of players? Getting feedback from a coach or opposing coach who will be honest with you is critical in evaluating your skill set.

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Getting a firm grasp of your skill level is important, because it's time to start making a list of colleges you'd like to consider. At this stage, it can be a long one. You should be asking questions like:

- Do I want to attend a college in a specific region?
- Do I want to attend a small, medium or large school?
- At my level, what division of college athletics would be the best fit for me?
- What am I interested in studying? If undecided, what schools give me the most flexibility to adapt to a major once I'm on campus?
- Are these options affordable for my family and me?

I have a preliminary list of schools I'm interested in. What do I do next?

The worst thing you can do is sit around waiting for coaches to contact you. You have to be proactive in this process. Write the head coach a personal e-mail, or make a phone call, expressing your interest in their



Before thinking about participating in a recruiting event, such as this CT Super Sophs event staged by lacrosserecruits.com, prospects should ask themselves some important questions about their collegiate futures.

program, and let them know well in advance if you'll be playing during the offseason so you give them the best chance to see you play. Through either a video service or a friend, get a highlight tape compiled as well as one or two full game tapes ready for potential coaches to view. If you don't have any of your games filmed, find a way to start, either through a coach or a parent.

I want to schedule an unofficial/official visit. Advice?

Meade and Wheeler suggest taking a Friday off from high school to spend a full day and night at the college of choice. Aside from meeting with the coaches and getting a tour of the athletic facilities, suggestions include taking a general admissions tour with non-lacrosse visitors; attending a class with a current player to gauge class size and comfort; visiting a dining hall with a player to see how the lacrosse team interacts during down time; and staying in a dorm room to get a feel of what life will be like should you choose to go there.

What questions should I ask at an unofficial/official visit?

Limestone sophomore goalie Brigid Milchling said she arrived at visits with a barrage of questions.

"I asked about class sizes, if we got special treatments like tutors, and I asked about how practice schedules went, how much time we had to commit to the program, the daily schedule, how far we traveled," she said. "I asked about the different dorms and whether they were co-ed, just the dining room and everything, how the campus acted around the community, about other sports and teams here."

As a goalie recruit, Milchling also knew to ask the coaches about their recruitment of her position. How many other goalies were being considered? What's the goalie status within the team? What role do you envision me having with the team?

Should my parents accompany me on the visit? What should their role be?

Obviously, parents have an important role to play here. They can be a great comfort to the recruit when he or she is absorbing vast amounts of information on a visit. A couple things to keep in mind: first, players will typically stay overnight in the dorms with other players when on an official visit, while the parents retire to a nearby hotel; second, when meeting with the coaching staff, parents should resist the temptation to answer questions directed at their son or daughter. "If I'm asking a player a question and her parent is answering it, that really makes me hesitate for two reasons," Ursinus women's coach Erin Stroble said. "One, I want independent students who are going to be able to handle themselves, and two, I want parents who are going to be supportive of the team but not overbearing. Let your daughter and son talk to the coach, and wait and then definitely ask your questions too. I appreciate how many questions the parents have."

Coaches to prospects: understand the time commitment.

Prospective college players know everything about the game of lacrosse will get tougher at the next level. Coaches and current players stressed the importance of time management skills, because you'll need them to balance the academic and athletic workload.

"A lot of times, we'll go through our season with them. We'll show them what a full year looks like," Limestone women's coach Scott Tucker said. "There's a lot of programs that may have more of a commitment level than others."

Be ready for honesty.

Milchling said one aspect of the process that took adjusting to was the straightforward nature of the coaches she met along the way.

"They were extremely blunt," she said. "They were very honest with me. It took me off-guard, but that's what I needed. They don't have time to mess around."