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Recruiting **U**: The Series

# Piece

Partial scholarships remain the whole truth for most D-I recruits

By Nathan Maciborski

Dom Starsia just chuckles. Whenever the Virginia men's lacrosse coach overhears two kids talking about "so-and-so got a full ride to Georgetown" or "Carolina gave him a full scholarship," he figures they're probably off base.

Unlike football and basketball — where nearly every Division I player gets a full scholarship — lacrosse players very rarely see their tuition, room, board and fees covered for an entire four years.

The "full ride" is one of many myths that student-athletes and their parents may encounter when navigating the NCAA athletic scholarship maze during the recruiting process. Time to shed some light on that and several other commonly held misconceptions.

### Myth 1: Scholarships Will Find You

Organization and communication are the cornerstones of the recruiting process. It is important for young athletes to organize first — put their goals on paper and then build a checklist of things that need to be done, which includes picking up the phone and calling college coaches. E-mail coaches with your personal profiles. It is important to take a proactive approach.



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# of the Pie

"I think the one thing that folks don't realize is that they have a tremendous laterality, as far as initiating communication with the college coaches, which essentially gets them on the radar screen," said Tom Kovic, the founder of Victory Collegiate Consulting. "I think that there is a little too much caution that athletes and families take when it comes to getting on the radar as far as athletic scholarships. I think they're afraid that they're going to come off appearing cocky, and that is not the case at all."

Coaches do their best to scour the country in search of recruits, but they can only be in one place at a time. If you believe that you have something to offer a program, it can't hurt to reach out to that school.

## Myth 2: The Well Runs Deep

Under the NCAA, including Divisions I, II and III, only 30 percent of student-athletes are on any form of athletic scholarship. Division III doesn't offer any athletic scholarships, nor do any Ivy League schools. And the majority of the D-I and D-II teams are not fully funded, meaning they do not have the resources to offer the maximum amount of scholarships allowed by the NCAA.

A fully-funded Division I men's lacrosse team has a maximum number of 12.6 scholarships to hand out. On the women's side, the max is 12. That number can essentially be divided up however a coach chooses, but the max is for the entire program, not per class. Some schools try to reward upperclassmen for their loyalty to the program by upping their scholarship going into their senior years, which may leave less than three scholarships for a coach to go out and recruit nine or 10 incoming players.



Virginia coach Dom Starsia says full scholarships are very rare in lacrosse.

"If you just look at the scholarship offerings, you're probably talking about the top 150 guys in the country, and there's probably 4,000 kids going in to play college lacrosse at all the levels every year," said Matt Wheeler, a four-year letterwinner at Wesleyan University who, along with former teammate Chris Meade, co-founded lacrosserecruits.com — a Facebook-style Web site designed to market high school lacrosse players to college coaches.

## Myth 3: The "Full Ride"

One of the most common misconceptions is that a scholarship, whether it is full or partial, lasts four years. By definition, a scholarship is a one-year renewable grant. Renewals are not automatic, and the college must notify the student in writing by July 1 of his or her scholarship status. Therefore, even the proverbial "full ride" — a rarity at virtually every program — is only guaranteed for one year.

"In my 17 years at Virginia, I think we've done it three times, where we've given somebody a full scholarship," Starsia said. "What we're talking about in general are pieces of scholarships.

Our goal every year is that everybody gets something."

If a typical, fully-funded Division I men's lacrosse team has 40 players on

## Recruiting Recipe

- Start early, stay active. Freshman year of high school isn't too early to start exploring college and scholarship options. Prospects should begin the active process as sophomores and narrow their lists of schools by junior year.
- Go online. Plenty of good information is available on the Internet. Start by going to [ncaa.org](http://ncaa.org) and downloading the "NCAA Guide for the College-Bound Athlete."
- Keep your options open. "If you just bank on Duke, UNC, Georgetown, UVA, Syracuse and Johns Hopkins and you don't hear from them, it makes your recruiting process feel like a failure, and it shouldn't," said Matt Wheeler of lacrosserecruits.com. A better scholarship offer — and perhaps a better college experience — may be available elsewhere.

its roster, there's a good chance that 35 of those players receive a percentage of a scholarship — likely less than half of one full scholarship. Another two or three may receive need-based financial aid only, while another two or three are paying their own way entirely.

#### Myth 4: Summer is Scholarship Season

Unlike the recruiting process, which is full of regulations and stipulations as to when and how a coach can contact an athlete, a scholarship offer can be made at any point. Just don't expect to hear one too early.

For a coach that starts out recruiting, say, 20 players, it would be imprudent to make specific dollar-amount promises in the beginning of the process. Nobody wants to be in a position where they have to go back on their word. So it becomes an ongoing dialogue, where the two parties get down to particulars as the signing period nears.

"What we tell boys when they're sitting here early in their junior year is, 'You're a scholarship *candidate* for us,'" said Starsia. "So if the boy has five or six schools he's going around to visit, when they come back to us and say, 'Hey Coach, I'm getting pretty close to making a decision,' then we're going to give them the information (i.e., a dollar amount) they need in order to complete that picture."

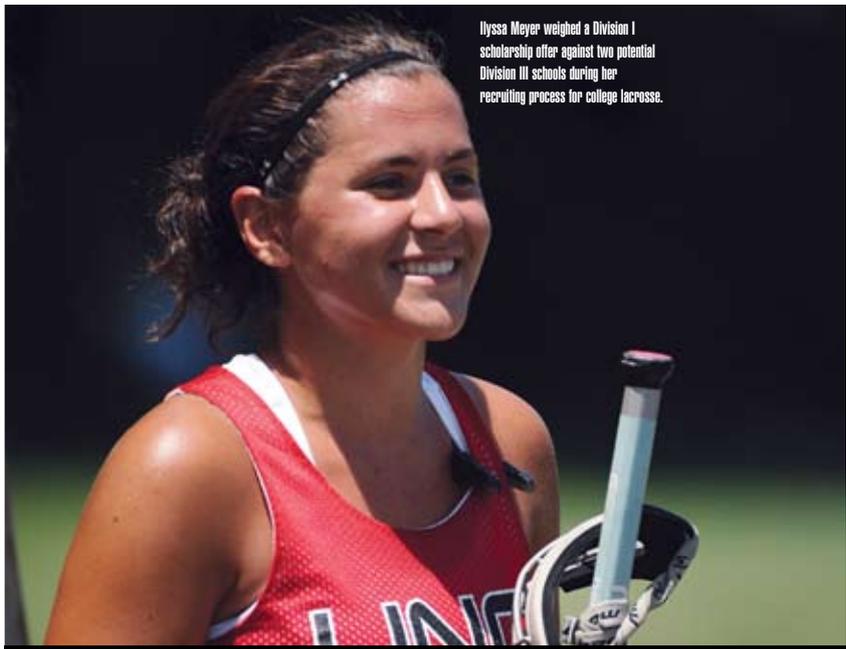
In most cases, the first binding agreement between an athlete and a program that is offering an athletic scholarship is the National Letter of Intent signing, which takes place in November or April of the senior year.

#### Myth 5: No Scholarship = Full Price

If a prospect is not offered an athletic scholarship in his or her freshman year, that doesn't mean he or she is not eligible later. There also are a number of other options that can be explored through the college's financial aid department. They include: need-based financial aid, grants and loans. **LM**

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"Recruiting U" takes a break next month. Catch up on previous features, and provide some feedback, by visiting Lacrosse Magazine Online. Click on "High School."



Ilyssa Meyer weighed a Division I scholarship offer against two potential Division III schools during her recruiting process for college lacrosse.

#### Peer Review: They Made Me an Offer...Now What?

The University of Detroit Mercy first spotted me at a recruiting tournament over the summer. We had been in contact via e-mail and, after July 1, on the phone. The coaches had asked me to consider taking a visit to see the campus during my senior year. So on Oct. 24, I began an official visit to a Division I school.

Head coach Mary Ann Meltzer made all the travel arrangements for my trip. After lunch with the coaching staff on campus, my jam-packed itinerary began with a tour of the athletics facility. After that, a brief tour of the campus ensued. I met with a dean of admissions, who filled me in on the academic side of the student-athlete, and a very interesting professor, who shed some light onto the curriculum of UDM.

After visiting the compliance office and then meeting with the athletic director, who told me about the expansion of UDM's athletic department, I spent the evening getting to know the team on a personal level. I observed, first-hand, how the team interacted while I learned all about life as a D-I student-athlete.

The next morning, after breakfast, the last stop for the weekend was a meeting with Coach Meltzer. I thought it would just be a debriefing, but it turned out to be more important than that. After discussing my experience from the weekend, she slipped me a letter. I figured it was a "thanks for coming and we'll keep in touch"-type letter. However, she explained that what was written there was my scholarship offer.

I couldn't believe it. I never would have expected such a generous offer, and was honestly shocked and thrilled to see it.

She continued to explain that now, with this offer, I could make a verbal commitment as soon as I was ready, and that a National Letter of Intent signing would follow. Thankfully, Coach Meltzer was very understanding and saw that I was a little surprised by her offer. She did not pressure me to make a decision on the spot and offered a generous time frame for me to make one.

Although my visit was in late October, I am still undecided (at press time in early November). I also visited Division III Goucher and Oberlin in the fall. There is more to college than just playing lacrosse, although that is a big factor for me. I want to weigh everything before making a choice that will affect the rest of my life. With the scholarship offer on the table, I definitely have a lot more to think about, and I hope I will make up my mind soon. In the meantime, I am very thankful for the offer and the chance to play Division I lacrosse.

—Ilyssa Meyer

*Meyer is a senior at Colts Neck (N.J.) High School. She plays midfield on the girls' lacrosse team.*