

# The recruiting process

Business



There are more than 460, 000 NCAA student athletes across the country, and at some point, every one of them made the decision to attend their respective University and participate in their respective sport or sports. However, the age at which each and every one of them made that decision differs greatly.

For most, it's towards the end of high school - a senior or upperclassmen, at least. But as the spectrum of university size and athletic prowess increases, the age at which those universities get their commits decreases. Drastically. The recruiting process is a shady, unregulated, and - for lack of a better word - corrupt `thing. I understand those who sympathize with coaches in this argument, in that coaches are hired to win games; and in order to do that, the coach needs the best players.

Thus, in order to get the best players, it entails establishing contact with the student-athlete at a very early age. However, I don't believe the athlete should feel pressured to make such a huge decision about their future at such a young age. I can speak on this topic specifically in Lacrosse. Lacrosse, being a less established NCAA sport compared to Football or Basketball, has less public eyes on it, and thus, less NCAA regulations. There are two kinds of ' commitments'; Verbal (or Oral, non-binding, etc.

), and Written (or signed, binding, regular, etc.). A Verbal commitment is as simple as a college telling the athlete that he or she will have a spot on the team if they elect to attend said college, and the athlete responding by confirming that they will accept the spot, and apply to the college with the intent of enrolling and joining the team. A Written Commitment applies to

colleges in the NCAA that are either Division I or II – meaning, generally, that they are larger schools with bigger athletic programs. A Binding commitment is entered through the athlete's signing of an NLI (National Letter of Intent) some point during their senior year during the National Signing Period, of which are three per academic year. NCAA regulations prevent athletes from signing an NLI prior to their senior year, so until then, the only thing linking the athlete to their chosen college is their word.

Verbal commitments, however, are universal throughout Divisions I, II, and III – the only difference being that Division III athletes do not have an official NLI to sign their senior year. In Lacrosse, the age for which the biggest, nationally-renowned recruits enter verbal commitments has gotten younger each year, to the point that the best usually choose their college and verbally commit freshman year of high school, before even playing a single minute of high school lacrosse. In lacrosse, athletes are generally grouped by their graduating year (For example, seniors this year are '2016s', juniors this year are '2017s', and so on). At this point in the academic year, most high-level Division I colleges already have their recruiting classes finished for the class of 2020. That is, they already know all of the 10 to 25 players they are bringing in four years from now. 10 to 25 high school freshmen who already have their colleges picked, per program.

The problem lies in the actual reason they are going to college – academics. Most freshmen do not have the slightest clue what they want to pursue in college, and, generally speaking, that aspect is completely neglected from their decision. Moreover, Lacrosse is not like sports such as Basketball and Football in that its pro athletes do not make a living off of playing the sport,  
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and thus most work a job for a living. Recruitment age has specifically decreased over the past decade, and in that time, there is an equally dramatic increase in the number of lacrosse players transferring schools or changing their commitment by the end of high school - some doing so multiple times. I believe that the NCAA has a responsibility to the future generation of student athletes to protect them from their own immaturity. Recruitment should be limited to the athlete's junior year, at least.

Restrictions need to be placed on the freedoms that coaches have to communicate with players early on in their high school careers. Doing so would prove more beneficial to the players, because they do not feel pressured to make such a big decision without having a few more years of life experience to factor in.