



Gearing Up for College

Helping Your Children Make Informed Choices



This article is one in a series that will be included in each in each issue of *Sports Parenting* to assist parents as they help their children prepare for college.

How a Parent Can Help Their Children Make Good Decisions About Pursuing a Sports Career Beyond High School

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Parents for Good Sports

Below are listed some actions parents can take to help their children make their choice about whether to pursue a college scholarship.

- Help them establish their priorities about how they want to live their lives in college and beyond.
- Help them carefully research their options.
- Help them understand that there are numerous ways their education can be funded (academic scholarships, grants, loans, and part-time jobs, most of which are less demanding than athletic training schedules.)
- Help them understand the importance to the reputation of their school or club coaches of having them earn scholarships. Weight the coach's advice accordingly.
- Help them dig below the college's PR. Assess the quality of the academic programs. Invite them to use outside sources to make their assessments.
- Help them get a good match between their athletic and academic abilities and the demands that will be placed upon them at the college they are considering. When demand exceeds capacity, disaster nearly always strikes.
- Urge them to seek objective evaluations of their athletic and academic talent.
- Help them resist flattery by recruiters.
- Insist that they get well acquainted with current team members.
- Urge them to interview team dropouts to find out why they left the program.
- Discourage them from choosing the school because they "love" the coach. Coaches put on their best face during the recruiting process. Furthermore, there is a good chance they may take a job elsewhere before the athlete graduates.
- Discourage them from over-estimating their resiliency to bounce back from setbacks. The consequences of losing in college are far greater for the college coach than they are for the school and club coach. Coaches can and do lose their jobs when their teams do not win.
- Help them be realistic about the life lessons they can learn on the playing field. Life lessons learned through sports participation are often overstated.
- Coach them on how to fight to preserve their individuality and autonomy. Avoid programs that regulate their every move.
- Insist that they make their own decisions. Urge them to consult others, but ultimately the decision is theirs and theirs alone.
- Help them resist being pressured to decide. Advise them to take their time.

- Insist that they study each school's graduation rate. Colleges are required by the NCAA to publish these statistics.
- Discourage them from placing too much emphasis upon climate and geography. Their future is more important than their immediate comfort.
- Invite them to proceed upon the assumption they will incur a career ending injury on the first day of practice. Have them ask, "Is this the place I want to spend the next four years of my life?"

Most importantly, an athlete's involvement in sport needs to be put in perspective. Their ultimate life goals need to guide their choices about how they use their college years. Granted the vast majority of high school graduates do not have a clear vision of what that want to do with the rest of their lives, but they typically have developed some sense of where they want to be after they finish serious sports training.

Excerpted from David Canning Epperson, Ph.D. and Paul Arrington, M.D.,
Are Athletic Scholarships An Illusion of Opportunity? What Parents Need to Know - But May Not Want To Hear

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