

Softball Recruiting = Business

College Recruiting

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I was doing an in-home interview with an athlete and her family a week or so ago and they told me something I very regularly hear and while frustrating for them, it was an easy explanation for a change. The parents as well as the athlete began telling me how they've been showcasing with their team, going to camps, emailing and calling coaches, for the last couple of years...and all of that with still no result. They began in her 8th grade year, and now being a couple of years later, they were under the impression they were doing everything right. So why had this produced no responses or recruiting interest from the coaches? Numbers. Plain and simple, numbers.

You see, college recruiting is a business, through and through. Not only for the university and the coaches, but for you as well. And anyone in business will tell you, the numbers never lie. In diving into the explanation for this family I decided to elaborate from both a coach's perspective as well as an athlete's.

Athlete

Example: Most business men and women will tell you that a 3% conversion rate is good. So when John Doe, the owner of the furniture store down the road begins doing postcard mail outs, he sends out a thousand postcards in his marketing efforts. It cost him \$300 to send out those thousand post cards. So if he gets a 3% return on that, it means that 30 different new customers will be coming his way! That is HUGE in the business world. If only one single person of those 30 end up buying furniture from him, he's already covered his money spent and actually made a little profit.

So now apply this to your college recruiting efforts...if you are attending camps, showcasing, doing mail outs, sending emails, and making phone calls, but you're only doing this with the average of 2-5 schools. Well if you get a 3% return on your efforts, that means you have a 0.15% chance of getting recruited by one of those five schools. Make sense? If you're targeting 50-100 different programs initially, your 3% application indicates you will have anywhere from 1-3 schools actively recruiting you. But at least you're being recruited now, right? Now apply that on a larger scale, and a larger scale, and so forth. **There are over 1500 college softball programs out there**, if you're only pursuing 2-5 and those programs either have no need or have no interest in you, your efforts are too little too late.

Extra tip: You've heard it a million times, but there are numerous ways to narrow down the programs to target. Major, location, realistic playing ability, and so forth. By the time you apply these things, you're still likely to have 1,000 plus options.

Coach:

Now looking at college softball recruiting from a coach's perspective...it's business. At the end of the day we know this:

1. The coach was hired to coach a team, to win, to produce graduating student-athletes, and again, win.
2. He/she MUST recruit players that bottom line, are going to help them win and get to the top of their conference and beyond.

3. The coach is only given so much money to spend on recruiting as well as athletic scholarships (if level allows). Therefore, he/she must meticulously watch their bottom line in recruiting and make sure their recruiting budget is always in line.

4. Again, coaches are paid to **WIN**.

In order to stay within budget and WIN, the coach must ensure that each and every player that he/she spends a single dime on recruiting, has the potential to elevate their teams level of play and contribute to their overall goal(s). If you hire a roofing company to put on a new roof, but they never do, would you keep them around? No. Same applies here. A coach is hired to maintain the integrity and reputation of a program, elevate all aspects of play, education, and reputation, and last but certainly not least, WIN. If he/she is not doing these things, their position as the coach isn't necessarily secure.

So don't take it personal if a college coach is not recruiting you. It simply means he/she can't let their emotions dictate their business. Yes, business. Coaching is a job, and running their team and their recruiting is a business. If a college coach is recruiting you, you receive an offer, and you commit to their program, you can guarantee that he/she is comfortable with your talent level, your commitment to education, and your ability to make mature and responsible decisions as a student-athlete/adult. Otherwise, you come to school and fail out or quit the team, his/her INVESTMENT was a bad one and thus, cripples their overall goal in this business venture that is coaching their college softball team and leading them to the top of their conference or more.

Remember the 3%

If you recall the "3% return on investment" discussed for the athlete? The same goes for coaches. If they only seek out a few pitchers for this given graduation year, their chances of finding the caliber and character of player they need is slim because their 3% return will be 1 or less. This is why the recruiting process is just that, a "process". Where as they begin building their list of potential prospects as well. For every year, every position, there are thousands of athletes just like you looking for a place to compete. The coach's job from there is to determine which athlete(s) give him/her the best chance to lead their conference. Period.

Bottom Line

The "take home message" here is that college softball recruiting, and every sport for that matter, should be looked at as a business both from the coach's perspective as well as the athlete's. If your college recruiting is a business, and you're only "marketing" yourself to 2-5 programs, and getting a 3% return is considered good, that's not a very good outcome is it? By the time most softball athletes realize that they haven't been marketing themselves to enough programs, they're in their sophomore or even junior year, which we all know is not ideal to say the least. Everything in college recruiting is a business, it's about numbers. There are a bunch of variables that are involved and in the end if you leave it to chance, your end result will be nothing even close to what you were hoping for. It doesn't mean you weren't talented enough or worthy, it simply means you weren't marketing yourself to enough schools and weren't marketing yourself to the right schools.