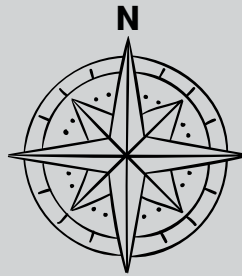


“Recruit athletes who match your values and then develop their skills. Many coaches turn a blind eye to the poor character of talented athletes only to pay the price in the amount of time it takes to manage that athlete to the detriment of the other athletes on their teams. It’s simply not worth it. Stay true to your inner compass, especially in the recruiting process.”

– Celia Slater



chapter 6

MANAGING THE REST: THE CONNECTED

By Holly Hesse and Shannon Wells

chapter 6 sections

- Recruiting: The Missouri State Philosophy
- Organizing and Managing Recruiting
- Parents: Including and Setting Ground Rules
- Alumni: Continuing and Remembering Their Legacy
- Community: Service and Engagement

RECRUITING

Below is our Missouri State recruiting philosophy and process.

And because recruiting is a HUGE part of college coaching, especially for assistant coaches, we have a whole section of this chapter, written by **Shannon Wells**, *the associate head coach for the **University of Florida** volleyball program*. Shannon is considered to be one of the best recruiters in the country. I'm confident that this recruiting section will provide some valuable insight into the why, what and how of this important aspect of managing a program.

If you are a high school or club coach, we hope by sharing this recruiting information, it will give you some valuable insights so you can support your athletes through the recruiting process which at times, can feel daunting for you, the young athletes you coach, and their parents.

The Missouri State Recruiting System: Connecting the Future

Recruiting in general terms refers to the process of identifying, attracting, interviewing, selecting, and committing student-athletes to your program. It is important to start with a recruiting philosophy that identifies the type of student-athletes that will best fit with your program.

Identifying: Triple A

At Missouri State we call our recruiting philosophy "Triple A" referring to student-athletes who are "A-class" in Academics, Attitude, and Ability.

Academics

Our number one goal as a staff is for each student-athlete to graduate with a meaningful degree in four to five years. We look for student-athletes who are serious about their education and whose goal is to achieve their academic potential.

Attitude

As a staff we seek to create a team environment that is unconditionally loving and supportive and where everyone can grow into more than even they thought possible. We actively seek student-athletes who banish gloom and negativity and who will be positive, upbeat, and enthusiastic.

Ability

As a staff we aspire to be competitive within the Missouri Valley Conference, our Region, and on a National level. We look for student-athletes who can succeed as an individual within the team and help the team succeed at these levels.

These Triple A's are the Non-negotiables of Our Recruiting Philosophy.

Attracting: Six Distinguishing Characteristics of Missouri State

We attract student-athletes with what are known as the “Six Distinguishing Characteristics of Missouri State.” What follows is a summary.

Academic Success

- 100% graduation rate under the current coaching staff
- 20 consecutive years above a 3.00 as a team
- #2 on NFCA Top Ten teams in 2018-2019
- 63 Academic All-MVC student-athletes
- 17 CoSIDA Academic All-District VII
- 3 Verizon/CoSIDA Academic All-Americans

Athletic Success

- 6 NCAA Tournament appearances
- Most recent NCAA appearances are 2011 and 2006
- 3 consecutive NCAA appearances in 1996, 1997 and 1998
- 1 of just 13 schools to appear in those 3 NCAA Regional Tournaments
- Regional wins against Iona in 2011 and Stanford in 1998
- 8 Missouri Valley Conference Championships
- 83 All-Conference Selections under current coaching staff
- 35 different players have been 1st Team All-Conference
- 10 players inducted into the Missouri State Hall of Fame

Diamond of Success

- Program philosophy
- Close coach/student-athlete relationship based on trust and respect is at the core of The Diamond of Success
- Emphasis on life skills and developing the whole person
- Development of physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and social aspects of the student-athlete

Athletic Facilities

- Wynn Student-Athlete Achievement Center
- Killian Stadium located at 2141 E. Pythian
- Hammons Indoor-Training Facility at Hammons Field
- Strength and Conditioning Facility in Plaster Sports Complex
- Athletic Training Services in Forsythe Athletics Center
- Locker Room in Hammons Student Center

Public Affairs Mission

- Special mission to produce graduates who are prepared to make a difference in their careers
- Development of knowledgeable leaders with a sense of concern and an understanding of community and environmental issues
- Courses will challenge the student-athlete to become an informed and active citizen
- Service learning opportunities which allow the student-athlete to earn academic credit in real-world situations as a volunteer in community organizations
- Public Affairs Convocation Series enables the student-athlete to hear and interact with nationally recognized speakers
- Missouri State is recognized for fostering a positive attitude, promoting community-building values, and encouraging students to explore an individual and moral reasoning process
- More than 90% of our classes are taught by faculty
- 80% of our faculty members hold the highest degree in their field
- Missouri State offers 550 career possibilities in 140 different majors

Experienced Coaching Staff

- Recognized as the #1 longest tenured staff in NCAA Division I
- Current staff has been together for 25 years
- Current staff combines for over 100+ years of coaching experience at the Division I level
- Holly: In her 33rd year as the head coach; 39 total years of Division I coaching, 4 years as a Division I player; 800+ wins; Coach of the Year in 1992 and 1994; most victories of all coaches in 35+ year history of the MSU program. Specializes in development of pitchers, mental training, team building, motivation and organization. On the Board of Directors for True North Sports. Author of The Diamond of Success.
- Sue: In her 31st year as Associate Head Coach; 4 years as a Division I player. Specializes in development of infielders, hitters, base running, and strength training and conditioning. Oversees budget and travel arrangements.
- Beth: In her 26th year as Associate Head Coach; 39 total years of Division I coaching, 4 years as a Division I Head Coach; 4 years as a Division I player. Specializes in development of catchers, outfielders, and hitters. Oversees academic progress and recruiting coordinator.

Interviewing: On Campus Visit

Sue and Beth do a lot of interviewing with prospective student-athletes on the phone before they are invited for a campus visit. Through conversations with the student-athletes' coaches and the student-athletes themselves they determine if they are "Triple A."

The Two Big Questions I Ask When I Meet With Them on the Campus Visit Are:

- “Can you give me six reasons why this program would want you to be a Bear?”
- “Can you give me six reasons why you want to be a Bear?”

These two questions give me insight into their confidence level and how much the recruit has researched our program.

Selecting: The Offer

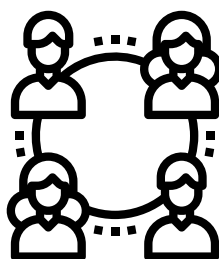
If all goes well on the campus visit, we make a scholarship offer before the recruit leaves campus.

Committing: The Decision

We give the prospective student-athlete a general timeframe in which they have to commit to our program, usually two to three weeks. During this time period we make this offer to only them. After that two to three weeks has passed, we then open that offer up to other recruits on our list.



MANAGING AND ORGANIZING RECRUITING



By Shannon Wells

Associate Head Volleyball Coach, University of Florida

My recruitment experience as part of a coaching staff began as a graduate assistant at a small Division I school. My key responsibility for campus visits was getting the head coach's car cleaned and vacuuming the locker room. Though it wasn't my favorite responsibility, it was a great experience because I learned that to be great at recruiting, the whole staff must be fully invested, no matter how big or how small the part we played.

I started as a Division II assistant, moved to a small Division I graduate assistant, then to a small Division I assistant to a Power 5 associate head coach. I have worked with very limited budgets and huge budgets. I have spent 13 years working on a system that has proven to work at all levels.

This System is Built on Three Questions:

- What makes our program different?
- Who should I be spending my time on?
- How do I organize my communication with athletes?

Before we get started answering the questions above, let's start with some staff communication about your program.

DEPTH CHART

Create a depth chart for your program. This chart should be divided by position, year, and scholarship money, and completed for the current roster and at least four years ahead.

On the next page is an example of a Future Depth Chart for a volleyball program. The highlighted places are the positions needed for each class and the amount of scholarship to be given.

2021

Outside (Position 1)		Setter (Position 2)		Opposite (Position 3)		Libero (Position 4)		Middle Blocker (Position 5)	
ATHLETE	YEAR \$	ATHLETE	YEAR \$	ATHLETE	YEAR \$	ATHLETE	YEAR \$	ATHLETE	YEAR \$
Suzie Smith	SR 12,000	Rachael Jones	JR 12,000	Mikayla Stump	JR 7,000	Hope True	SR 8,000	Mia Long	SR 12,000
Fran Frank	SR 8,000	Monica Box	FR 12,000	Emma Bong	FR 0	Izzy Healy	JR 1,500	Sophia Murphy	JR 8,000
Phoebe Flower	SO 12,000					Ava Stump	FR 0	Josie Zinger	JR 12,000
Drae Bottle	FR 6,000							Jorie Brook	SO 4,500
Grace Zoe	FR 0								

Total Scholarship
115,000

2022

Outside (Position 1)		Setter (Position 2)		Opposite (Position 3)		Libero (Position 4)		Middle Blocker (Position 5)	
ATHLETE	YEAR \$	ATHLETE	YEAR \$	ATHLETE	YEAR \$	ATHLETE	YEAR \$	ATHLETE	YEAR \$
Phoebe Flower	JR 12,000	Rachael Jones	SR 12,000	Mikayla Stump	SR 7,000	Izzy Healy	SR 1,500	Sophia Murphy	SR 8,000
Drae Bottle	SO 6,000	Monica Box	SO 12,000	Emma Bong	SO 0	Ava Stump	SO 0	Josie Zinger	SR 12,000
Grace Zoe	SO 0					2022 LB	FR 4,000	Jorie Brook	JR 4,500
2022 OH	FR 12,000							2022 MB	FR 12,000
2022 OH	FR 12,000								

Total Scholarship
115,000

2023

Outside (Position 1)		Setter (Position 2)		Opposite (Position 3)		Libero (Position 4)		Middle Blocker (Position 5)	
ATHLETE	YEAR \$	ATHLETE	YEAR \$	ATHLETE	YEAR \$	ATHLETE	YEAR \$	ATHLETE	YEAR \$
Phoebe Flower	SR 12,000	Monica Box	JR 12,000	Emma Bong	JR 0	Ava Stump	JR 0	Jorie Brook	SR 4,500
Drae Bottle	JR 6,000	2023 S	FR 12,000	2023 RS	FR 10,000	2022 LB	SO 4,000	2022 MB	SO 12,000
Grace Zoe	JR 0					2023 LB	FR 4,000	2023 MB	FR 12,000
2022 OH	SO 12,000					2023 LB	FR 0	2023 MB	FR 2,500
2022 OH	SO 12,000								

Total Scholarship
115,000

EVALUATION PROCESS

I have worked as an assistant on five different staffs, and each program approached the evaluation process very differently. Getting all staff members on the same page takes time. It takes rounds of review to build consensus on what to look for in recruits, getting agreement on the short term and longer term depth chart, while engaging all perspectives on who will be a perfect fit for our program, and most importantly, finding the recruit that your head coach will fall in love with.

During my initial recruiting trip to a new program, I take a ton of video of the athletes. I then have a staff meeting to review each of the videos. I describe the athlete, their performance, what I like, don't like, and where I think she should be on our list.

The next part, and by far the most important, is I simply listen. I listen to the rest of the staff evaluate this athlete, understanding what they are seeing, what skills they are seeking, where this recruit needs to be on the same list. At this point, it is not about that actual recruit, it is about learning what type of recruit is best for our program. If I listen properly in these meetings, I know how to train my eye to see what the rest of the staff is seeing so I can adjust my perspective the next time I go out. I'm making a mental list of items that a recruit must have to be the perfect fit for our program.

This meeting is not fun for anyone. It takes a ton of time, but by investing time doing this upfront work and building consensus, we are making our evaluation process much more efficient each time we go off-campus to evaluate.

I challenge you and your staff to not only incorporate the video activity, but start having discussions about what specific skills, traits, attributes, and abilities you are seeking in your recruits.

I like to describe recruits as "above the line" or "below the line." "Above the line" or "below the line" means that a line is drawn within every evaluation category for every recruit. Their skills are either above or below that line in that category. No matter how desperate, how much pressure you feel to win, you should not take athletes who are "below the line" in the categories you and your staff discussed. This is the standard for your program. Recruit athletes that are above the standard.

I highly encourage you to use the two staff activities below. It is worthwhile to spend time here, getting to know your program, the expectations of your program, and getting your staff to agree upon what you are looking for, before you even step off-campus, send an email, or make a phone call.

Staff Activity (Self-Awareness Evaluation Process)

For each of the categories below, discuss with your staff what is “Above the Line” and what is “Below the Line” for your program.

1. The Player

- a. Athleticism: Are there certain parameters for the type of athletes you have in your program? Should different positions have different parameters?
- b. Skill Level: How good does their sport skill need to be for your program? Should different positions have different skill levels? Is this a sliding scale with athleticism (Higher the athlete-less skill, lower the athlete-higher skill?)
- c. Teammate Skill: How good of a teammate does your recruit need to be? How would he/she demonstrate this?
- d. Leadership: Are you looking for a vocal leader? A leader by example? Do specific positions have to show certain leadership traits?
- e. Confidence: Are you looking for confident athletes? What evidence shows that they have this? Are there specific behaviors you want to see?
- f. Ability to learn/grow: How does an athlete show you that they value learning and growth? Is this trait important to you?

2. The Person

- a. Academics: What type of student should they be? Are there academic standards they must have?
- b. Family/Life Story: Are you looking for a specific type of family background? What type of previous or current athletes have found success at your school?
- c. Values: What type of values or morals should this athlete have?

3. Strengths and Weaknesses of Your Staff

- a. Strengths: What are some specific strengths of your staff (training a specific position, dealing with athletes with bad home life, helping students with academic issues)?
- b. Weaknesses: What are some things your staff has really struggled to help with over the years (entitled athletes, athletes with a certain kind of technical flaw, training specific positions, athletes with previous injuries, etc...)?

4. Understanding Your Program and the Fit

- a. Brands (to be discussed later)
- b. Non-Negotiables: Are there any characteristics of recruits you know would not be a good fit at your school? Are there any characteristics your staff will not mesh with?

These are very important items to discuss with your staff. Each interaction should complete the picture of what an “ideal” recruit would look like for your program. Have continued discussions about what behaviors/characteristics are a good fit for your program. Expect each person to speak from their experience. Give your staff ample opportunities to let their voice be heard.

Now that you have an idea of what type of recruits you are looking for, it’s time to dive more into specific needs for your program.

Staff Activity (Depth Chart)

1. Fill out a depth chart for each year and provide it to the staff.
2. Each staff member should analyze each season and be prepared to answer the following questions in a staff meeting:
 - a. What position do we need in each class? If you want to use the template like the example provided, use this link:
<https://bit.ly/2Faxv11>.
 - b. What specific skills are required for that position? Use the above the line behaviors here and your current roster to help you decide what is needed.
 - c. How much scholarship money should be put into that position?
3. Meet as a staff to discuss the charts. Come out of the meeting with a single chart. Post this chart in the office and continue to update it as athletes commit.

Having a depth chart does not mean you have to stick with it. Athletics is a fluid environment; people get hurt, people transfer, recruits decommit, etc. The staff should review and discuss the depth chart monthly. Make sure your depth chart is posted somewhere the entire staff can view it. We use a shared drive instead of a whiteboard in an office.

All too often, I hear coaches tell me they have no idea what they are looking for when they are on a recruiting roadtrip because there is no communication within their program regarding what their current roster looks like or their future needs. These conversations need to take place before the first recruitment action takes place!

Organizing Your Contact Database

Before the first correspondence goes out, make sure you check with your compliance office to understand NCAA legislation on communication with prospective student-athletes.

Let me give you a scenario: You send a mass email out to your whole recruitment database. Responses begin to fill up your inbox. As you sort through the inbox, you start to notice the athletes responding to you are the athletes you aren't sold on yet. You respond to them, because that is what we are told to do, and guess what: they write back. And the process continues.

The athletes who likely didn't respond are the athletes you are ready to take the next steps with. You have just invested four hours emailing back and forth with athletes you don't even want yet. Would it be a better return on your time investment to connect with the athlete you really do want? This misallocation of time and focus is the BIGGEST mistake I see a staff make. We spend too much time on athletes that we are not ready to take the next steps with and not enough time on the athletes we really want. This means our databases are too big! Most programs initiate contact with their athletes at the same rate and spread their message to hundreds of recruits, hoping someone will bite. Communication is where you can set your program apart. ***Spend 90% of your recruiting time on athletes you want to be part of your program.***

One minor adjustment in your recruiting philosophy can bring some better results. So how do we do this?

CREATING TIERS

Create tiers within your database and assign a tier to each athlete you are currently recruiting. Each tier has its own system of communication.

Tier One

Tier One are your top athletes. These are athletes identified as a great fit for your program and you are ready to advance to the next steps in the recruiting process.

There is no ideal number of athletes in Tier One. You want to keep this group as small as possible so you can invest more time with each of them. For example, if you have five athletes on this list for every one scholarship, you can really get to know their wants, their parents, the coaches, compared to having 20 recruits on this list.

The depth chart completed in the previous activity should guide the creation of your tiers, especially if you went into detail about the specific skills required for each position. For

example, if your program does not need a certain position in the next class, then any athletes who play that position should NOT be in this tier, no matter how much you enjoy that athlete.

Your staff should allot 90% of their recruiting time to this tier. They are the priority. They will get the most communication from you.

If you only have time to do one thing that week in recruiting, make sure it is geared toward this group of athletes.

Tier Two

Tier Two are the athletes you like, have potential, but you are not quite ready to have them part of your program. Maybe you need to evaluate them more; maybe you picked up on some red flags from their coach; maybe they have a ton of potential and you are just waiting for them to develop the skill.

This group is usually bigger than Tier One. We are going to spend about 8% of our time on this group of athletes.

Tier Three

Tier Three are athletes you have not had a chance to evaluate yet. They might have emailed you, his/her coach emailed you about them, they made an "All-Star" List.

We are going to spend 2% of our time on this tier.

Staff Activity

1. Name each tier. Be as creative as you want. For example, Tier One can be "Future ____" Tier Three is "Interest Kids" etc...
2. Have each member of your staff create an Excel file that divides your recruiting database by these tiers.
3. Spend time as a staff and discuss where each athlete is on your list and why each person put them there. The two most important groups to spend time debating are athletes between Tier 1 and Tier 2. Do not debate athletes between Tier 2 or Tier 3! If one person thinks they should be on Tier 2, put them on Tier 2 and move on.

Organizing Your Communication

Now that your recruit database is organized and there's a better understanding of who is in each tier, let's dive into communicating with our recruits.

The most important part of communication with your recruits is **consistency**; not only consistency with the frequency at which you are communicating with them, but the consistency of the message.

Another big mistake coaches make is going to a tournament with a list of athletes they like, return to the office, send these athletes an email, then go out the following weekend, find a new group, send those athletes an email. The athletes you liked at the very first tournament haven't received a message from you in over a month because you found a whole new batch of athletes. This process is ineffective!

Now that communication tiers are organized, here are some ways to spend time creating ways to communicate with your recruits. We'll then finish this section by putting them into an organized communication calendar.

Brand Emails

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, a brand is "a class of goods identified by name as the product of a single firm" or "a characteristic or distinctive kind."

The staff exercise below makes the staff think about your own program, what makes you different? What sets your program apart from all the other programs out there. What are your program's selling points? What is your "brand?"

Brand emails are emails/mail outs you create and will be used year after year with very limited edits. Our goal is to create 24-36 brand emails to use.

Staff Activity

1. Using a big white board, brainstorm with your staff by asking the questions below and writing the answers on the whiteboard.
 - a. What makes your program different?
 - b. What are some of your program's selling points?
 - c. Look into the mission statement of your university. What makes your university different?

2. As a group, look at all your answers. Are any recurring themes surfacing? Group those together and come up with a title for them.
 - a. Here are some examples:
 - "Our sports programs win a lot! We have a lot of All-Americans, All-Conference players, etc..." This is a great brand. You can name this theme "Competitive Program"

- “Our university is a faith-based community. Almost 90% of our student-athletes listed faith as the most important priority when choosing a program. Our athletes must attend church every Wednesday and we have team bible study.” Another great brand example and can name it “Grow with God”
- “The academics at my university are Top 5 in the country and #1 in the State. Almost 45% of our academic programs are in the top 10 in the country.” Strong academics should definitely be part of your brands.

3. Come up with 3-5 brands for your program. On the other side of the white board, at the top, list each one and create a column under it. Here is an example:

UNIVERSITY OF VOLLEYTOWN				
Location	Staff	Winning Traditions	Academics	Facilities

4. Choose one brand, using examples from the other side of the white board or brainstorming, list the reasons why you choose that theme. Repeat this for each theme. Below is an example:

UNIVERSITY OF VOLLEYTOWN				
Location	Staff	Winning Traditions	Academics	Facilities
College Town	Coaching Staff	History in conference	Rankings	New Gym
Weather	Players Hometowns	Team Goals	Academic Advisors	Video Room
Beach	Strength Coach	Winning under HC	Networking	Weight Room
Close to home/ Far from home	Athletic Trainers	Other Sports	Jobs after college	Training Table
		Traditions	Alums	

5. Have a staff member write all this down and save this document. Each one of these ideas under the brand becomes a brand email for you to use!

- Assign each staff member a brand. Have them create a mailout/ email/graphic that relates to the information you just created.

It's important to not get overwhelmed. In no way is it realistic to expect to have 24-36 brand emails created in this short time. My suggestion is to target 12 brand emails to begin with. That is one brand email a month. During the off-season, put some extra time into creating additional emails and grow it to 24. You are now sending 2 emails a month to your top recruits telling them all the reasons why your program is a great fit. And the great news: next year with your new recruiting class you use the same exact emails.

Here is an example of a brand email. One of our brands is “Winners Amongst Winners” in which we talk about the success of all the athletic programs. This is a graphic that was designed to show all of our NCAA championships at Florida. This same graphic can be used EVERY year (with hopefully one edit as more teams win a National Championship.)



Current Event Emails

Current Event emails are created each time you use them. They are focused on current happenings within the team (game results, awards, etc.), updated university happenings (awards won, special visitors to campus, etc), updated athletic department happenings (updated renovations, success of other teams, etc..), and holidays.

The goal is to create 12-24 current event emails. This means I am sending 1-2 emails a month focusing on current happenings within the university. I will send one email specific to our team and then the other email I decide what is most important about happenings around our program/university/city/etc. and send that out.

Here is an example of a current event email we have sent:

Dear Mike,

Imagine one of your freshman playing in the biggest weekend of her young volleyball career and hitting .575 and averaging 2 blocks per set, pretty awesome right? So you can imagine my excitement when our 6'4 freshman middle blocker Rhamat Alhassan did that against the #13 and #6 ranked teams in the nation in California! Because of this, she earned SEC Player of the Week and AVCA National Player of the Week, only the 12th player in school history to accomplish this!

In the match against San Diego, Rhamat recorded a personal best 37.7" inches as measured by the VERT. So that's 6'4, wingspan 6'7, and she just jumped 37.7". Want proof? Here it is [**here**](#). (The kid she hit over touches 10'8)

Go Gators!

-Mary

Questionnaires

NCAA Division I legislation states that questionnaires can be sent to recruits. How can you divide up your current questionnaire to potential student-athletes to make more than one?

I split up our generic questionnaire into Personal Information, Athletic Information, High School Information, and Club Information. From one questionnaire, we now have four. The ultimate goal is to have 12 questionnaires so you can send one questionnaire a month. If your budget is an issue, create each questionnaire as a Google Doc or Dropbox file so you can send the link to a recruit instead of paying for postage.

Brainstorm with your staff or ask other coaches in your athletic department for additional questionnaire themes.

Admissions Mailings

NCAA Division I legislation allows for information created by the Admissions Department to be sent to prospective student-athletes from the athletic department. This is a resource that requires no work from your staff.

Send a staff member to the Admissions office. Have them introduce themselves and ask to see the information they send to prospective students. Bring back some examples to the office and as a staff discuss which ones you think can be adapted for your recruits.

I worked at a university and had such a great relationship with our Admissions Office that I would send them our Excel sheet of our database, and they would add it to their database of prospective students. They did all the work of sending the recruits information monthly.

Camp Brochures

NCAA Division I legislation allows for camp information to be sent directly to recruits.

Creating your Communication Calendar

You have done a great deal of work in creating/brainstorming ways to communicate with recruits. This next section we will organize all the information to create a calendar that can be used annually. Here is a link to the calendar your staff can fill out together: <https://rb.gy/rzcuuv>.

Each month has its own communication sheet. I start the calendar with September. If you are a sport that can start communicating with recruits on June 15th, then change the calendar so June is the first month.

September	
THEME	
GOALS	

TIER ONE				
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Brand Email				
Current Event Email				
Admissions Mailing				
Questionnaire				

TIER TWO				
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Brand Email				
Current Event Email				
Admissions Mailing				
Questionnaire				

TIER THREE				
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Brand Email				
Current Event Email				
Admissions Mailing				
Questionnaire				

COMMITTS				
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Brand Email				
Current Event Email				
Admissions Mailing				
Questionnaire				

The second row on the calendar is **"THEME."** You and your staff came up with 3-5 different themes/brands that differentiate your program and you want to sell to recruits. Each month you will choose a specific theme. Everything you send to a recruit provides information regarding that theme. It is important your message remains consistent.

The third row serves the **"GOALS"** for that month. Each month, your staff should discuss what recruitment goals you need to accomplish and write it in this box. Examples of goals can be finishing visit itineraries, making phone calls, organizing evaluation schedules, etc...

In the area that says **"TIER"**, replace it with the words your staff used to describe your separate tiers.

As a staff, discuss the amount of monthly communication that should happen for each tier. Remember: **90% of your communication needs to happen with Tier 1 athletes.**

Here is an Example of How to Separate the Communication:

Tier One: 90% of Our Time

The goal is for Tier One to receive at least one piece of communication a week from our staff.

1. Brand Emails: 2-3 times a month
2. Current Events Email: 1-2 times a month
3. Questionnaires: 1x a month
4. Admissions Mailing: 1x a month

Tier Two: 8% of Our Time

The goal is for them to receive information that does not require much time from our staff.

1. Brand Emails: NONE (They will start to receive these when they are Tier 1)
2. Current Events Email: 1-2 times a month (if created for Tier 1)
3. Questionnaires: 1x a month (if sent via a link and not costing money)
4. Admissions Mailing: 1x a month

Tier Three: 2% of Our Time

1. Brand Emails: NONE
2. Current Events Email: 1-2 times a month (if created for Tier 1)
3. Questionnaires: NONE
4. Admissions Mailing: NONE

During the first year of using this system, your calendar will look different because not as much communication has been created yet. Start with sending brand emails, then split up questionnaires, and next head to Admissions. If you can send out one brand email a month, a questionnaire, and an Admissions mailing, you are off to a great start. Remember, consistency is the most important component. Your recruit needs to hear consistent messages on a consistent basis.

Now that you have had these discussions as a staff, start to fill out the first month on the calendar. In the area where it says “Brand” fill out the name of the email you are going to send. These are the emails your staff created in the “Brand Email” activity.

Once you have completed one month as a staff, assign the rest of the calendar to a staff member to complete the whole year. Once a month have a staff meeting to discuss the upcoming month, assign emails that need to be created, and edit the schedule accordingly.

An example of what one month of the calendar will look like once you have completed it can be found on the next page.



Managing Phone Calls

If you are like me, the phone is not your friend, especially when you are talking to 16-22 year old athletes. To be fair, recruits don't like phone conversations that much better. They would much rather text back and forth. Since we know this, let's make sure we have a plan and stick to some important guidelines for making phone calls.

- Before you jump on a call, ask yourself, "what am I trying to get out of this phone call?" What do they currently think and what do I want them to think by the end of the call? Here is your purpose, spend a few minutes figuring out a plan to reach your objective.
- This call is not the time to sell everything that makes your program great. This call is about listening, connecting with the recruit, getting a better understanding of who they are, and what they want in a university. Gathering this information will help you formulate what information you can send them.
- Always ask open-ended questions. I usually write down 2-4 open-ended questions to ask the recruit before I even get on the call. The goal is to use this phone call to learn more about THEM, not tell them more about YOU.
- Limit the call to 10-15 minutes. Remember, they would much rather spend time texting you than being on the phone.
- End the phone call with two things:
 - "Do you have any questions for me?" The recruits don't want to interrupt you to ask questions. Giving them the space to do so is very important.
 - "Next Steps..." Before you get off the call, make sure to give the recruit the "next steps" in the process. They are leaning on you for guidance on how the recruiting process works. You should be setting up the next call, or asking them to provide you information, or letting them know you are going to send them any requested information.
- Always follow-up after a call with a coach or the athlete. Send a text to the athlete thanking them for their time and then some sort of information about your school that you sense helps them in the process. Follow-up with their coach and let them know how the call went and review the next steps.

Social Media

The best place you can get your message out about your university is through social media. According to the “Common Sense Census” in 2019, American teens, aged 13 to 18 years old, spent an average of 7 hours and 22 minutes on their phone each day. According to Actforyouth.net in 2018, 85% of teens use YouTube, 72% use Instagram, 69% use Snapchat and Twitter at 31%. The athletes you are recruiting are spending time on social media.

About five years ago, our program committed time and energy into our social media with a focus on recruiting. We found there were many departments within our university who were using our social media handle to relay information: marketing, ticket office, video services, sports information, and the coaching staff. We needed a solution to all work together and to put more focus on recruiting. We created a social media “hub.” This person was responsible for creating a monthly calendar that included all of our social media networks. This calendar was uploaded to a department-wide shared drive and each department is responsible for filling out the calendar with information about planned monthly posts. The goal was to have one post a week on one of our social media networks. The whole group meets once a month to discuss the calendar and responsibilities. Additions are added, delegation of different posts and graphics are assigned, and messaging and audience confirmation is reiterated.



Below is an example of one of our monthly calendars.

	Twitter	Instagram (real photos or videos only, no graphics)	Facebook	Snapchat
February				
1	National Women in Sports Day			
2	Recruit in Detroit	Grounding Day		
3	Recruit in Chicago			
4				
5		Superbowl Sunday		
6				
7				
8	Cooking Class Pics (Zach)			#44 Day Takeover-Cooking/Stay in the Game
9				
10	By the Numbers 1 (CN)			
11				
12	VERT CHALLENGE RELEASE-ZD			
13				
14	Valentines Day UF-ZD	Valentines Day UF	Valentines Day UF	
15				
16				#8 Snapchat Takeover-ZD/SW
17	Recruit in Salt Lake			
18				
19	S& C Graphic (CN)			
20		Love your Pet Day-pics of team with pets (SW)		
21				
22		Campus Pics with weather (CN)		
23	Recruit in ATL			#1 Snapchat Takeover
24				
25				
26	:Middle Blocker U" "Who's Next" (CN)			
27	Spring Season Schedule Release (ZD)			
28	#21 Birthday		Facebook Live first day of practice (AB)	#10 Snapchat Takeover

This process was in place for about six months. We found that each department had a better idea of the messaging the staff wanted to use for social media and the hub was no longer needed. Our content team is amazing-we just had to communicate our purpose better and then leave it to them to do their job. SkullSports reported in August 2020 that our volleyball social media accounts had the highest interactions among all of Division I. Our content team did all the work; however, with an organized plan, you can make a big difference in your social media game.

RECRUITING RESOURCES

There are a couple of recruiting software programs that create efficiency throughout this process. Programs such as Frontrush, Scoutware, and ACS are a couple of examples. Many of these programs have compliance software as well. Your athletic department may already be using one of these software packages.

These programs are designed as a recruiting solution for college coaches that help manage depth charts, recruit boards, database, and email efficiency. These programs allow coaches to group together their tiers with a mail merge system when sending recruits or coaches information about their university.

For example, all of my Tier One athletes are in one group. When I create an email, I pull up that tier, choose all their names, copy and paste the email I have drafted into the body of the email and use mail merge to personalize them with their name. These programs also provide beautiful banners or letterhead. Instead of sending an email to each individual athlete, this program allows me to send it as a group, yet personalized, so the recruit never knows. You can even send the email from different people on your staff.

These programs cost from \$500-\$1500 a year. It is well-worth the investment!

Another helpful resource is using a shared drive within the staff. Many times you can request a shared drive from your university's IT department. But if a shared drive is not available, using Google Drive is another great solution. This is an easy way for everyone on staff to be on the same page about recruiting.

Recruiting the Team

Now that you have an idea of your tiers, the information you and your staff are wanting to get out, and some resources to be more efficient, let's spend some time figuring out who else we need to communicate with.

The athlete is just one piece to recruiting. Our job is to make sure that whomever your recruit leans on to help them also understands your school and what your program has to offer a recruit. You are recruiting them just as much as you are recruiting the athlete. This is where YOU WILL BE DIFFERENT! This is why spending 90% of your time on the recruits you want is important, because it frees up valuable time and resources to appeal to the recruit's "home team." their families, coaches, and advisors who will help guide their decision. If your list gets too big, there won't be time for these important interactions to take place, and you will be missing out on important information that can help you through the process.

Recruit's Coaches

This is not simply about that one email to a recruit's coach or one phone call to let the coach know you saw a recruit play at a tournament, are interested, asking where they are in the decision process and then it's done. You have to work to build a relationship with this coach. This will take multiple calls and emails. This will also require informing the coach about your program, how you see the recruit fitting in at your program, and why your program has everything the recruit is looking for. Recruit's coaches go through the recruiting process every year, just like we do. Most are well-versed in how this process works.

We want to communicate with a Tier One recruit between 2-6 times a month. My suggestion is you do the same with their coach, especially if your recruit likes their coach.

If you communicate with a coach as often as you communicate with a recruit, you are building a great relationship. When the recruit finally commits, there are ways to keep this process going and continue to build relationships with coaches in key geographic areas or from key programs from which you tend to recruit.

Each program will be unique in how they approach fostering these relationships. Spend some time with the staff and figure out how you can continue to build and keep relationships with your recruits' coaches.

Parents

Recruiting the parents is probably more important than recruiting the actual recruit. I know many of us would rather hear from the athletes than the parents. The reality is the athletes we are coaching right now need their parents to be involved. We can either accept this reality as coaches or ignore a very important piece of our student-athletes' lives .

If you are communicating with a recruit 2-6 times a month, you should also be communicating with their parents 2-6 times a month.

The reality is if you can get a parent excited about your program, if you can get a parent on board enough that they want their child to come to your program, you have a really good chance of getting the recruit to commit. Additionally parents will give you some good information about recruits. Ask them what their concerns are as a parent about their child coming to your school. Ask them what it would take to get their child to commit. Ask them how the process is going.

Parents are looking for coaches they can feel comfortable with; after all, they are entrusting you with their child for some of the most important years of their life. They are literally putting their child's life in your hands. They need to be part of the process and the research shows the recruits want their parents to be there.

I have heard concerns about getting too close to the parents during the recruiting process, the fear that those parents will want that relationship to continue when their child is at your program. I have not found that to be the case. What I have found is that because we have built a great relationship, our conversations about their child seem to be more productive because we have a foundation of trust in each other.

CAMPUS VISITS

You have put in all the work, the athlete is interested and you finally get the chance to get them on campus and show him/her why your school is the perfect fit for their student-athlete experience.

Maximize this opportunity to make the visit special for this recruit. Every visit should look and feel completely unique because every recruit has different wants and needs. Spend time with your staff before each visit and talk through how to personalize the visit for your recruit.

Before the Visit

- 1. Complete a Profile Sheet of the Recruit.** This sheet is sent to anyone that will have contact with the recruit. The sheet includes important information about who is attending the visit with him/her, the athlete's background, schooling, club teams, awards, hobbies, social media handles, a picture and any other special notes you may want to include.
- 2. Answer These Questions with Your Staff, "Why is This Recruit a Good Fit for Your School?"** Remember those brands you created? Which ones are the most important and relevant to this athlete? What role do you see this athlete having for your program? What are the must-do things during the visit? What are some things you think he/she will not be interested in doing?
- 3. Create a Plan.** Using the information from your brainstorming session create a unique itinerary for this recruit. Make sure to match the brands you have and the brands she wants. For example, if this athlete has repeatedly stated that going to a program that will keep her healthy is important, then make sure you spend time with your athletic trainer, sports performance coach, and dietician. Show her the facilities and talk to her about the resources and provide her supporting data that your program truly keeps athletes healthy. If she has said that academics aren't that important to her, then walk her through your academic center, have her meet your academic counselor. Have her parents sit down with the academic counselor and have the recruit spend some time with the team. Having the recruit sit down with the academic counselor for an hour because that is called for, but when academics aren't that important to her doesn't make sense for this particular athlete. It can show that you weren't really listening in all those conversations leading up to this point. However, the parents might enjoy an academic meeting and share any important information with their child.

- 4. After the Plan is Created, Delegate Who is Doing What for the Visit.** Put your staff in positions where their strengths shine. If you have an assistant who is great in the gym or on the field, allow her/him to show off that aspect. If you have an assistant who is great with parents, make sure she/he is sitting next to the parents at all meals. Choose the student-athletes in your program who you feel would best mesh with this recruit because they have the same background, same major, have similar friends, or even look the same. Every detail of the visit should be planned.

DURING THE VISIT

Remember, by the time your recruit has stepped on campus, they usually know a great deal about your school, not only from all the communication through your weekly recruiting emails, but also via the power of the internet. They are there to build a relationship with YOU and the team. Make sure you provide opportunities for everyone to connect.

Here are Some Opportunities you Might Want to Provide:

- Student-athletes and the recruit only
- Parents and coaching staff only
- Recruit and head coach only
- Team and student-athletes having fun (set up a game)

It is my Favorite Part of the Visit: Time to Seal the Deal. What do you do in That Closing Meeting? Here are Some Thoughts:

- 1.** Remind the recruit and their family about your brands matching. Reiterate you are the right fit for them.
- 2.** Explain the role you see that athlete having on your team. From on-court/field, leadership, teammate, etc. Why are they the one you want?
- 3.** After you make the offer, ask them if they are ready to commit. Many times coaches are hesitant to ask this question. It doesn't mean they have to say yes, but give them the space to say yes if they want to. (If they say yes, close up the rest of the chapter and move on! You nailed it! Nothing else to learn here). If they said no, keep reading.
- 4.** Before they leave, ask about a timeline. How much time do they need? There is a ton of debate whether coaches should give timelines or what approach to take. The reality is that you can't always wait months for a recruit to commit, or you will lose your whole list. Set clear expectations with the recruit and the parents. Make sure both sides understand how the timeline looks. Timelines are much less scary when expectations are clear from the beginning regarding how much time you have.

5. Explain the next steps in the process to the recruit and parents. Let them know you want to reconnect in 1-3 days, after they have had time to think about the visit and the offer and had a chance to talk to family. Spell out what happens next.

AFTER THE VISIT

1. Meet with your staff and discuss the visit. Was there any new information learned? Any ideas of how to get the final “yes”?
2. Connect with the athlete’s coach. Gain some perspective on the recruit’s thoughts about your program and reiterate why this athlete is the one you want.
3. Get in front of the recruit as much as possible. No one is more important to the staff than this athlete! Make sure she/he knows it and feels it.

Managing Your Staff

The most difficult part of recruiting is keeping the entire staff on the same page about each recruit and finding ways for the whole staff to be invested in the process. Staff engagement takes a lot of time and energy. That said, the best staff I have worked with have found a way to engage at an extremely high level.

Hold a weekly recruiting staff meeting. Set the agenda to cover where you are with the top recruits, the communication plan for that week, and discuss what the next 1-2 weeks look like.

I mentioned before how important it is to keep all staff members on the same page when it comes to recruiting.

Here are Some Simple Strategies you can Implement into Your Staff’s Culture to Assist in This:

- **BCC (Blind Carbon Copy):** When communicating with a coach, recruit, parents, etc... always BCC all coaching staff members so they are in the loop. Be sure to tell them in advance so they don’t “reply all” to the message and make the recruit suspicious about who is included in correspondence. If a recruit emails you, make sure to forward the email to all staff members.
- **Screenshot Text:** After texting with a recruit, take a screenshot and send it to the staff group message. This allows all staff members to know what communication has happened.
- **Phone Calls:** After a phone call with a coach, recruit, or parent, write up notes summarizing the call and what you learned. Email that update to all staff members.

- **File:** Set up a folder for each of your recruits on a shared drive. File everything you get from that recruit, coach, or parent.

Roles and Responsibilities

Every staff member should have some responsibility around recruiting. It is among the most important skills you can help your coaches develop. As a head coach, spend some time thinking of each staff member's strengths and how you can divide up the recruiting responsibilities among them. To be fully efficient in the process, all members of your program need to be invested in recruiting.

Below is an example of a typical staff and how recruiting can be divided among the members of a staff:

Head Coach

A head coach has many responsibilities within the program. The time they spend on recruiting should be spent with the most important recruits. These are the athletes you know you want to offer a scholarship to or are going to offer. From phone calls, emails, mailings, and off-campus evaluations, the head coach only spends time on the most important athletes. Their time is valuable and limited; spend it in the places where it can do the most good.

Recruiting Coordinator/Assistant Coach

The recruiting coordinator is the main recruiting contact. They should manage all facets of recruiting from the database, communication, campus visits, off-campus recruiting, and budget. This person will spend about 65% of their time on recruiting. This person is responsible for delegating recruiting responsibilities among the staff.

Assistant Coach

The other assistant coach plays a vital role in the recruiting process as well. Depending on their strengths, responsibilities should be delegated. They are part of the communication process, evaluations, and campus visits. They are assisting the recruiting coordinator in all projects and should be free to speak their mind about each athlete and their process.

Office Worker/Student Worker

Updating the database, responding to athlete emails, sending questionnaires, writing addresses on envelopes, etc are all tasks that you can hire a student from your campus to do. You don't always have to pay them; putting experience within the athletic department on their resume is a huge plus. These are all projects that have to be completed in the office and take up so much time! Hire a student or delegate it to an office worker and open up your staff's time to dive deeper into the recruiting process.

Resources

I really enjoy recruiting, even on the days when recruits decline our offer. It is a new adventure each and every day. It allows your staff to be problem-solvers, great communicators, and most importantly, it can be a creative outlet.

Over the 13 years of my career I have researched ways to grow and evolve the recruiting systems for my programs.

Here are a Few of the Resources I Like to Use:

Dan Tudor

I saw Dan Tudor present at an AVCA Convention and I was hooked. His process organization and the research he conducts has led to the foundation of my recruiting system. I highly recommend checking out his website and signing up for his newsletter. www.dantudor.com.

Google Search

It is a big joke in our offices that National Signing Day for football is my favorite holiday (No really, don't talk to me on this day; my TV is on, and I'm invested!) I just love all the work that goes into recruiting one athlete and then the anticipation of waiting for a 17 year old student-athlete to put on a hat that bears your school logo. Whenever I hit that creative block, I google "Football Recruiting." It is a cut-throat business and I respect the job these recruiting staffs do to make their recruits feel special. It is a great place to get some fresh ideas.

Coaches at Your School

Among the most important lessons I learned quite early in my career was to "be a tourist in your own community." You live in a really cool place, but the only time you really go check it all out is when friends come to town and you get to be a tourist for the day. You are surrounded by some of the best recruiters at your school, your coworkers from other sports. Invite someone in your department who has a great recruiting game to lunch this week. Pick their brain. What are they selling? What are they doing? How do

they communicate? What is their system like? You are both selling the same university, I'm sure you can find great value in what other programs at your university are doing.

Want to be really bold and creative? Try holding a Coaches Recruiting Symposium. Ask 2-3 coaches to present a recruiting idea they use, have some small group discussions, and learn from each other. I'm lucky enough to be at a university that does this, and each time I go, I bring something back to the office that immediately helps our program.

Getting Your Athletes Recruited

There are many coaches who are on the opposite side of the recruiting experience. It is their job to actually assist getting their athletes recruited. Whether you are a club coach, high school coach, or even a junior college coach, this section is for you.

The recruiting process can be overwhelming for players and their families. We commonly see families attempting to "figure it out" on their own and end up making a lot of mistakes. These families are desperately seeking guidance, and your assistance can make all the difference.

Here is a list of items you can do to help prepare and guide your athletes and their families.

Create and/or Run a Team Website

Among the biggest challenges for college coaches is finding accurate, up-to-date information on recruits. You may ask, "Do college coaches really have time to check out my website?" The answer is absolutely. We track all of our top recruits throughout their seasons, but unfortunately we have to do this through newspaper articles, websites, and Google alerts. Sometimes, it's nearly an impossible task to find out the result of your big rival match.

The following are the most important items to have updated on your website to assist college coaches:

- Your contact information. We are trying to build a relationship with you as you are one of the most influential people in the recruit's life. Make contacting you as easy as possible.
- Team Schedule: The earlier the schedule is online the better. This allows us to work your matches into our schedules.
- Results of your matches

MaxPreps.com and Hudl are two websites that many coaches use to find information about your athletes.

Communicate with Coaches

If you have read any of the previous pages, I would hope you would get an idea of how important your evaluation is to the recruiting process for a college coach. There is no one, outside of a family member, who has more helpful insight into our future athletes. However, to be helpful and trusted by college coaches, you must be very honest about the athlete. College coaches understand that each athlete will have their own set of issues. We are relying on you to reveal those as much as you reveal the amazing things about that recruit. Everyone has strengths and weaknesses; it's imperative to present a balanced picture of the student-athlete.

It is really helpful to college coaches if you get to know your athletes. Here are some common questions college coaches will ask you about your athletes:

- **Family Situation:** Are their parents married? If they are divorced, who does she/he live with? What is the relationship like with the parents? Where did the parents go to school? Did they play sports? What are their jobs?
- **Siblings:** How many? Ages? If they are in college, what program do they attend?
- **Academics:** GPA and test scores? Academic strengths and weaknesses.
- **Financial Situation:** This is really important for all coaches. For programs that do not offer full scholarships, it is helpful to determine if they could afford your school. For those with full scholarships, can they afford to take an unofficial visit?
- **How Does the Player Learn?** College coaches are projecting how that athlete will develop in the future. To accurately predict a player's ceiling, we need to have an understanding of their growth as an athlete.

Assist with Phone Calls

Most of your athletes will need to be proactive in making phone calls to college coaches. Unfortunately, there are only a select few you will have each year who will consistently have coaches reaching out to them.

We completely understand that a phone call with a college coach can be very intimidating. College coaches have conversations with athletes this age all the time. It is our job to make them comfortable on the phone. You can be an integral part of their process by encouraging these phone calls and educating the recruit on how a phone call works and what proper questions they can ask.

Assist with Videos

You do not need a ton of technological skills to create a video. It is easier than it has ever been. If your program is not using a system that allows for video upload, then create your own YouTube page. Just google, "Create your own YouTube page" and you will find a lot of resources.

Each sport is going to have different parameters for recruit videos. I highly encourage you to reach out to some college coaches with whom you have developed relationships and ask them specifically what they would want in a video.

Become Familiar with Different Programs

There has never been a time when sports have been more accessible, from Big 10, SEC, to SWAC, Division II, NAIA, etc. Many programs are streaming their games/matches for free. We suggest once your athlete begins to show some interest in a certain program, you spend some time watching that program compete and ask yourself, can my athlete compete at this level?

Encourage your own athletes to watch their sport on TV, all different levels. This will help them evaluate where their skill set is compared to the programs they are interested in.

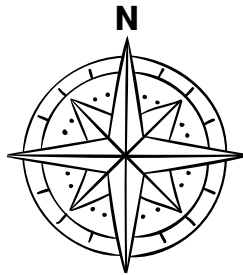
Education

It is not only the recruit and their family's job to be educated about recruiting, but yours as well. Every division has a different set of recruiting guidelines. It is the responsibility of college coaches in that division to know what those rules are. Please ask questions when you are on the phone with college coaches. We go through this EVERY YEAR and can be great resources for you.

I hope the information in this section helps you understand some ways you can help your athletes get recruited. Here are a few common mistakes you can help your players avoid:

- Help your athletes pick the right level college program. This takes a critical eye by you to help assist them in the right direction. More importantly, it will also take a gentle touch to steer your player in the right direction. Your goal is to find them a level where they can reach their goals, contribute to the team, and most importantly be happy and thrive for FOUR years.
- Players need to respond to college coaches. Simply hitting "reply" and responding "Thanks for the letter coach" is enough to keep a college coach motivated.
- Fill out all questionnaires and return them!
- Visit multiple campuses before making a decision. Visit the school you are interested in at different times of the year (in-season, out-of-season, different seasons, etc...)
- Make sure your athlete meets more than just the coaching staff and team. An athlete spends more time with a strength coach, athletic trainer, dietician, and academic advisor than any of the coaching staff due to NCAA rules. They should be given the chance to meet these people during a visit.

MANAGING THE REST: THE CONNECTED



**PARENTS, ALUMNI AND
THE COMMUNITY**

THE REST: THE CONNECTED

The remaining sections of this chapter focus on organizing, leading, and managing groups that are closely connected to your program: parents, alumni, and the community. These groups are the lifeblood of your support system. They care about your success and feel connected to your team.

PARENTS: Connecting the Support System

Beginning with the recruiting process, we want the parents of our student-athletes to feel like a valued part of our program.

The next step we take to connect the recruit to the program is to have a family social after our Maroon and White Fall Scrimmage in September. On this one day alone every parent is happy with me because every player gets significant playing time!

Family Social

The family social gives me an opportunity to introduce our players to each other and our players an opportunity to introduce their parents and family members.

I start the social with this quote, "The start of something new brings the hope of something great. As we begin a new year the coaching staff hopes that this is a great year for your daughter and for the team. We feel it is an honor and a privilege for us to coach each and every one of your daughters, and we look forward to helping her learn, grow, develop, and succeed this year."

I set the tone for the year by sharing our staff's **Coaching Core Values** and what follows is a talk I usually give to the team, parents and staff at the annual family social

"The Talk"

Our team culture is rooted in our core values. Both the coaches and the players each have a set of core values on which they base their behavior and how they show up for each other every day. These shared core values make us a team.

You as parents and family members are our most important support system and our biggest fans! Your support can and does factor into our success. Therefore, knowing and supporting both the coaches' and players' core values can make a big difference for our team culture.

The Coaches' Core Values are ingrained in the **COMPASS**, an instrument used for determining direction. So each core value begins with a letter in the word compass...

CARING: *Promote love, kindness, and respect for each person and each role.*

You can support this core value by supporting the team whether your daughter is in the starting line-up or not. Please show love, kindness, and respect for your daughter as well as everyone's daughter. Let's show love, kindness, and respect for everyone who wears maroon and white.

You can support this core value by displaying good sportsmanship in the stands at home and on the road. I love competition. Competition breeds sportsmanship, teaches discipline, and fosters teamwork.

The essential elements of character-building and ethics in sports are embodied in the concept of sportsmanship and the six core principles of trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and good citizenship. The highest potential for sports is achieved when competition reflects these six pillars of character. So let's set the standard in the Valley of what good sportsmanship is all about by creating a healthy and respectful environment for competition.

Let's exhibit kindness and respect towards all participants including the student-athletes, coaches, and officials. It takes all three to have a fairly contested game.

OPTIMISM: *Expect the best possible outcome.*

Positive environments outperform negative environments. You can support this core value by always expecting the best possible outcome for each pitch, play, at bat, and game. Think positively and more importantly speak positively about our players, staff, team, program, and university. Your energy matters. Make it matter for the good.

MENTAL TOUGHNESS: *Overcome all adversity on the way to success.*

You can support this core value by supporting the team and staff whether we win or lose. A great season is on the horizon and yet there will be peaks and valleys, wins and losses, setbacks and comebacks. Every team has to walk through the fire. How we handle both adversities and success will largely determine whether we will stand up, stay in the fight, and keep moving forward toward our goals throughout the season. Help us stay in the fight until the fight is over.

PASSION: *Deep love and affection for athletes, staff, sport, and competition.*

You can support this core value by promoting love, passion, and joy for the game. Help your daughter remember that growth, improvement, and effort are greater than being perfect, talented, and winning. Keep her love for the sport alive by encouraging her to have fun, stretch beyond her comfort zone, and by showing her that who she is as a person is greater than who she is as a player.

ACCOUNTABILITY: *Take responsibility for effort and outcomes.*

You can support this core value by reminding your daughter to focus on what she has to do to succeed and to focus on effort and improvement.

Encourage her to look for the life lessons that come from competition. Prepare her to respond to adversity. Insist that she take ownership of the process. Help her to develop toughness so that when she experiences tough times down the road, she will be prepared to overcome. Uphold the coaching staff's authority and decisions. As a parent you can either join in the complaining process or sensibly respond to your daughter, "What is the best way for you to support your team?" or "Have you spoken directly to your coaches about what's bothering you?" Her comfort isn't the goal, growth is. Teach her that it's okay to be uncomfortable because that is where the growth is.

During her time at Missouri State she will be confronted with many opportunities to resolve conflict. Each of these situations provides your daughter with growth opportunities that you can either maximize by giving her tools to find her voice, and handle it on her own; or you can minimize her growth by insisting she take her queues from you. When she was learning to walk, which seems like two minutes ago, what would have happened if you carried her everywhere? Would she have ever learned to stand on her own? Would she learn it's okay to expect others to carry her? Keep this in mind: the more you do for her, the less she will learn to do on her own. When and how she chooses to respond to these conflicts will be a large part of her learning experience. Guide her in taking responsibility and handling these situations in a positive manner.

SERVANT LEADERSHIP: *Enrich the lives of others.*

You can support this core value by supporting the concept of selflessness. Everyone has the power for greatness. Not for fame, but for greatness, because service determines greatness. Good things happen in an environment of love and service. What successful teams have in common are athletes and coaches who are willing to serve the team's greater good. This means surrendering, "*the me for the we.*" It means doing what is best for the rest. It means accepting a lesser individual role if it is necessary to go to the next level as a team. At the root of true cohesion is a sense of selflessness, a willingness to see that the team goal is greater than the goal of any one athlete.

Players need to understand that within the guidelines and boundaries of a successful program, each one is there to serve others on the road to realizing the team's greatest athletic and human potential.

Encourage your daughter to constantly ask herself, “How can I best serve my team?” as opposed to “How can I get more playing time?” It can be a challenge to shift an athlete’s focus away from success to service but when it happens, great things can happen for everyone.

In her book *Wolfpack*, Abby Wambach describes coming to the conclusion that what was best for the team was for her not to play as a starter as she had done for so many years.

“Here’s what’s important: You are allowed to be disappointed when it feels like life’s benched you. What you aren’t allowed to do is miss your opportunity to **lead from the bench**. If you’re not a **leader** on the **bench**, don’t call yourself a **leader** on the field. You’re either a **leader** everywhere or nowhere.”

SUCCESS: set and achieve high goals and expectations for the good of all

- For all student-athletes to graduate within 4-5 years
- For each team to have a GPA of 3.50 or higher
- For each student-athletes to have a GPA of 3.25 or higher
- To improve on the previous year’s accomplishments
- To win a Regular Season and Tournament Championship in the same year
- Advance to the NCAA Tournament
- To win 30+ games each season

I then have a senior member of the team address the parents, sharing the team mission and core values for the year.

I close the family social by saying, “As we look ahead to the upcoming season it is important to remember the rich history and tradition of the Missouri State Softball program which is detailed in this historical video. This video was made 2 years ago and while it centers around the celebration of my 30th year, more importantly it shows what Missouri State Softball is all about.” [Show Video]

"I believe that this year's team will not only uphold the history and tradition of the Missouri State Softball program but ELEVATE it to new heights of success and prominence in the Missouri Valley and beyond. I believe that the year ahead will be a journey of joy and one filled with magical moments. That magic begins with each one of us!

Welcome to the 2019-2020 season!"

Itineraries

Another way we keep our parents connected to the team is by sharing our travel itinerary with them for each trip. It contains hotel information and details our schedule for the trip. We make every effort to schedule family time on the road and communicate clearly when that time is.

Communication

We encourage our parents to contact the staff if they have questions or concerns about their daughter's health and wellness or academic progress. We share our communication with parents with the student-athlete and/or include them in the conversation. We do make it clear to our parents that we will not discuss their daughter's playing time with them.

ALUMNI: CONNECTING THE LEGACY OF THE PAST

I am proud of the rich history and tradition of the Missouri State Softball program that now spans over 50 years. I strive to keep the legacy of our past players and teams relevant to our current players and team. I do this with welcome letters, legacy of numbers, legacy day, and tournament letters.

Welcome Letters

I have on file welcome letters from our alumni to our freshmen player who now wears their number. What follows is an example of an alumni welcome letter:

From: Jones, Madison T
Sent: Friday, June 22, 2018 4:15 PM
To: Jones, Madison T
Subject: letter

Hello NEW Bear,

I first want to say congratulations on making it here to play at the D1 level and welcome to the Bear family. What you don't realize when you arrive at MSU is that you are in the 1% of athletes that get to play at this level. Be proud of how hard you've worked to get here with all those long summer ball games, and know you are about to have the ride of your lifetime here as a Bear! I played 5 years at MSU and I can honestly say those were the best 5 years of my life. The coaches and teammates I met along the way have become family and we would do anything for each other in a heartbeat. I'm not going to lie, there were definitely some lows you too will experience throughout your career, but the highs exceed all of them in the long run. I've learned so much over the years and I wanted to give you some tips that might help you throughout your 4 (sometimes 5) years:

- Get to know everyone on the team, no matter if they are a senior or another one of the incoming freshmen. Even introducing yourself to other athletes on campus will make your time at Missouri State University so much better. All of you are going through the same workouts, crazy schedule, practices, games, etc. and it helps if you have some other friends to go through it with. The friendships I made here will truly last a lifetime and be something I cherish forever.
- Conditioning can be rough, but come prepared and do your workouts in the off season because it pays off, trust me. Believe in the process with Coach Frey because it will help you with your physical abilities and strength as an athlete. Just get through the early morning workouts and trust me, you'll survive.
- If you want to play, prove yourself on the field that you deserve to play. As incoming freshmen I had only played shortstop, but 2 weeks into fall they moved me to outfield. I told myself, instead of pouting, I was going to work harder than anyone out there to become a starter, and that's what I did. I proved to the coaches that my leadership and abilities were more than enough to start as freshmen.
- Show the coaches the right attitude and effort that got you here today. Respect the other players on the team because they do have some good insight on how things run, but don't wait to be great just because you're a freshman. I got that advice from a GA my freshmen year and it is 100% right, be great the first day you walk onto that field.
- Go early to practices whenever you can to work on hitting or fielding or anything you might be struggling with at the time. This is where I got my head on straight when I was struggling and would ask Sue or Beth to come throw me extra reps and they never once hesitated. The coaches do look for and expect this from you!
- The mental game IS important no matter what anyone else tells you... Holly will teach you so much on how to control the controllables through hard times and LISTEN to them because it not only helps you in softball, but in the real world too.
- In softball you're going to fail... everyone knows that, but it's how you react to that failure that will show what kind of athlete you are. The more uncomfortable you are, the more you learn and the more you learn the confident you become. Be CONFIDENT in your abilities and know you are here for a reason.
- DO NOT be afraid to ask for help. If that were from a professor, athletic advisor, the coaches, or teammate anyone of those people would be more than happy to help you with whatever you need!
- Most importantly... have FUN! Throughout my career and surgeries I forgot what the game meant to me. It's not always about having the best stats on the team or winning every single game, but it's all about enjoying the little moments that come along the way because your last game comes in the blink of an eye. My last year here was probably one of the most rewarding seasons to date because of how we approached the season. I didn't worry so much about my stats, but more on how I was helping my teammates every game and ended up having one of my best seasons yet.
- Now on a less serious note... buy rain boots. Tarp duty is rough and rain boots will save your life on those days.
- Don't take everything too seriously! Dance, sing, and have fun at practices and before games when it's appropriate** (God knows I did and I know Holly loved it 😊)
- Take a step back from softball sometimes... it's an important part of your life now, but don't let it consume every thought of yours! (it will help with stress so much haha)

Hopefully some of these tips help you in your first year at Missouri State. Your time in college as a Bear will go by so much faster than you think, so take the time to enjoy it along the way and make the friendships that will truly become your family.

Congratulations again on making it here and I can't wait to come and support you all this season!


GO KICK SOME BUTT!

Madison Jones #1
a.k.a. Mad Jones
GO BEARS

I love this letter because it is such great advice to an incoming freshman. The new player now takes pride in knowing someone that wore their number before them, and the alumni player also feels a connection to that player. This brings me to my next way of connecting the present to the past: the legacy of their number.

Legacy of Numbers

I have each player review all the other players that came before them who wore their number and their accomplishments. Below is such an example:

Name (Years)	LEGACY OF	Award
Kat Taylor Kyana Mason (2016- 2019)		NFCA All-Region 1st Team (2019) All MVC 1st Team (2019) Academic All-MVC (2019) MVC All-Defensive Team (2019) MVC Player of the Week (2019)
Ali Trickey (2012-2015)		MVC Service & Leadership Award (2015)
Madison Hargrove (2010-2011)		MVC Tournament Championship (2011)
Brooke Kempker (2006-2009)		All-MVC Second Team (2008) MVC Tournament Championship (2006)
April Johnson (2004-2005)		
Bonnie Jones (2002-2003)		
Heather Anderson (1994-1998)		Missouri State Athletics Hall of Fame (2012) MVC Tournament Champion (1998) All-MVC Second Team (1998) MVC All-Tournament Team (1998) MVC Tournament Champion (1997) MVC Tournament Champion (1996) NFCA All-Midwest Region First Team (1996) All-MVC Second Team (1996) MVC Player of the Week (1996) MVC All-Tournament Team (1995) MVC Regular Season Champion (1994) All MVC First Team (1994) MVC Player of the Week (1994)
Emily Morgan (1991-1993)		MVC Regular Season Champion (1992) All-MVC Second Team (1993)
Tracy Crede (1987-1990)		
Suzy Maas (1985-1986)		

This again creates a sense of pride in our history and inspiration to the current players to carry on that legacy and live up to the success of that uniform number.

Legacy Day

Each season we pick out a game day to showcase the legacy of our program. We honor past coaches, past teams, or celebrate program milestones. We invite our alumnae back for this special day to reconnect and celebrate with us. Through the years, I've been blessed to coach a lot of great players and share the company of many great people. Legacy day always reminds me of that. Legacy day is among my favorite days of the year!

Tournament Letters

I also have on file a number of letters written by our alumnae specific to tournament time. As I read these letters to the current team competing for a conference championship, it gives me a chance to talk about those players and their accomplishments. Below is an example of such a letter:

From: Shannon Buslepp [mailto:shanbear13@yahoo.com]
Sent: Thursday, May 10, 2012 5:58 PM
To: Perine, Elizabeth M
Subject: Re: GO BEARS

Bears,

I am writing to you all to tell you what it was like for me to win the MVC tournament. Truth is that was my time. Today and this weekend is your time. These moments you are experiencing are some that you will never forget. I encourage you all to challenge yourselves. Like you've heard before, it does not matter what you have done during the season. What matters is these next 3 days. Each and every one of you is representing players from the past, present and future.

In the past few years, I have gotten to know most of you pretty well. I've seen your struggles, tears, frustrations, failures, and most importantly your successes, both individually and as a team. You're amazing athletes and you DESERVE to be where you're at. In recent years, the BEARS have shined at the MVC tournament. Keep that tradition alive! Shut the xxxxx up, and let xxxxx know you came to their house to take the title back to yours! Kick ASS (sorry holly), but more importantly enjoy every moment of every pitch, of every play, of every inning. AND HAVE FUN!!!!

Here is one of my favorite quotes that I want to share with you, "Impossible is just a big word thrown around by small people who find it easier to live in the world they've been given than to explore the power they have to change it. Impossible is not a fact. It's an opinion. Impossible is not a declaration. It's a dare. Impossible is potential. Impossible is temporary. Impossible is nothing."

GOOD LUCK BEARS!!!!
Shannon

COMMUNITY: CONNECTING THROUGH SERVICE AND ENGAGEMENT

It is my experience that Gen Z loves to serve and be active in their community. While generations of the past looked to the community to support them, Gen Z looks to support their community. A high value for Gen Z is that everyone feels respected, no matter who they are.

Below are a few of the favorite ways my student-athletes love to serve and engage with the community of Springfield:

Miracle League: Our players love to volunteer as “buddies” at Miracle League, a baseball league for athletes of all ages who battle physical and developmental disabilities. The league attracts families who want to give their children with special needs the chance to participate in team sports. Miracle League is our players’ favorite night of the week!

Habitat for Humanity: Whether it is helping to build a house or clean up a neighborhood sidewalk so they are safe for the neighborhood kids to walk to school, our players take pride in making a marginalized community look more beautiful.

Free Youth Clinic: Each year we give a free youth clinic to those in sixth grade or younger after a spring game. Our players love to teach the game to those who are just starting to learn it!

We let our student-athletes decide each year how they want to serve and engage with the Springfield community. Each year they say they want to do more!

In Closing:

Hopefully you gained some great ideas on how to manage and connect with your recruits, parents, alumnae, and community. The next chapter covers other key management skills needed to lead your team, club or organization.

Chapter Reflection and Commitments



List your 3 biggest takeaways from this chapter:
1. 2. 3.
What resonated strongly for you from this chapter and why?
When reading this section it became clear to me I need to improve in the following area(s):
How will you improve in these areas? Is there a class you need to take? Is there a book you need to read? Is there a person you need to contact? Is there a video you need to watch? Name one action item you can commit to.
What will you implement immediately into your program, team, organization or club from this chapter?
How will you implement this? What steps will you take?
Step 1: Step 2: Step 3: