

The Next Level

A Guide to Becoming a College Athlete

By Dominic Andriacchi

Copyright © 2008 Dominic Andriacchi. All Rights Reserved.

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Section One: Athletes and High School	4
Continual Tasks	5
Freshman and Sophomore Years	10
Junior Year	11
Senior Year	13
Section Two: Additional Information	17
Sample Letter to a Coach	18
How to Make a Highlight Tape	19
Important Websites	20

Introduction

Congratulations on deciding to become a college athlete. This is an exciting time for an athlete in high school, and it can often be overwhelming. This guide is to be used to help you reach your goal of becoming a college athlete.

I wrote this book because of how difficult this process was for me when I was in high school. Looking back, I learned a lot of valuable information. I want to share this information with you. However, this book assumes two things: you're dedicated enough to pursue this to the end, and you have at least some level of natural athletic ability.

Most athletes need to train very hard in order to become the best athlete they can be. When in doubt of your level of athletic ability, examine your play in game situations. A college coach is going to want to see if you produce in games. If you don't play as well as you'd like, don't fret. Through hard work and dedication, your play can improve dramatically.

Section One:

The Athlete and High School

Continual Tasks

The following are all very important areas that need to be in constant consideration throughout your high school career. Update, revise, and adjust the following areas monthly in order to give yourself the best opportunity to become a college athlete.

Stick To Your Goal

Throughout high school, there will be many different and difficult situations that will hinder your success. Everything you do, whether that be studying for a test or skipping a weight lifting session, either brings you closer to your goal or pulls you away. It's important that you keep your goal in mind at all times. Also, share your goal with someone who is a strong, positive influence. Oftentimes this person will be invaluable in your pursuit to reach your goal.

Start, Follow, and Update an Exercise Regimen

In order to perform to the best of your ability, and to separate yourself from your competition, you need to start exercising year round. As time progresses, you will notice your body changing as you exercise. Your exercise regimen should also change as you do. Update your regimen often to fit your needs in order to become a better athlete.

Get help when creating and updating your exercise regimen. There are many great resources available to help you develop a great program. Ask a coach, hire a

personal trainer, or you can do your own research (but be selective where you gather your information). Keep track of your progress, and ask for help when needed.

Some schools have their own weight lifting programs that athletes are required to adhere to. Utilize this to the best of your ability. Not only is it important in bettering yourself as an athlete, it also shows your coach and teammates that you care about your performance. If you feel as though something isn't working specifically for you, or you need improvement in other areas, talk to your coach about it. Establishing this communication between the two of you will only help you reach your goal.

Start, Follow, and Update a Nutrition Plan

A nutrition plan is vital, especially when combined with your exercise program. It hurts your athletic performance to not get both of these areas under control. It's like trying to catch a football with only one hand. Yes it's possible, but it makes it much harder than it needs to be.

Just as when developing your exercise program, there are many great resources available to help you. Seek out qualified help when developing your nutrition plan, and talk to your doctor about it. Everyone's body reacts to food differently, so it's important to see your doctor when creating a nutrition plan. Also, update your plan as your body and goals change.

Pay Attention to Your Grades

This area is the most important area out of all when becoming a college athlete. It is also the most overlooked area. Athletes often neglect to maintain a minimum required

grade point average. It does no good to be an outstanding athlete if you can't get into the school to begin with.

If you're having problems with one or more classes, seek out help from your school. Most schools have additional resources for students who are having difficulties with their schoolwork. Go to the teacher whose class you're having difficulty in, and ask for help. Ask the guidance counselor for possible tutors, start your own study group; there are many ways to get needed help. It's important to adhere to individual university and NCAA scholastic requirements.

Take the Required Classes

Each division of the NCAA requires you to take a minimum of specific core classes. When planning your classes to take from your freshman through senior year, it's important to keep these minimum requirements in mind. Visit the NCAA Eligibility Center website (the web address can be found in the "Important Websites" section), where you will be able to find the minimum requirements. You can also check which classes your school offers that satisfy those requirements.

Determine Possible Schools to Attend

Determine which schools you would like to attend and play for. Make a list of five dream schools, as well as a list of five safety schools. Once you have this done, compare all the schools together in key areas, such as:

- the cost of each school

- the minimum scholastic requirements of the school
- the percentage of students who graduate within four years
- if they offer the major you want

Next, look at your comparison chart and find the college with the hardest entrance requirements. This will be the school that you will set your sights on.

Now you're probably wondering, "Why did I choose the hardest school?" If you can meet the requirements of that particular school, then you don't have to worry about meeting the requirements of the others. This effectively cuts down the amount of information you need to pay attention to, while still leaving you with nine other great colleges you can attend.

It's important to note that as you progress through high school, your choice in schools will change. Update your list of potential schools as you see necessary. Be sure to also check school requirements frequently in case they change their minimum requirements.

Join Complementary Sports

It's important as an athlete to maintain your competitive edge at all times. What better way to keep your competitiveness, and develop yourself as a well-rounded athlete, than to join complementary sports? If you constantly think about one sport, you'll eventually grow tired of it. These complementary sports will help keep you in optimal physical condition while preventing you from burnout.

Set Physical Goals for Yourself

Now that you have been informed of the mandatory scholastic requirements, and have made the necessary adjustments, it's time to look to the athletic requirements. Search to see what the standards of physical talent are for the different divisions. Also, see what requirements your potential ten schools have for their athletes.

Using football for example, certain positions require different forty yard dash times. Those times differ between the different NCAA divisions, as well as among the different college teams. Determine what these requirements are for your particular sport, and set your goals to exceed them.

Everything you do, from your free throw percentage to your grade point average, should exceed the minimum requirements the colleges and the NCAA have. You want to exceed the standards, not meet them. Finally, be sure to update these goals as you achieve them.

Attend Sports Camps

Attend sports camps offered in your area throughout high school. These camps are a great way to increase your athletic performance. They are also very effective at getting your name out amongst college coaches. This is important because when it comes time for recruiting, you will already be in their minds.

Freshmen and Sophomore Years

Set Your Goal

Do you want to play at a Division 1A school, or does it not matter which division you play in? Do you want to play more than one sport, or just one? These are just two of the questions you need to ask yourself to determine your goal. The biggest decision for you to make during these two years is to decide whether or not you want to become a college athlete. Everything you do from now on will either help or hinder you from reaching your goal.

Start Becoming a College Athlete

Start following all of the areas mentioned in the continual tasks section. Other than that, the most important thing you can do during these years is to set your main goal (which you should have already done). Don't put any of this off until tomorrow. Don't wait, start today.

Junior Year

Register with the NCAA Eligibility Center

During your junior year you will need to register with the NCAA and have them review your eligibility. By now you should already know about the NCAA Eligibility Center website, and have reviewed their mandatory criteria. Now that you are a junior, you need to register with them and follow their instructions to prove your eligibility to the NCAA.

Take the ACT/SAT

Remember that information you gathered earlier about each college's entrance requirements? Good. Now is the time to take either the ACT or SAT (or both, depending on what is required by the universities). You should take the test as a junior in case you receive poor results. It will be possible to retake the test again in order to improve your score (check with test administration on their scoring policy).

Try to do the best as you can on these tests. Get a full night of sleep and eat a good breakfast before taking the test. Also, there are many resources that will help you study for these tests. I strongly suggest you look into getting some help prior to taking these tests.

Start Applying for Scholarships

Attending college is expensive in today's world. While some colleges do offer scholarships to athletes, they're often not "full rides." As a junior, start searching elsewhere for money to help you pay for college. Many universities and high schools offer a variety of different scholarships. Check with both to see what's available to you. Apply for all scholarships that you meet the criteria for, and be sure to search out scholarship opportunities for the remainder of your time in high school.

Senior Year

Send Out Recruitment Letters to Coaches

Start sending letters to the coaches of the teams you wish to play for. These letters should be no longer than two pages (aim for one page), and should include information that showcases your talents. Some such information is:

- Your GPA
- ACT/SAT score
- Athletic awards you have won
- Important athletic information (forty-yard dash time, height, weight, bench press, etc)
- Information about your athletic career thus far (tackles, fumble recoveries, points scored, free throw percentage, etc)

There is a lot of information that you can display to coaches. However, remember to limit the size of the letter and only display information that is beneficial to your image. Finally, ask if the coach would like to see a highlight tape, or if you can set up a meeting to discuss recruitment.

Apply to Potential Colleges

Take out the comparison list of your ten potential schools. Now is the time to apply to the colleges you can get into. This process itself can be very easy, as most universities have clear instructions on how to apply on their website. However, be sure

to read everything about the application process, as many colleges require a fee to review your application.

Visit University Campuses

As coaches respond to your letters, ask them if they can give you a tour of their campus. Usually each college has select days that potential recruits can visit and get a different tour than the rest of the incoming freshman class. Tell the coach you want to take a tour of the school, and use this time to your advantage.

While at the school, take notice of the facilities. Ask important questions about upcoming renovations and construction, ask what a typical schedule is for an athlete, the options are endless. Often the coaches will want you to meet their team. Ask team members important questions that you might not ask the coaches. Take all of this into careful consideration; these are the players and coaches that you'll be spending a majority of your time with for the next four years. Also, some colleges offer an overnight visit where recruits are paired up with team member and spend a night on campus. If this is available to you, go ahead and accept. See what it's like to live on campus before you're committed to.

Compare Athletic Offers

By this time, you've spoken to many coaches and have many different offers. Take this time now to compare all the different offers you've received, and choose the one that's best for you.

(It's important to realize that regardless of what a coach promises you, that doesn't mean it'll happen. Think of this as a business contract and get everything in writing. That way, they legally have to back up their promises. Do this for everything from playing time, to promised scholarships.)

Finalize Eligibility

By this time, make sure you have met all necessary requirements the NCAA mandates. You should also start getting applications back from the universities you applied to. Get all of this taken care of, since the next step in the process to becoming a college athlete is the most demanding yet.

Choose a College

Up to this point you have been gathering as much information as possible about your potential colleges. Now it's time to make a decision on which one you'll attend.

Some important questions to ask yourself during this time are:

- Do I like the coaches?
- Do I like the players?
- How are each school's facilities in comparison to each other?
- Are they offering me any money to attend? If so, how much?
- What have they agreed to, in writing, in terms of playing time?
- Does location of the university matter?
- What is the cost of the school?

- Can I afford to attend this school?

The questions you can ask yourself are endless. Compare all of the options to the best of your ability, and make a decision.

Sign a Letter of Intent

Talk with your coach if it is necessary for you to sign a letter of intent. If it is, be sure to do so before the applicable deadlines.

Sign Up for Financial Aid

There is one more stage before you're ready to ship off to college, and that's to sign up for financial aid. Talk with your university to see what you need to do. They want you to attend, and they'll help you in this process. It's relatively easy, however it is an intricate process, which is why I advise you to seek help when signing up for financial aid.

Congratulations! You're now a college athlete!

Section Two:

Additional Information

Sample Letter to a Coach

Coach _____,

Hello, my name is _____ and I'm a senior (football, softball, etc) player at (high school). I'm writing to you about potentially becoming a player on your team.

Currently, I'm (height) and (weight). I'm currently (running X time/distance, X weight on the bench press, free throw percentage, etc). During my last season (or over the course of your varsity career), I have (scored X points, won X races, etc).

Recently, I was awarded (your academic and athletic awards). My GPA is X, and I received a (score) on my ACT/SAT.

I have (game/highlight) tapes available, and would be glad to send you one. Also, I would like to (meet with you/talk on the phone) and discuss potential recruitment. If you would like any other information, please don't hesitate to ask. I can be reached at (phone number and times). Thank you for your time.

Your Name

Your Contact Information

How to Make a Highlight Tape

When you create your highlight tape, you have to decide between individual clips of your performance, or a copy of one or more games. However, if you decide to send a copy of a game, make sure you play nearly the entire time. A coach isn't going to want to play a guessing game whether you're playing or not.

Now that you've decided whether you want to include individual highlights or whole games, the next thing you need to do is create the tape. When deciding between creating a disc or a tape, I would suggest sending a tape. This is because the coaches should have equipment ready to play the highlight tape. Also, it's easier to replay certain parts.

Write your name and contact information on the highlight tape, and it's ready. Before you send it, write another letter briefly describing what's on the tape, any important advancements you've made in your athletic performance, and write that you would like a follow up after they reviews the tape. Now you're ready to send it out.

Important Websites

<https://web1.ncaa.org/eligibilitycenter/common/>

This is the web address for the NCAA Eligibility Center. All questions regarding eligibility should be taken here.

<http://www.national-letter.org/>

This is the web address for the National Letter of Intent. Any questions you may have about the letter of intent can be found here (your coach may know as well).

<http://www.actstudent.org/>

This is the web address for the ACT. Here you can register and find out answers to questions you may have regarding the ACT.

<http://www.collegeboard.com/>

This is the web address for the SAT. Here you can register and find out answers to any SAT questions you may have.

<http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>

This is the website for Federal Student Aid. This is an important website when you want to find out more information about receiving financial aid.

It is important to note this is not a comprehensive list. Websites do change, so be sure to create your own comprehensive list with all web address you may need.

For more information for athletes, go to:

AthleteResourceCenter.com