

## **COMMUNICATING WITH COLLEGE COACHES**

As you know, communication between you as the recruit and college coaches is one of the **most important factors in the recruiting process**. The more you communicate with a coach, the easier it is to figure out if you have a connection with that coach, if you feel comfortable, if this is a person you could envision yourself playing for. Of course instant messenger and emails are a quick, affordable and, most of all, comfortable way to communicate with college coaches. However, a phone call can have a much greater impact as you build the coach/recruit relationship. Remember, you as a recruit (parents fall under this same rule) can initiate a phone call with a college coach at **anytime throughout your high school years**. One important thing to know is there are NCAA rules as to when college coaches can call you.

There are hundreds of other players out there who play at your same level, so you have to find a way to **decipher yourself from the rest**. A phone call can help with this because it says to the coach that you are sincerely interested in that particular program because you are taking time out of your day to make a phone call. A phone call also speaks to your leadership ability. All college coaches are well aware that the majority of recruits are intimidated or uneasy about making a phone call. It makes perfect sense to feel intimidated about calling an adult you have never met before. Because of this, college coaches are very impressed by recruits who take the initiative to make a call. It says you have the guts to step out of your comfort zone and that is what coaches want in their players.

In addition, again, you are trying to make yourself stand out among all the other players out there and one major difference between you and everyone else is your personality. Maybe a hundred other girls out there can play at the same level as you, but do they have your attitude? Your competitiveness? Your drive? These are the attributes coaches are looking for to **help them figure out who is the best match for their team**. If you call, it gives you the opportunity to display to the coach what might make the biggest impact in the decision they make: your personality.

I think it's important to note that in order for a coach to get to know you, you have to talk to them about you personally. If you call a coach and simply discuss your past few matches, your upcoming tournaments and your stats, then they leave the call without a sense of the kind of person you are. Remember, coaches are people too and they have interests that stretch beyond volleyball. On top of it, they coach a group of young ladies and I am sure they have many of the conversations with their players that you have with your friends. So, bring up a recent movie you saw and say why you liked it or not, talk about an upcoming dance or some fun activity taking place at school, ask the coach how he or she spent their last vacation and what they like to do with their time off, or what is their favorite city to visit within the conference they play in. Check out the website before you call and read some of the articles posted on their season because not only will this give you some added topics of conversation, but it will again alert the coach to the fact you are sincerely interested in his or her specific program.

What's even better about calling coaches is the fact that the majority of coaches are clued in to the fact that you are nervous to make that call, so as soon as you say hello they will take over and make you comfortable. If you have been in touch more

with the assistant, then call him or her first, then the next time make a call to the head coach.

The phone calls can last anywhere from **5 to 10 minutes**, but you certainly don't want to stay on longer than this. If every time you call a coach you talk for 20 or 30 minutes, the time you are spending on this will get out of hand and expensive.

**How often do I call?** As freshmen & sophomores, if you are being heavily recruited, then you will want to check in with your schools often, about every 2 months or so. If you are not being recruited, you may just want to call a coach every once in awhile. Obviously, you would call more as the club season is in progress to see if the coach was able to watch you play and get feedback. Juniors will want to start using phone calls more consistently. If there is interest from the coach, you should call once a month. Once again, it should be more frequent during club season. "Unsigned" seniors should be calling every 2-3 weeks to the programs that have interest. Remember they can call you at this point, too.

**When is the best time to catch a coach live?** First, I would find out when they have practice. You may want to set up a call later in the evening if they say it is okay. You can also email the coach ahead of time and tell them that you plan on calling at such and such a time. You may also want to "zero" out to their secretary and ask them when they are usually in the office. Sometimes, trial and error will be the best way to find out. First start out in the morning, then at lunch, then in the early afternoon, evening and so on. Remember, if you do not get them live and you leave them a message, NCAA coaches have rules as to when they can return and initiate phone calls.

Okay, so now we have the fundamentals about the call down. Let's get into an example of the first phone call to a coach – what I call a "Get to Know You Phone Call." One thing to note first is that you should have already emailed the coach with all of your information, so they have a general idea of whom you are and what you have to offer. It is a good idea to give the coach a heads up on when you will call, so he or she can have your information available. Remember, the coach cannot possibly know every recruit out there; so the more you prepare them before the phone call, the better. Okay, so here it is...

First, I would start out with an introduction of whom you are.

PLAYER: Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm junior outside hitter for \_\_\_\_\_ club or HS. I just wanted to follow up with the email I sent you last week.

COACH: I remember getting your information in, let me get it in front of me. So, how is your season going?

PLAYER: Good. Our team is 10-2 and we are facing our toughest rival this weekend. I am really looking forward to it. It will be my toughest match up on the outside. You have been doing really well in your conference schedule and it looks like you have a tough match up this weekend as well with \_\_\_\_\_ University.

COACH: Yes, it will be a tough weekend, but we are really working hard to prepare and I know our girls are really fired up for these matches. Everyone is healthy and I know we can pull out both matches this weekend if we play like we can.

PLAYER: Well I just wanted to get a feel for what are you looking for in my recruiting class? And where are you with recruiting for my class?

COACH: (Will answer the question), then may ask: So looking at your information here, what's important to you for your future team? What do you like/dislike about your current team?

PLAYER: (You should respond the way you really feel, not guessing as to what they want to hear. Is it closeness of the team? Success of the team? Competitiveness? Etc...) Then you could ask – what do you look for in a recruit? Physical wise and intangibles.

COACH: (He/she will answer the question), then may say... What are your interests in academics and how important is that to you? (If you are local) Are you looking to stay close to your family or get away? (If this school is far from home) How do you feel about the distance away from home?

PLAYER: (You should answer honestly)

COACH: I am so glad that you called and since we've gotten to know each other a little, I hope you feel comfortable calling me with updates throughout the year and good luck this weekend.

PLAYER: Thank you for making me feel comfortable, I certainly will. I'll look forward to future contact with you. Good luck to you as well this weekend.

Now obviously, this is a scripted phone call and they will go much more naturally than this sounds on paper, but this will give you an idea of what questions you can ask and what questions the coach may ask. Compare this phone call to the first call you would make to a guy that you like. (Of course, I'm writing to the female student's perspective – parents go back to your dating years and reminisce about your first phone call to someone you liked!) This phone call is used to get to know that person and see if there is interest. Most of the time you would not go for the kill and ask them out for a date – okay these days, maybe you would, but for our purposes, it's more of a get to know your personality phone call. The next day you can write a quick email to the coach saying that you appreciated the time he or she spent with you on the phone and that you look forward to getting to know him or her more.

I hope after reading this you realize only positive results can come from calling a college coach and it might be the reason you put yourself in a more favorable position during the decision making process. So, get over that nervous feeling, pick up the phone and give a coach a call. Trust me, it will be a lot easier than you think and I would venture to guess you will even enjoy it!