

Reality speaking..... What are your odds for an athletic scholarship

Certain recruiting services, combines and camps pitch exposure as a recruiting tool and the #1 reason that you won't be recruited if you don't have it! They are all out to make \$\$\$\$\$ While exposure is important, no amount of exposure will help you get recruited by a college coach if you lack the size or skill to play for that coach and team.

According to the National Federation of High Schools, participation in high school football, is 1,023,142 boys at the high school level? What does this mean for your recruiting efforts? Well..... nothing!

Some recruiting service pitches are these. "There are over 1 million high school football players, how will you stand out" - "There are 254,000 seniors who play high school football. There are only 5,042 athletic scholarships awarded at the D1 level. Your odds are 1-50 that you get a scholarship."

Looking at the numbers, we can see that lines like "over 1 million" and "1-50" get people ready to hand over hard earned money. Those numbers really have little to do with the recruiting process. In reality over 75% of those kids are underclassmen.

Let's look at some realistic numbers:

D1 football teams are required to offer 85 athletic scholarships (and no more per team) and you can divide 85 by 4 because each coach has about 21.25 scholarships per year to replace graduating seniors. There are 117 football teams at the 1A level. That means, at the D1 level, there are roughly **2,486** athletic scholarships available each year. (21.25 scholarships x 117 schools) give or take a few scholarships.

However, that is not the total number of scholarships available. There are 121 1-AA football teams. These teams are allowed to offer a maximum of 63 athletic scholarships per team. 63 athletic scholarships divided by 4 years equals about 16 scholarships a year. 16 scholarships a year times 121 teams equals 1,936 athletic scholarships available per year. But wait, each football team in the Ivy League competes at the 1AA level, but does not offer athletic scholarships. We must deduct about 150 scholarships to maybe 1,750 at the 1AA level.

Now, let's say there are roughly 4,240 football scholarships awarded at the D1 level (including 1AA) each year, and that's assuming every 1AA team offers the max (highly unlikely).

Not every high school football player is going to play D1, wants to play D1, **or can play D1**. You may be an all-conference player but so much depends on the quality of the competition in your conference and how many kids excel at your position across the state or nation.

If you include D2 schools the number of scholarships increases. D2 Schools can give a maximum of 36 scholarships but not all schools use that allotment. For example, the NSIC schools only gives a maximum of 24. We can take 36 and divided it by 4 to include replacing graduating seniors. The maximum number would be 12. There are 167 schools who offer Division 2 football. That means that there are potential maximum of 2004 scholarships at D2. The one advantage division 2 has is that they are allowed to split scholarships. Which means you will not have a "full ride" but it does allow for more potential scholarship availability.

What does this all mean.... **well we can assume a total of about 7000 total scholarships or partial scholarships** available for football players each year.

Let us say 50% of all high school (senior) football players want to play in college (which is a generous estimate), the total number drops to 127,000 senior football players. Let us say that out of those 127,000 kids who want to play football in college, only 40% have the skill, the size, the speed, and desire to play at the scholarship level of football- D1, 1AA or D2. Now the number is 50,800 players.

Odds? 7000 scholarships / 50,800 players = About a 12% chance of scholarships.

Even with these odds, numbers only tell part of the story. It has less to do with numbers of high school players but more to do with how many players **want** to continue at D1 and **can compete** at this high level of football. The size and speed of players in the game from high school to non-scholarship division 3 is a huge step up. To play at a scholarship level school takes a special athlete.

When examining the odds closely, there are positives and negatives. If you don't have the skill to play at the D1 level, you have **NO** odds, but if you do have the skill and desire to play D1 football, the odds of you receiving an athletic scholarship can be better than others would like you to know. In reality, you are not competing against 254,000 other kids, you are competing against a few thousand kids who possess the size, skill, and speed to play at that level. IF you have those attributes AND the passion to play, you are only competing against those with similar abilities. **You cannot buy skill and no amount of exposure will make up for a lack of skill**, especially at the D1 football level (or any level for that matter).

These same arguments apply to any sport, regardless of exposure - in order to receive an athletic scholarship 3 things have to happen.

1. You have to find a program that has available scholarships to offer.
2. You have to find a program that has a pressing need that the coach is trying to fill (If you are a LB and they have an All-Conference Junior LB and last year they recruited 2 more freshmen LBs means you may be a very good player but you will not be high on their priority list)
3. You have to be extremely talented and you have to connect with the coach and find a way to display your skills to that coach. Your high school coach may well be the best avenue for that connection.

College? What about the next level? With 9,945 college football players and 1,856 professional football players. It doesn't take a genius to figure out that the overwhelming majority of college football players will never find employment in the NFL.

Enjoy your high school experience! The lessons and fun of the game will last you a lifetime.