

Recruiting Column: How you communicate with coaches might be the key to unlocking scholarship opportunities

By: **Fred Bastie, [Playced.com](#)** / May 17, 2017

*USA TODAY High School Sports has a weekly column on the recruiting process. This isn't about where just the top five-star athletes are headed but rather a guide to the process and the pitfalls for student-athletes nationwide from Fred Bastie, the owner and founder of **Playced.com**.*

***Playced.com** is an industry leader in college recruiting. Their technology based recruiting service identifies the right colleges for potential recruits to pursue and provides a recruiting system that is second to none for student athletes of all talent levels and ages.*



Other than yourself, the most influential people in your recruiting journey are your current coach and the coaches at the colleges you are interested in. It's not your parents, or your teammates or even a recruiting service. That might seem obvious, but many recruits don't involve their current coach until it's too late and most recruits aren't prepared when college coaches do call. For those reasons, you have to make sure your current coach is on board early and you have to be prepared to talk with college coaches when they call. Communication is the key. Here are some examples of the right and the wrong way to communicate with your current coach and with college coaches when they call.

Talking with your current coach

Like it or not, your current coach is the most credible source to vouch for your athletic abilities, your character and your work ethic. In fact, his or her opinion of you might be the deciding factor on whether or not a college coach is interested enough to contact you. A coach who is willing to take the time to tout your abilities and character speaks volumes to college coaches about you as a player and a person. You need to talk with your coach about your desire to play in college, about your goals and ask for advice on the right schools to pursue. If your current coach (high school and/or select) is in your corner, it really can make a difference.

Here are two examples of a typical first conversation between a student-athlete ("Jeff") and his high school coach ("Coach Ryan") about recruiting. The first conversation, Jeff is not prepared.

Jeff: Hi coach, do you have a minute? I really want to play in college and I am wondering if you could help.

Coach Ryan: Sure Jeff, do you have any ideas about where you want to play?

Jeff: Not really. I thought you might know where I could find a scholarship.

Coach Ryan: Ok.... Um, how are your grades?

Jeff: I think they're ok.

Coach Ryan: How did you do on the ACT or SAT?

Jeff: I don't remember, but I can ask my parents and tell you tomorrow.

Coach Ryan: Do you have a major in mind?

Jeff: No, but I'm pretty good in math.

Coach Ryan: Do you want to stay close to home? Does the size of the school matter to you?

Jeff: I don't care. I just want a scholarship.

What in the world is a coach going to do with that information? That conversation was a total waste of time. Here's an example of how the conversation might have gone if Jeff had been prepared:

Jeff: Hi coach, do you have a minute? I really want to play in college and I am wondering if you could give me some advice.

Coach Ryan: Sure Jeff, do you have any ideas about where you want to play?

Jeff: Actually, I have some ideas, but I need your help to determine the right colleges for my abilities. Can we schedule a time to discuss that?

Coach Ryan: Absolutely. How about after practice next Tuesday? By the way, how are your grades?

Jeff: I am a solid B+ student and my NCAA Core Course GPA is a 3.65.

Coach Ryan: That's great. How did you do on the ACT or SAT?

Jeff: I got a 22 on the ACT and I am taking a review course right now to try and bring that up a little.

Coach Ryan: Do you have a major in mind?

Jeff: Not really, but I probably will pursue a business degree and maybe look at law school.

Coach Ryan: Do you want to stay close to home? Does the size of the school matter to you?

Jeff: The size of the school isn't that important and I want to be close enough to come home some, but for the right college opportunity I am open to any possibility.

This conversation actually gives the coach enough information to start thinking about how he might be able to help. Most coaches want to help their athletes make it to the next level, but you have to help them help you. They need direction and guidance in reaching out to programs that are a match for your abilities and meet your personal preferences.

Talking with college coaches

Once your current coach is on board, it's time to prepare yourself for conversations and correspondence with college coaches. A good way to prepare yourself is to anticipate the questions a coach might ask and be ready with your answers.

College coaches want confident players who know what they want and are ready to make it happen. Don't get me wrong, one bad conversation with a college coach might not ruin your chances with a program, but a good conversation can go a long way toward earning a college scholarship.

Here are two examples of an initial conversation between a college coach ("Coach Roberts") and the same prospective recruit ("Jeff"). In the first conversation Jeff is not prepared and in the second one he is.

The unfortunate conversation

Coach Roberts: So Jeff, I know you mentioned you are interested in our program, what are you looking for most in a college?

Jeff: Well, I'm not really sure, I just want a scholarship.

Coach Roberts: Ok, hmm...What do you think are your strengths and weaknesses as a player?

Jeff: Everyone tells me I'm really good and I try hard. Oh yeah, I got All-District last year.

Coach Roberts: That's great, congratulations. So, what do you think sets you apart from other prospective recruits?

Jeff: I'm really not sure, but my coach tells me I'm good enough to play in college.

Coach Roberts: What other colleges are recruiting you?

Jeff: I got invited to a camp at XYZ State University and the assistant coach at Jackson College called me last week. I'd like to play for you or either one of those schools, depending on the offer.

Coach Roberts: Those are both good schools. I think you should give them strong consideration. Do you have any questions for me?

Jeff: Not really. I was wondering how big of a scholarship you might offer me.

Coach Roberts: We'll get back with you Jeff. Thanks for your time.

The conversation when the recruit is prepared

Coach Roberts: So Jeff, I know you mentioned you are interested in our program, what are you looking for most in a college?

Jeff: Well, first of all I want a quality education and I know I can get one here. I am really interested in competing against the best and learning my sport. Based on what I know about your teams, I'm confident I'll have an opportunity to do that here.

Coach Roberts: Great! In your opinion, what are your strengths and weaknesses as a player?

Jeff: I am constantly trying to get better, but I think my strengths include my foot speed, my attitude and I believe my teammates view me as a leader. I am still working hard in the weight room to improve my strength and it's paying off.

Coach Roberts: Good answer. So, what do you think sets you apart from other prospective recruits?

Jeff: First of all, I think my grades give me an advantage over some recruits. I take school seriously and you will never have any problems with me in the classroom. Second, I feel like I'm a hard worker and I think Coach Ryan will tell you I am very coachable.

Coach Roberts: What other colleges are recruiting you?

Jeff: I've really just started the recruiting process and I've talked with coaches from several colleges, but I really want to play for your team.

Coach Roberts: Do you have any questions for me?

Jeff: Yes, I have a few:

- What do I need to do to earn a spot on your roster next year?
- How many players are you recruiting at my position?

Coach Roberts: Great questions Jeff. Let's schedule an official visit and we can discuss those at that time. I'll have my administrative assistant send you some options to come see the campus and meet some of the players.



Here's the deal

How you communicate with your current coach and with college coaches can go a long way toward earning a scholarship. Be prepared before you talk about recruiting with your high school coach, your select coach or any college coach.