



National Youth All American  
**Scouting Course 101**



# Scouting 101 Overview

- **What does a Basketball Scout do?**
- From the middle school after-school program to the NBA (National Basketball Association), Basketball Players play the game because they love it. Each Player has his or her own strengths and weaknesses, and it's the job of the Basketball Scout to evaluate those skills.
- Although Basketball Scouts work at nearly every level of play, most of the paying jobs are at the college and professional basketball levels. You have two main goals as a Basketball Scout. The first is to evaluate the competition. If you're going to play against a team with an insanely quick forward or a superstar three-point shooter, you need to plan how to defend against those skills.

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The second, and more common goal is to recruit players for the next level of play. As an NBA Basketball Scout, you travel nationally and internationally in search of the best players in the game. At the college level, you evaluate high school players.

The job requires a lot of travel, odd hours, and a complete devotion to the game of basketball. Not only do you need to know and understand the rules and playbook, but you also must know how to identify raw talent.

Each situation is a little different depending on what skills you need to round out the team. Commonly, though, you hunt down the players who excel at speed, shooting, or rebounds. With luck, you get them to agree to play for, instead of against, your team in the upcoming season.

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- **What Makes A Good Football Scout?**
- Now, do you have what it takes to become an NFL scout?
- Not everybody has the right mental profile and the skills to become a football scout. And while there are some hard skills involved – such as knowledge of football – scouting requires some **soft skills that cannot be easily developed.**
- Every one of us excels at something unique – some people are great football players but terrible coaches, others have zero success in the league but become great GMs, while the rest excel as scouts.
- With that in mind, you should set your expectations right and understand what you are getting yourself into.
- Now that we have that out of the way, let's have a look at the key hard and soft skills that an NFL scout must have.



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- **Excellent Knowledge Of Football**
- This one is a no-brainer. To be able to identify talent among dozens of high school football players, you need to have an **excellent understanding of football**.
- In fact, you need to understand **much more** than any player on the field.
- Each football player knows his role and what he is supposed to do to neutralize the opponent. Football positions have their **distinct purposes**, and every player needs to have an in-depth understanding of their tasks on the field.
- Scouts are different – their expertise isn't limited to just one position.
- As a scout, you will be watching individual players make moves and commit mistakes. Based on that and on your comprehensive knowledge of football strategy, you need to be able to accurately identify talent.
- Scouts take a step back and have a look at the field from a more general, more global perspective, needless to say, this requires another level of knowledge of football.



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## Eye for Talent

- You need to have an eye for talent.
- It's very easy to point your finger at a great player on the field and say that he's good. This is just stating the obvious.
- However, how about **identifying outstanding potential** among the grey mass of college or high school players? Do you have what it takes to pinpoint a player who has the skills but **needs some polishing** to successfully play in the National League?
- This isn't all. An NFL scout also needs to be able to **project the skill set of a football player onto the philosophy and situation of his team**.
- Gut feeling plays a huge role in identifying skill as well. Great entrepreneurs have an eye for business opportunities and are capable of investing money where it needs to be. Likewise, great scouts have an intuition that lets them pinpoint unique strengths and talents in seemingly unremarkable players.

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Patience is **extremely important** for an NFL scout as well. You may wear rose-colored glasses all you want, but football scouting is actually a **very intensive job** mentally and time-wise.

You will need to watch hours of match footage and make notes, documenting every significant move, mistake, or offense of every player on the team.

Merely analyzing a game is going to take **hours and hours** of your time. Not only that, but **not every game** will give you prospects to recommend to your team's management. You'll need to have the patience to plow through dozens of games to find just one outstanding talent.

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## Ability To Present Yourself

- So you've found a John Doe that seems like a very promising candidate for your football team.
- Having a reliable gut feeling along with comprehensive football knowledge is a must, but you also must be able **to convey your thoughts and ideas** to your team's management.
- If you cannot articulate **why** your John Doe must become a member of the team and if you cannot stand behind your choice, your ability to identify skill will be **rendered useless**.

## Communication Skills

- Your "people skills" hugely matter as well. Scouts often must work in groups, so having good communication skills is crucial if you want to excel in this career. Constructive interaction with your peers and supervisors is a prerequisite for success in the league.

## Dependability And Punctuality

- Finally, you need to be dependable and punctual. Here, administrative and time-management skills would surely come in handy.
- Scouting involves a lot of travel and writing. Being on the road a hundred days a year is a normal occurrence for scouts. You will also often have to write dozens of reports, and the management will frequently want them by the next Friday.

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- In order to be a quality scout you must understand what college basketball coaches want.
- Here are 5 key qualities programs use to find the right players for their program.
- What do coaches want? It was a combination of the five factors which led to us to pursue and ultimately sign a young, unheralded recruit in the Class of 2009 from Canton, Ohio. The combination of these factors played a large role in him earning a starting spot as a freshman, leading all of Division I freshman in scoring in 2009-2010, and being named the Patriot League Player of the Year as a freshman. That young man's name: C.J. McCollum. He would go onto lead Lehigh past Duke in the 2012 NCAA Tournament and be drafted 10th overall in the 2013 NBA Draft by the Portland Trailblazers.
- Obviously, not everyone has the same potential that C.J. was able to capitalize on but as college coaches we are looking for factors that will lead to potential being reached. We are looking for achievers in every sense of the word and my experience evaluating, recruiting, and coaching a player like C.J. has cemented in my mind the importance of these factors when evaluating prospects.

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## **5 Key Qualities which separate you in the recruiting process:**

- **Passion:** We wanted someone that was very passionate about the game of basketball and had big dreams. Very rarely are people highly successful in an area in which they are only moderately passionate. Often times, passion is what drives work ethic. It was clear from Day 1 that this young man had a yearning passion for the game of basketball.
- **Winning Habits:** When talking on the phone with recruits in 2008, I began to notice that this young man was usually leaving the gym, going to the gym, or talking to me about what he did at the gym that day. This made an impression on me as an assistant coach because he was living out his passion for the game. I knew he cared about reaching his potential. Other recruits were talking about the movies, video games, school dances or TV shows – which are all normal activities, but also gave an indication of priorities as well.

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- **Confidence:** As a coach, we can only instill so much confidence in our players. There must be a level of self-confidence and self-assurance which allows you to compete at a high level under pressure. As I spoke with this recruit in 2008, I heard a very confident young man who believed in himself because of the habits and passion referenced above.
- **Good Academics:** Being consistent in the classroom and achieving high marks not only opens more doors for recruits, but it is also a window into the character and maturity of the young person. Coaches want mature student-athletes that understand the value of education and how they can maximize their experiences as a student-athlete to prepare for success in life. That was something that really impressed me about this prospect, we were the highest-rated academic school recruiting him, and he referenced that frequently when stating his interest in us. That showed me that he cared about academics.

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- **Fit:** Here is where recruiting can be tricky, both for coaching staffs and for student-athletes and their families. What appears to be a great fit for one party is not equally as great a fit by the other party. This can happen for a variety of reasons. Sometimes coaches are looking for a specific position and you just don't fit their class' needs. Other times, players are looking for an instant opportunity, but the program already has multiple players in that position. There are a variety of variables that go into finding "the right fit", but a combination of academic fit, talent / preparation to succeed at that level, relationship with coaches and current student-athletes, as well as opportunity to contribute (timelines for this can vary) are some of the main factors that both sides must consider and see a match. All these variables matched for both parties during this recruitment in 2008-2009.

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- NBA scouts and executives go through an exhaustingly thorough process while analyzing college basketball players, but there are a handful of key features they value greatest.
- Today's NBA places a premium on athleticism and precise jump-shooting, but those aren't the only aspects of the NCAA baller's game that evaluators notice.
- The intangibles are just as important, if not more important, than the physical or skill attributes of a recruit. But what exactly are those intangibles, and which ones are worth more in the eyes of a scout?
- Players who possess both the tangible traits and intangible qualities are the ones that stand out and climb the draft charts.

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### "Explosive" Athleticism

- When NBA scouts and executives assess a prospect, above-average athleticism is always a plus. There are different types of explosive athleticism that help a recruit stand out.
- **Vertical:** Getting to the rim with ease isn't the only advantage of leaping ability. Players who can bounce can also release jump shots easier, rebound better and contest opponents' shots.
- **Lateral quickness:** Athletes who have quick footwork and explosive lateral movement and are able to play relentless defense if they actually take the effort to do it. The lateral quickness also helps players provide better help defense. This is especially handy for big men.
- **Dribbling speed:** Players who have a good first step with the ball ([Austin Rivers](#)) are extremely tough to guard, and players with breakaway speed ([John Wall](#)) are almost impossible to stop on the fast break.

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## Character

- Scouts can't immediately know a recruit's character, but there are several aspects to character that they can look for while doing their homework.
- **Work Ethic:** Is the player a gym rat? Does he continue to work on his skills as often as possible? Is he a student of the game? Can you tell he hits the weight room?
- Also included in the work ethic is how hard a player plays during games. [NBA.com](http://NBA.com)'s David Aldridge talks about NCAA champion Michael-Kidd Gilchrist's advantage despite skill deficiencies:
  - "**...MKG is beloved by NBA scouts for a simple reason: he plays hard. His path to the pros is his relentlessness. Playing hard, as I'll say for the billionth time, is a skill that gives MKG the nod among every NBA personnel person I spoke with over (Harrison) Barnes.**"

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- **Coachability:** Some of the best players are the type of players who can absorb any kind of feedback, no matter the coaching style. Certain recruits are better than others when it comes to learning game strategy, and they also apply individual skill improvements better.
- **Leadership:** Not everyone is built to be a leader. Thus, players like Michigan State's Draymond Green get favorable looks because they show NBA leadership potential, even if they won't be the best athlete on the team. They possess a contagious positive attitude, good communication skills and serve as an [extension](#) of the coach.

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- Ambidexterity
- *Ambidexterity* is the ability to use one's right and left hand equally well. From an individual skills perspective, players are deemed much more valuable if they can dribble, shoot and block shots with either hand. Let's break down all three phases:
- **Dribbling:** Ambidextrous ball-handling is crucial, especially for guards. For example, [check out Kyrie Irving's Duke highlights](#). His ability to go right or left keeps the defense guessing and gives him so many opportunities on the court.
- **Scoring:** Players who can finish with either hand have a significant edge over those who can't. NBA scouts notice when a post player can shoot a baby hook or a short bank shot with either hand. [Sacramento](#) saw this kind of potential in DeMarcus Cousins, and [this clip](#) shows his ambidexterity.
- **Shot-blocking:** A player who can block shots with either hand is a bonus. The best recent example is Anthony Davis, who is primarily right-handed but can block shots with his left when he needs to.

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## Versatility

- Versatility is a buzzword we hear all the time, but only a few college basketball players are versatile. This gives them the inside track to getting drafted.
- What are some of the things that make a player a "versatile" prospect? Let's take a look at the most versatile college basketball products from the last five drafts, and why they were so valued:
- **2008:** UCLA forward Kevin Love was picked fifth because he possessed size, had great hands around the rim, and he could also step outside and hit jump shots.
- **2009:** In one of the least-versatile draft classes, Memphis dynamo Tyreke Evans was picked fourth, and a major reason for that was his ability to play point guard, shooting guard or small forward.

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- **2010:** Ohio State standout Evan Turner went second overall due to his 6'7" frame and collection of ball-handling, shooting and power driving skills.
- **2011:** When Georgia Tech swingman Iman Shumpert was picked 17th overall, it raised some eyebrows. But the Knicks knew they had a versatile guard with offensive athleticism and elite defensive skills.
- **2012:** Michael Kidd-Gilchrist, the No. 2 selection, was the most versatile prospect in the draft due to his defense, passing, rebounding and fast-break skills

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### An Ideal Body Frame

College basketball players literally come in all shapes and sizes, and it's up to NBA scouts and executives to determine which ones have bodies with the potential to endure the rigors of the league. They look for wingspan (because a player's reach is more important than their height), and strength.

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Muscle-wise, body frames usually fall into one of three categories. They're either (1) NBA-ready because the young athlete has well-developed muscularity, (2) not ready *but* the frame is conducive to future muscle-building, or (3) not ready because of a wiry frame that's not conducive to muscle-building.

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Let's take three 2012 draftees as examples of each category:

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- (1) Thomas Robinson, No. 5 overall: He has an NBA-ready body, which is part of the reason he was picked in the top five.
- (2) Meyers Leonard, No. 11 overall: [NBADraft.net](http://NBADraft.net) scout Tyler Ingle notes that he has "excellent length on a good frame that will be capable of supporting more muscle."
- (3) John Henson, No. 14 overall: Although highly-skilled in the post, Henson dropped to 14 because his [narrow shoulders](#) will prevent him from putting on a substantial amount of muscle without it adversely affecting his athleticism.

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## Jump Shot Potential

- Prospects will always find their way to the NBA if they can develop an ultra-consistent jump shot.
- Scouts value a college basketball player who already has great range, smooth shooting form and a quick release. But they also keep their eye out for mediocre shooters who have the potential to develop their shot.
- The shorter a player is, the more important it is for him to have a quick, high release and advanced shot-creating skills. Think Jimmer Fredette.
- College players must also have the potential to increase their range, as the three-point line moves back a couple steps on an NBA court.
- For post players, NBA coaches aren't asking them to become snipers from three-point land. But they do want their big men to be able to nail an open mid-range jumper when the opportunity presents itself.



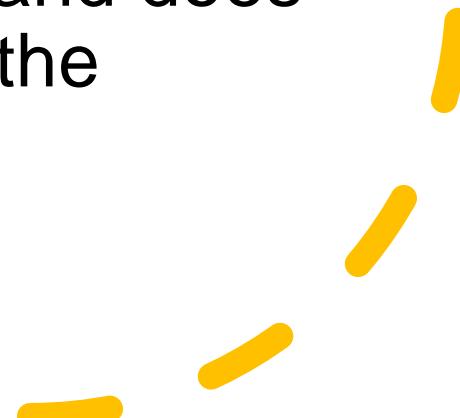
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## Instincts and Court Awareness

- Something that's extremely difficult to teach is instincts and court awareness, which is why NBA executives and scouts value it so highly.
- Take 2012 draftee Kendall Marshall, for example. He's a left-hand dominant ball-handler who is an average shooter, a below-average finisher and a below-average athlete. But he was picked in the lottery by Phoenix because he has phenomenal court vision and passing skills.
- Instincts and court awareness aren't just important for point guards, though. Great instincts can help any player move without the ball, get open and find the soft spots in the defense. Court awareness results in better weak-side defense and team cohesion.
- It also helps on the fast break, like knowing when to toss and ally oop or when to drive it in.

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NYAA puts a premium on young players understanding the fundamentals of team basketball. Talking on offense and defense, making the right play are two examples. Meaning player's that understand the differences of dribbling with a purpose and not using unnecessary dribbles for no apparent reason. NYAA does not put any value in a player that dominates the ball and does not utilize their teammates for the common good of the team.



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- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UqztWFcF3TI>

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- 1. NYAA puts more value on what?**
  
- 2. Name three of the 5 Key Qualities which separate you in the recruiting process**
  
- 3. When scouting a player, what is something every player can do but often do not do?**
  
- 4. True or False...Players that may not be as athletic but is very coachable should get a better rating than someone that is not.**

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- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KXHa0VkKshs>

- Use the link above to complete the following ...
- Watch and Explain –
- Who are your top 5 players on your scouting reports?
- Explain why
- Explain the top three players regarding Potential
- Explain future expectations
- 1. Future Hall of Famer
- 2. Future NBA Talent
- 3. Professional Player
- 4. Division 1 College Player
- 5. Division 2 College Player
- 6. Division 3 College Player
- High School Level



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