

# Targeting & Identifying a College for You

The search for schools that meet your criteria comes next. The fastest, easiest and cheapest way to do this is via the internet. Although you can find almost any school through most Internet search engines, you will soon learn that there are hundreds of schools that you have never heard of.

Our links page has several ways to look up schools with softball programs with separate listings for D1, D2, D3, NAIA and also a listing of all schools by state. You will also find links for schools on the NFCA, NCAA and NAIA web sites.

## **NARROWING THE SEARCH:**

- There are several hundred colleges and university that offer softball programs.
- How do you choose which ones to contact?
- Picking the divisional fit, geographic location, the academic fit and the competition fit is only the beginning,
- Most school websites are invaluable source of information.
- Check the academic requirements and the courses of study that are offered.
- Assuming the school still meets your criteria it is now time to find out if your a good fit for its softball team. H
- How is that possible? The answer comes in knowing what to look for on the website.
- Find the link to athletics and/or sports.
- There you will find the secret to finding the right colleges for your player to target.
- There are **five things** on almost every website that you will find incredibly useful:
- **Roster, Statistics, Record, News Releases, and the Coach's bio.**

**Roster: The roster alone gives you enough to decide to target a school or reject it.**

- **First and foremost it gives you the home towns of each player on the team.**
  - It tells you where that coach recruits from.
  - Coaches have recruiting patterns.
  - They tend to recruit from the same areas year after year.
  - If there are no players on the roster from your region, chances are that the coach will not even look at you, unless you are one of the special players.
  - This does not mean that you should not contact that school.
  - This is one time where the old adage "Nothing ventured, nothing gained" is very appropriate. You have absolutely nothing to lose by contacting these schools and you can never predict what the outcome will be with 100% certainty except that if no contact is made then there is zero chance of generating interest in your player. So contact these schools and see what you get in return.
- **Second, the roster tells positions of the players and their year of graduation.**
  - It gives you some idea of what the coach will need the year that you graduate from high school.
  - Track what positions have been added over the past few years to see if a pattern exists.
  - Some coaches will recruit catchers every other year, etc.
  - Most teams do seek to sign at least one pitcher every year.
  - Third, the roster gives some physical statistics, such as height. Coaches like players that fit their modes. If you notice that every player is over 5'8" and your player is 5'2", chances are she will not be the type of player that that particular coach is looking for.

## **Statistics:**

- Looking at a team's statistics will tell you a lot about the needs of the team.
- Specifically, if you are a great offensive player, look at the hitting statistics.
- If it looks like the team needs offensive players or if the best offensive players will be gone by the time you graduate, this would be a good school to target.
- Similarly if you are an excellent pitcher and the team does not have one pitcher with an ERA under 3.50, this would be a good college to contact.
- Statistics will give you a pretty good idea of distribution of playing time.
- This could be a good indicator of whether you will play as a freshman if you attended that school.

**Record:**

- What was the team's record last year?
- Who were the other schools they played against?
- Is the team in a rebuilding mode or will it compete for a conference championship? This could be an indication of how much a freshman will get to play.
- Joining a team that is building is often an advantage in terms of playing time and scholarship potential. Logically, a coach will not trust an untested freshman with a significant role if the team has a chance to win a championship.
- On the other hand, a team that is rebuilding may want to give experience to underclassman as a way of improving the team for the future.
- In addition, a school with a strong winning record may have 1000s of girls beating on their door willing to do anything (with or without a scholarship) to join the team.
- It can also tell about the needs of the team and the type of game it plays.
- Along with the record, you will usually find the scores from the individual games.
- Does the team score a lot of runs or is each game a low scoring affair? This may give you an idea of whether the coach plays a power game or relies on pitching and defense with idea of scratching out runs when it can.
- Where do you fit into this?
- What tools do YOU bring to the table?
- All of this is information that will help you decide if this school is a good fit for the player.
- There is a caveat here.
  - Resist the temptation to overanalyze.
  - No one factor should necessarily be the deciding factor in which schools to contact, especially this last one.
  - There are certain things that you will never be able to tell from these sorts of statistics. For example, is the coach specifically recruiting players to fit a certain type of system or does the coach adapt the game to players he or she has?
  - If it is at all possible to see records and scores from past seasons you may get a better feel for this. However, this is a good area to question the coach about if you get the chance to meet the coach face to face.

**News releases:**

- Colleges love to brag and put out positive news out.
- On the websites you will find a series of news releases.
- This will include information about the incoming class of players as well as honors that any of the current players have attained.
- Both of these will give clues as to what the school will need in they way of players in the next year or so.
- Practically speaking, if the team has an underclassman (freshman or sophomore) who attained All-Conference or All-American honors in your position and that player will have at least two years of eligibility left when your player would be a freshman, chances are good that the team will not be looking for a player in that position in your year of graduation.
- Even if it does, then it is not likely that your player would play at all as a freshman or even as a sophomore, at least not in her natural position.
- Similarly, if the incoming class of freshman players the year before your player will graduate from High School includes one or more players in her natural position, chances are the coach will not see a need to include another player in the same position in the next season.

**Coach's biography:**

This may well give you insight into the type of player that the coach wants.

In addition, this tells you how long the coach has been there.

If the coach is new, some of the observations above would not apply.

From all this information, you should put together a list of colleges that you want to target for possible recruitment.

Once again, I would like to point out that this is about an overall fit between the player and the school.

Although this is a very analytical approach to the recruitment process, there is a place for emotion and "gut" feelings.

So be careful about being too narrow in search, especially early on in the process.

The initial net should be cast as wide as possible.