

Taking care of business: Division I Football Coaches' Insight on the Recruiting Process

Drew Swinney, Clemson University

Sarah Stokowski, Clemson University

Chris Corr, Troy University (Advisor)

Abstract:

Recruiting is an integral part of the college football landscape. There has not been much research done to help prospective student-athletes (PSA) gain visibility and navigate the recruiting process. Nor have parents of PSAs been properly prepared to help lead their child through the world of recruiting. This study explores the perspective of Division 1 college football coaches in what recruiting looks like to them and what advice they would offer to PSAs and their parents. The findings from this study are useful to parents and PSAs in understanding the recruiting process and how they can work to be seen by schools.

This study was informed by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943) to determine what the college football recruiting process looks like, how can PSAs and parents navigate that process and how can PSAs increase their visibility in college football. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs includes physiological needs, safety and security, love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). In making their decision, PSAs look at these five factors when determining where they will go to college (e.g., Bede & Wolf, 2021). These factors not only help coaches figure out what players are looking for, but they also help parents and PSAs verbalize and understand what they truly want in a college.

The method used to explore more of this topic was convenience sampling. An open-ended Google Forms questionnaire was sent to ten coaches in college football by way of email. Among the 10 coaches questioned, six were white and 4 were black. Eight coaches were from Power Five schools and two were not. Eight coaches coached offense, while two coached defense. Between the 10 coaches, ages ranged from 27-61 years old. Four of the coaches played football in college while six did not. The questionnaire consisted of five demographic questions and thirteen open-ended questions to address the research questions. To help inform the questions, the researchers relied on previous knowledge from personal experience and various articles of literature.

The coaches interviewed narrowed down the best advice for potential PSAs into four themes: play comes first, get in front of schools, character, and patience. The overarching message from the data gathered would fall into the advice of "controlling what you can control" (William). Controlling what can be controlled encompasses on-field performance, academics, camp

attendances, and off-field character. Another implication of the data outcomes is that PSAs should trust the process. If a PSA focuses on what they cannot control, they may be impacted negatively by that worry. In spending time worrying, a PSA will be neglecting what they do control, hurting their chances of maximizing opportunity. The coaches interviewed implore PSAs to stay patient, and trust that everything will work out how it is supposed to.