

The Roles of High School and Club Coaches in the Recruiting Process

I want to talk this month about the role that high school and club coaches play in the recruiting process. As a student-athlete and parents, what should you be asking of your coaches? Of course, this answer depends on many factors. How experienced is the coach? What has been his/her playing and/or coaching history? How involved are they with the collegiate level of volleyball? How involved do they want to be when it comes to helping you with the recruiting process? How knowledgeable are they about the recruiting process? What do you do if they are not experienced enough or not very knowledgeable about the process?

Here are a few things that you need to ask of your coaches.

Write letters of recommendation. As you are sending out correspondence, you may want to include a letter of recommendation from your high school and/or club coach.

Q: What can they offer in this letter? A. The intangibles about you.

Q: What are the intangibles?

- a) Coachability – do you listen during time outs? Do you take criticism well?
- b) Maturity – how do you behave on and off the court?
- c) Daily work ethic – are you just a game player or do you come to practice to get after it everyday?
- d) Court smarts
- e) Consistency
- f) Relationship with your parents – this is important!
- g) Relationship with other teammates
- h) Are you a leader?

Invite college coaches to matches and/or practices. If the coach is inviting the college coach to the practices and match, it is just another level of credibility to offer. It is important for the club coaches to develop relationships with the college coaches for future networking opportunities for players.

Remember that college coaches can communicate with HS and/or Club Coaches at any time about players, so it is important for your coaches to be involved in your recruiting journey.

Offer guidance to determine what division of play is the best match for the ability of the athlete. This can be a tough one. There can be close relationships that have developed and, let's face it, sometimes we as parents don't want to hear the truth about our children's abilities.

So coaches, how do you go about handling this one? My advice is to be as honest as you can. Use your experience in coaching to help them determine what level they can play in. If you personally do not have a lot of experience or do not feel comfortable in evaluating the athlete in this way, then use other local coaches who have seen the athlete play several times. Ask them to give their evaluation based on their

experience. Sometimes the best thing you can do as a young, inexperienced coach is use the coaching resources around you until you feel competent in handling these evaluations on your own.

Parents, you need to be able to face reality here! You need to take your parenting blinders off on this one and truly look at your daughters' ability. What else can you do as parents to get an honest look at things? Take your daughter to college matches. Go to several matches within each division – NCAA Divisions I, II and III, NAIA and NJCAA. There can be big discrepancies within each division, so go and see as many as you can. See a top 25 team play. Then see a team ranked in the next 25 and so on. Is your daughter the caliber of player that is on the court? If they are all 6' and your daughter is 5'7 – it's probably not likely it's a good fit. Take into consideration future potential as well. If your daughter is a freshman in HS, then she has a few years to grow and improve as a player.

Set up videotaping sessions. It is important for coaches to help the parents in making a recruiting video. The role as a coach is to run the drill that will best showcase the athlete's skill and ability. Many parents look at the recruiting video as a difficult step because they do not know where begin. Tapes do not need to be fancy, just effective. One way to make it easier on the parents is offer to hire a local sports videographer who would come in and video anyone who wants to make a recruiting video. I would suggest the parents pitch in on the cost and get as many people as you can to cut down on costs. This way with the coach running the drills and the videographer behind the camera, the parents are off the hook for the skills portion of the tape.

Put together a training program for the athletes. What I mean by this is to put together a "summer workout" or "off-season" workout that would improve their jumping, foot speed, etc... Where can you get these training programs? Ask local, collegiate strength coaches for some workouts or training programs. Also, ask the local collegiate volleyball coaches what they have their players do for summer workouts.

Educate your players and parents on how the recruiting process works. The more educated the players and parents are about the recruiting process, the easier it is on the high school and club coaches. Have some one come out and give a seminar for your club and/or high school team. This way everyone is on the same level of information and they can apply it to their personal situations. Seminars and booklets are a very valuable tool in educating yourselves on the recruiting process. It is a "one-stop shop" for recruiting information.

The High School and Club Coaches can play a vital role in the recruiting process for the student-athlete. If you are a parent, then ask these things of your daughter's coaches. If you are a coach, then be ready to assist your student-athletes. The more we are educated on the process the more we can help the student-athlete find the best fit for them academically, athletically and socially and that is the overall goal.