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The Biggest Mistakes Made in the College Recruiting Process

In the growing competitive landscape of junior golf and college recruiting with thousands of participants, I am amazed that most people make the same mistakes over and over again. If you allow it, the results of the college recruiting process can become quite predictable and not so desirable.

Every year, thousands of qualified and capable golfers completely miss out on their opportunity of playing college golf. Even more common, many attend the wrong school in false belief of their personal abilities or the opportunity to play. Junior golf parents across America are left overpaying for college by the tens of thousands of dollars. But that doesn't have to be your story.

Over the last few years I've picked up on many mistakes being made in the college recruiting process. College-hopeful athletes can leapfrog their competition by doing things right and avoiding the mistakes outlined in this article and parents can save thousands on college costs and hours of headache by being knowledgeable about the process.

We've identified the three most common mistakes made by athletes and their families in the college recruiting process and listed them for you. Below, you will find the mistakes I most often see and tips to help you avoid making these same errors.

1

Mistake #1: Hiding behind the keyboard

The single biggest mistake I see junior golfers making during the recruiting process is ***hiding behind the keyboard***. In today's day and age, so many people are consumed with what's on the screen in front of them and neglect the opportunity to build the real meaningful relationships around them. I see players willing to communicate via email but so many of those same players are reluctant to pick up the phone, which is seemingly glued to their fingertips. IRONIC! One thing you'll need to embrace if you want to be successful, not only in the recruiting process but also in life, is that meaningful relationships are key. So get busy! Build relationships; real, genuine,



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face-to-face relationships and over time you will see the recruiting process evolve right in front of your eyes.

Biggest misconception: “If I just put up a few low scores, Coaches will start to email me.”

Not only is this a myth, but email communication is becoming thought of as an acceptable way to develop relationships from the junior golfers perspective, which is a huge fallacy.

Get this... Email communication doesn't start relationships and most often it's too late for players once they realize they have to start dialing the phone and visiting schools in order to be recruited. Most times, I see that if players don't start dialing until Junior year or later, disappointment will set in. Some feel depressed or down on themselves after an underwhelming lack of responses from coaches. A select few, even have thoughts of quitting when coaches don't respond to them.

What you should do...

Send introductory emails with the motivation to get your foot in the door, then make it your obligation to begin building meaningful relationships. Pick up the phone and start dialing. Be persistent, stay open minded, curious and ask good relevant questions in order to find your “best-fit” school or university.

2

Mistake #2: Eyeing the wrong schools or too few of them

Another mistake I've encountered far too often is players focusing on schools that do not fit them – athletically, academically, and socially.

When players come to me for the first time, they often arrive with a list of schools far reaching from their current athletic and academic abilities. Even worse, some players haven't gathered or organized a list of potential colleges at all and sometimes even the best players neglect researching the social or extracurricular aspects of the schools they wish to attend.



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Biggest misconception: The single biggest misconception in the recruiting world comes full circle when players attempt to compare junior golf scores to college golf scores. Simply stated, all golf scores are not created equal! Many golf industry professionals and college coaches that I talk to equate the scoring differential between junior golf and college golf to almost **3 shots per round!** Therefore, if you are researching a particular school and their #5 player has a 75 average, it's most likely they were **averaging** even par 72 during their junior golf career. Far too often I encounter players and families that come to me saying "I know I can play for them, my average is better than player # so-and-so". Unfortunately, this just doesn't add up. Traditionally, I tell my players to compare their scores to the top three (3) players on the current roster and if their scores aren't comparable, they should probably look elsewhere for playing opportunities.

Get this...

I don't believe players are purposefully choosing schools that don't fit them. I believe that their lack of knowledge and research is truly holding them back. They target colleges that aren't a match from the get-go. They say "I want to go D1", but fail to do any research or probing on what the particular schools and golf programs have to offer.

What you should do...

Most players don't *really* understand what they want out of a school until they are on campus themselves, meet with the coaching staff, and get a better feel for the team. So.....

First, target colleges that are a match. How? Consider the following categories.

- i. Athletic - research schools and make certain that your current scoring average is equivalent to the # 1-3 players on the roster.
- ii. Academic – Ask yourself, can I be admitted to this particular school? Does this school offer major fields that interest me, can I see myself being comfortable in this academic environment, class size, rigor, study hall, libraries, tutoring help, etc.
- iii. Social – Ask yourself, what if golf doesn't work out? What if I happened to get hurt or get sick? Will the coach help me find other opportunities? Can I find other extracurriculars to suffice?

Then, set up unofficial visits with schools of interest.

Begin to meet with coaches and embrace them with a sincere handshake and good eye contact. The most undervalued aspect of the recruiting process is your personal character. If you know you are a good candidate and you can add tremendous value to a



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particular golf program, then it's your objective and responsibility to convey that to coaches.

3

Mistake #3: Relying on the "If I play well enough, coaches will find me" attitude

If you are a Power 5* Recruit, this could potentially be true, however, this is not the case for 99% of junior golfers. These players are truly exceptional, and are most often ranked inside the top100 in their recruiting class and average under par by junior year. Coaches will notice and begin recruiting these players before high-school and sending them recruiting questionnaires and inviting them to summer camps.

*Power 5 conference school (SEC, ACC, Big 12, Big 10, Pac 12).

For those of you who are not part of the 1%, a good rule of thumb is to NOT expect coaches to find you, but to be patiently proactive during the recruiting process and reach out to coaches on your own.

Biggest misconception: Many players are extremely nearsighted when it comes to the recruiting process and how they expect to go from point A (where they are now) to point B (getting recruited). They expect coaches to magically find them (within the sea of 10,000+ junior golfers), recruit them and offer them scholarships. This simply doesn't happen.

Get this... Today, the recruiting process is happening earlier and earlier. Players are committing to colleges in their Freshman and Sophomore years. This trend is becoming a formality for a few reasons. Here are a few Coaches giving their take...

"Golf is going early just like other sports. The top programs are pushed to be better and better so they are try to get the best and commit them as soon as possible. Athletic departments are putting more pressure on them than ever before. The issue is that it is only a verbal commitment and if the player doesn't continue to progress the coach will not honor the commitment and find someone else."

- Mid-Major Division 1 Coach



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“We would love to sit and wait to hand out our offers. However, nowadays we simply can’t do that.”

- Mid-Major Division 1 Asst. Coach

“Most sports are headed in that direction. Players are getting better at a younger age, which makes it easier to evaluate them. It’s the nature of the game and everyone has to adjust.”

- Division 1 Head Coach in the SEC

What you should do...

Understand that in today's day and age, if you aren't receiving calls from Coaches by September of your Junior Year, it's unlikely that you will be offered a significant scholarship at a Power 5* conference school.

- If you are a **top recruit** in the country, begin speaking with coaches and taking unofficial visits to college campuses during your early years in high school.
- If you are a **good junior player** but not an elite recruit, plan on calling coaches and taking unofficial visits early on but be reasonable with the schools that you visit and pursue.
- If you are a **“late-bloomer”** – don't expect to gain much interest from top50 schools, as most have already finished recruiting by Junior year. Although there are few opportunities left, you will however have more opportunity of gaining the attention of college coaches around Early Signing Day of your senior year.

Other Notable Mistakes

1. “Selling” yourself
 - a. Stop selling and start nurturing relationships
 - b. Coaches want to recruit players/families they trust – trust isn't built overnight
 - c. Don't brag about intangibles, you aren't the person that should be selling that message to college coaches.
2. Not taking school/academics seriously
3. Not surrounding yourself with a TEAM
4. Pursuing “exposure” instead of “evaluations”
 - a. Exposure – communicating via email and with non-decision makers (assistant coaches, 3rd parties)



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- i. Camps, showcases, recruiting websites, etc.
- b. Evaluations – taking visits, speaking with coaches face to face
 - i. Personal evaluations, 1-on-1 time, campus visits, etc.

Thanks for reading,

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ForeCollegeGolf is a college placement and recruiting business where Mike aims to apply his background in competitive golf and recruiting education to help educate players, their families, and coaches about the college recruiting process.

If you have any questions about the article above, any feedback, an article idea you would like to provide; you can contact us

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