

# Introduction

## **My Own Recruiting Story**

I have been fascinated with college soccer recruiting since 1978, when I was going through the college soccer recruiting “process” myself. It was a much different time, with no club soccer to speak of, and no college showcases. The college soccer landscape was much different than it is now, with the Big Ten only having one college program on the men’s side – national powerhouse Indiana University – and the rest of the Big Ten schools having club soccer programs at best. Similarly, the schools of the Atlantic Coast Conference had not made true commitments to their respective soccer programs; it would be a few years yet before they offered playing scholarships across the board. To my recollection, the Ivy League remained the best conference in the country at that time.

I did not have any guidance in the college recruiting process. My father was an immigrant from Germany who could not advise on the subject – he knew of Harvard and that I wanted to play for Brown (the Ivy

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power at that time), but that basically exhausted his knowledge of schools. I had contact from some Boston-area college coaches who came to my high school games, but was fortunate that a prominent coach from that era, Hubert Vogelsinger, had taken me under his wing. Vogelsinger was the former head coach of Yale, and he had written the first American soccer instructional book of note, The Challenge of Soccer. He had become the head coach of the local pro team, the Boston Minutemen of the North American Soccer League<sup>1</sup>, and was a very influential coach.

With the backing of Vogelsinger, my recruiting opportunities expanded significantly. He recommended me to coaches and provided a written recommendation for me to use as well.<sup>2</sup> As a result, I received a recruiting letter from Jerry Yeagley, head coach of the number one team in the nation, Indiana, and was admitted almost immediately after I applied. I would have likely played very little at that powerhouse. Vogelsinger recommended me to Cliff Stevenson, the head coach of my dream school, Brown, but Stevenson wasn't particularly interested in me. I

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<sup>1</sup> Vogelsinger had left Boston after the 1976 NASL season to become first the head coach of Team Hawaii in 1977 and the San Diego Sockers in 1978 (each an NASL team), but we stayed in close contact and he kept up on my playing development.

<sup>2</sup> I can to this day recall a sentence from that recommendation (surely written by Hubert's talented wife, Lois, who was the brains behind Vogelsinger's books, soccer camps, and other business ventures), which seemed to be part compliment and part critique: "Steven has great stick-to-itiveness when his interest is aroused..."

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was however recruited by Brown's conference rival Cornell, and so I wound up there.

While still a high school senior I had been given a great opportunity with the brand new North American Soccer League team in town, the New England Tea Men: a chance to periodically train with the first team, and a part-time job in the front office assisting the team's Public Relations Director, Vince Casey. And then something amazing: Casey made me the game Official Scorer and Statistician. Deciding on and awarding assists on goals in NASL games was, for a 17-year-old, very heady stuff.

The spring of my freshman year at Cornell coincided with the second season for the Tea Men, and I would have to take a 12-hour Greyhound bus ride home from Ithaca, NY (which included a 3-hour layover in Syracuse) to Boston nearly every Friday evening for the team's Saturday home games. The bus would leave Ithaca at 6:00 p.m. on Friday, and arrive outside of Boston at 6:00 a.m. on Saturday. I would work the game that afternoon or evening, sleep at my parent's house, and then take a bus back to Ithaca on Sunday (the return trip did not have as many stops and layovers, so it did not take 12 hours).

Near the end of the spring the Tea Men General Manager told me that if I wanted to keep the opportunity I had to transfer to a school near home, and so I did, to Brandeis University in Waltham, MA.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Following the next season the Tea Men moved from Boston to Jacksonville, Florida, but I was not going to transfer to a college in Jacksonville.

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I didn't know much (actually anything) about NCAA transfer rules, but as I was making my decision about which school to choose, the Brandeis head coach, Mike Coven, told me that he thought I would not have to "redshirt" (sit-out) a season per applicable rules, and that I would be able to play for the school right away. The preseason couldn't have been going better on the field for me, but a week or so in I was gobsmacked by a letter from the Eastern College Athletic Conference, informing me that I did indeed have to sit out pursuant to applicable transfer competition rules. I was devastated.

The original recruiting and then transfer experience was filled with fortune and misfortune (and some missteps), but thematically, the one constant is that I went through a process about which I knew nothing, and would surely have avoided missteps if I had had more information and guidance. I have been fascinated by the recruiting process ever since.

## **Noah's Recruiting Story**

The college soccer recruiting world had become quite different by the time my two sons came of age over the last few of years. As anyone reading this knows, the club soccer scene is dominant (and glutted), and there are many, many college showcases and identification camps from which to choose – the challenge is verifying which of them are actually worth much in terms of helping an aspiring player to be noticed by a college of his/her ambition.

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As a parent, I love my two sons more than anything. As their coach for many years, however, I bent over backwards not to show favoritism to them, a cardinal rule of coaching a team on which one's child plays. And so, as a coach and soccer person (doing my best to separate from the love and resulting natural bias of a parent), I think I assess the playing abilities of my two sons accurately and without inflation.

That said, I believe that my older son Noah is a gifted soccer player, who possesses some playing qualities that are rare for an American player. I often say what separates American male players from European and South American players – cultures which are fully immersed in soccer -- is the “millimeter” and the “millisecond.” The “millimeter” refers to the comparative tiny extra space between a player's foot and the ball he has just trapped. If the ball is consistently trapped a millimeter further away from the foot then that of his opponent over hundreds of touches during the course of the game, then in this sport of possession and attrition, the player and team will be the worse for it. The “millisecond” refers to that comparative tiny extra time period it takes for the player to see the play develop. Not recognizing opportunities quickly enough in a sport where space closes fast similarly puts a player and a team at a disadvantage. Played on and up to a 120-yard long and 80-yard-wide field, with 9 field teammates with whom to keep track within the flow, there is no more complex team sport in the world than soccer. The constant repetition and immersion by players in these other countries in general places our players behind regarding these important playing traits.

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Noah started playing soccer when he was 3, and he took to it and loved it immediately. Though not a perfect player by any means, along with the requisite excellent technical playing and ball skills, Noah possesses some qualities that are rare for an American: namely, advanced field vision and calm and equanimity, especially in high pressure areas like the 18-yard box. High level coaches who have seen Noah have often referred to his play as “more European than American”, a comment with which I proudly agree<sup>4</sup>.

Noah played in the U.S. Development Academy (the “Development Academy or, the “DA”)<sup>5</sup> for his club, the Boston Bolts. His high soccer IQ (allowing him to see several plays ahead as they develop) and passing and scoring ability makes Noah a born offensive center midfielder: a “10” in tactical soccer parlance. The fact that Noah does not have blazing foot speed (one of his playing imperfections) also reinforces that center midfield is his proper placement on the field.

Noah led his Development Academy team in goals and assists from the center mid position during his 8<sup>th</sup> grade year. But inexplicably, Noah was moved by his coach to outside/wing midfield during much of his key

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<sup>4</sup> When I say that Noah is “gifted”, I don’t mean to suggest some notion of “from the hand of God.” I mean, rather, that (along with natural athletic coordination) he began playing at a very young age, and he has worked awfully hard at it, and through that work and desire has developed some unique playing qualities for an American player.

<sup>5</sup> The former elite youth club/player league and structure run by U.S. Soccer, which has now been replaced by MLS Next.

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recruiting years, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grade. A classic wing midfielder jets down the wing and whips balls in for the striker and attacking midfielders. Noah did well out on the wing but did not/could not play that position in that classical style. Rather, he used guile and his skills and brain to beat players and create, as opposed to relying on pure foot speed.

I was concerned for sure when Noah was first played out of position on the wing, but my initial better instinct was to trust that the coach knew what he was doing in the best interests of the team (and, of course, to be a team player). But as time went on and Noah remained out of position, placed where he could not fully show his playing attributes, I became very concerned. Playing Noah on the wing was not helping the team or Noah. And the issue festered much longer than it might have precisely because I sat on the Board of Directors of the club, and I did not want to leverage my power or access in any way – I did not want to be one of “those” people. So, I waited and watched the issue play out.

Having sat back for all of sophomore and for the fall DA season of junior year, I finally made a coffee date with the club Director of Coaching (who at that time was still the head coach of Northeastern University and was therefore not at every Bolts DA teams’ games). When I told the Director of Coaching (the “DOC”) that Noah had been put out on the wing for most of the last 2 years, he put his head in hands, and said (among other things) that that was neither good for the team or Noah. That evening he instructed the team’s coach to put Noah back at center mid, but as we

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were soon to find out, some significant damage had been done.

In February of Noah's junior year, we embarked on a driving trip down the coast to meet with the coaches at Brown, Princeton, Haverford, and Georgetown. The Philadelphia stop on the trip was supposed to include a visit with the University of Pennsylvania, but shortly before we left, the Penn head coach informed Noah that he would not be on the final list of his 6 recruits. That was an omen, as Penn had been the first Division 1 college to make official contact with Noah when it became permissible on September 1<sup>st</sup> of his junior year.

The first stop from our home outside of Boston was in Providence with the then Brown University head coach, Pat Laughlin. Noah had scored a very good goal against the Montreal Impact DA team in 10<sup>th</sup> grade at a game at which the Brown recruiting coach was present<sup>6</sup>, and while NCAA rules prevented Brown from making contact until September 1 of junior year, we had heard from the Bolts DOC following that game that Brown had significant interest in Noah.

Anticipating the inevitable question, I sat in the meeting with Laughlin for the first few minutes, just so I could explain about Noah being played at wing mid, and provide assurance that he had been moved back to center mid. Laughlin led and said to Noah "You've been playing wing midfield." I jumped in and made the explanation, but Laughlin repeated the same

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g0BRmj7IQvI>



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statement. Then he added: “We like you a lot at center mid, but we haven’t seen you enough there. We don’t like you as much at wing mid, and so we’re not going to use one of our (recruiting) slots on you.”

Thud. The negative consequences of having been played out of position during the key recruiting period suddenly hit home like a ton of bricks. All in, Noah was contacted by over 30 schools during the recruiting process. In some cases, he was the top recruit for the program at issue, but for more programs he was not the top choice, and this is significant, because at many schools coaching staffs provide university admission departments with a list of their recruits in order of priority, thereby improving a very desired recruit’s chances at gaining admission. Being played at a position in club soccer that any decent college coach would recognize as not his college position had hurt Noah, and it felt like he was a player who had slid on draft day.

Noah ultimately committed to Harvard University, but he was the 7<sup>th</sup> and last recruit for the program that year. Though his grades and test scores put him above the academic index for Harvard recruited athletes, we were anxious as, this was after all Harvard, and because we knew that it would have been better had he been the first or second recruit on the list. Nevertheless, we had good assurances from the Harvard recruiting coach, and it was that program and school with which Noah proceeded.

And then an unthinkable event occurred. A mere few weeks before early admission decisions were to be

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announced, news broke of a scandal within the Harvard men's soccer program. It was reported that some of the Harvard men's soccer players were sharing amongst themselves a Google document that contained inappropriate comments regarding the Harvard women's soccer players. The Harvard administration responded by shutting the men's season down with two games left on the 2016 fall schedule.

Over the next week we tried to get in touch with the Harvard head assistant coach who had recruited Noah. The coach finally called back on the 8<sup>th</sup> day, apologizing that he had not earlier returned the call, but explaining that it had been a very trying and frenetic period. We were assured by the recruiting coach that no further punishment would be doled out to the soccer program by the Harvard administration. However, it soon became clear that the incident had transformed the men's soccer program from desirable to pariah status (at least for the short term) in the eyes of the administration and the Harvard admissions office. On the day of early admission (December 11, 2016), a player recruited ahead of Noah was rejected, and Noah's admission was deferred.

When a player commits to a D1 school the other D1 schools who recruited the player generally move on for that year, and so if things don't work out with the school to which the player committed, the player is in a type of limbo. Division 3 schools generally complete their recruiting process a bit later, but for a player who is tracking to D1, a D3 school seems to be a

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mismatch on the field (of course, it can very much be a match academically).

When the word got around about what had happened with Noah, the coach of one of the top prep school soccer programs in the country, the Berkshire School in western Massachusetts, contacted me in an effort to have Noah do a post graduate ("PG") year there. A Mexican youth national team player had just de-committed, and the Berkshire coach wanted Noah to fill his spot at the attacking center mid position. The coach's pitch was that after a PG year at Berkshire, Noah would have his pick of Ivy League schools at which to play.

As Noah did not need any academic or physical seasoning (a common reason why athletes do a PG year), this was a most unorthodox consideration for us, but in light of the Harvard debacle, I was for it. However, Noah just wanted to get on with it, and he pivoted after the Harvard disappointment and quickly committed to Brandeis University of the University Athletic Association ("UAA"). Academics is a top priority in our household, and as we viewed it, the Ivy League, New England Small College Athletic Conference (Williams, Amherst, Tufts, etc.) ("NESCAC") and the UAA (University of Chicago, Washington at St. Louis, Brandeis, etc.) were the best academic soccer conferences in the country, but as a D3 soccer program, I thought that Brandeis was not the right fit for Noah.

But it was of course Noah's decision to make, and he chose to go right to school, at Brandeis. Noah had a

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dream first-year in college, starting and helping Brandeis reach the Final Four, and he was named to three All-New England Best XI teams by the New England Soccer Journal magazine during his college playing career. Though it is my belief that Noah was more appropriately suited for an Ivy League school both on and off the field, circumstances intervened, and it was of course Noah's decision as to where he would matriculate and remain throughout his 4 years of college.

## **Josh's Recruiting Story**

My younger son Josh is also an excellent soccer player, with high-level ball skills and a good soccer brain among his most attractive playing qualities. Josh is not quite as gifted a player or as athletic as Noah, so I am tremendously proud of him for how hard he has worked to achieve a long-held dream of becoming a college soccer player.

Also best as a center midfielder, Josh can play quite well out on the wing as well. Josh similarly played his club career with the Boston Bolts, and for its DA team at the U14 level. Josh was not consistently one of the first 12 selected players on the Bolts DA team, and so as I discuss in Chapter 7, the question arose whether the title and status of a DA player was worth it. Josh was only starting the DA rules minimum 25% of the time, and was otherwise not receiving substantial playing time. The advice I usually gave the parents of boys on Noah's DA team in that predicament who asked if the DA moniker was worth it (as discussed at

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length in Chapter 7), was that it was not if their son was not getting playing time.<sup>7</sup>

I decided that I could not give that advice if I did not live that advice. Josh left the DA, and it proved to be the right thing for him both personally and for his playing career. Josh thrived on the Bolts National Premier League team and in high school (which he got to play after leaving the DA). He scored 24 goals his senior year of high school, and was named League Most Valuable Player, All-New England and to The Boston Globe and The Boston Herald newspapers respective All-Scholastic teams. He had emerged from his older brother Noah's shadow and set his own successful path.

Josh had recruiting interest from three colleges which would fit our ideal academic criteria: Emory University and Brandeis University of the UAA, and Bates College of the NESCAC. It was a close decision for Josh between Emory and Brandeis, so close in fact, that on the day he had to decide Josh first picked Brandeis, but then changed his mind and chose Emory (he hadn't informed either coach by the time he changed his mind).

It was a hard choice between a school and a program Josh knew well in Brandeis, and one in Atlanta far away from home; but one which would continue to allow Josh to forge his own path away from Noah's

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<sup>7</sup> I would tell the parents that as a Board member I didn't want them to leave the Club, but that I was a parent first, so I wanted to give honest and caring advice in the parent's and child's best interest.

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shadow. My wife Lori and I were torn as well, but quite proud of Josh for choosing the path less travelled. I was also doubly proud of Josh, for he had received his recruiting offer from Emory out of an Emory summer Identification Camp, something which, as explained in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, is not an easy thing to achieve.

Right after Josh received the Emory offer, the Emory coach went to admissions to do an academic “pre-read” on Josh<sup>8</sup>, and the coach reported that the pre-read came back positive, but with a binary mandate of slight improvement – namely, Josh had to raise his ACT score by one point to gain admission to the school. That was a clear and bright-line task, one which Josh promptly met by raising his ACT score by that point the next time he took the test.

With Noah’s Harvard recruiting experience still fresh (and having painfully learned through it that things don’t always go as expected in such process), we stayed in frequent touch with the Emory head coach, so as to ensure that everything was solid, and that we could not be headed for a similar devastating surprise of the type which had occurred two years earlier. The coach assured me that the path was smooth now that

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<sup>8</sup> A “pre-read” is a standard step in the recruiting/admissions process once a coaching staff has decided that it wants to make the player one of its official recruits, wherein the admissions department signals whether a recruit is likely to gain admission based on his/her academic profile (with or without extra weight being provided to the player being deemed an official recruit at the school at issue).

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Josh had met the mandate of the admissions department.

And then, unbelievably, as they say, lightning struck twice. Two days before Early Decision admissions in December of 2018, the head coach called to say that he had just come from admissions, and though Josh had raised his ACT score as required, admissions had apparently now (two days before the admissions date!!) raised its concern that Josh had not taken enough Advanced Placement courses, and as a result of that, it was unlikely that he would be admitted two days later.

Well, I can tell you that in addition to the emotion of shock and disappointment, I hit the roof with anger, as this matter obviously had not been handled correctly. I did have perspective though (even in the moment), and in this case I want to be clear that I did not place considerable blame on the head coach, who I adjudged to be upright and honest throughout the entire recruiting process. Rather, as the coach was young and new to the school and to the position, I quickly inferred based on my experience that this shocking result was more based on communication breakdowns between, variously, the coach, the athletic department (i.e., the Assistant Athletic Director who was the program's liaison to Admissions) and the admissions office (more on this in the next Section of this Introduction).

As for Josh, he had a devastating first day in the aftermath of the shocking news, but we quickly pivoted back to the Brandeis and Bates coaches, both

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of whom re-confirmed their interest in him. Josh chose Brandeis, applied Early Decision II there, and was accepted without incident.

### **Lessons Learned**

At this point I am sure you are wondering about lessons learned from these two recruiting experiences which I can pass on, to help you best avoid the types of bumps in the road both of my sons experienced. I would be glad to share my thoughts in the hopes that it can help you.

I suppose the overriding lesson from Noah's Harvard recruiting experience is that so-called "Murphy's Law" can occur at the worst times. The fact that news of the fall 2016 Harvard men's soccer team scandal broke mere weeks before early admission decisions were announced simply comes down to stunning bad luck. That is not a lesson about the vagaries of college soccer recruiting in particular, but rather, that "stuff" happens in life, and sometimes at the worst possible time.

That said, there are yet perhaps a few particular impressions I could share from that experience which could be helpful. Since soccer is so much a part of your child's identity and background, it is essential that the school be a fit, the soccer program be a fit, and that there is a good fit with the coaching staff. I liked the Harvard assistant coach who recruited Noah, but I had reservations about the Harvard head coach at the



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time,<sup>9</sup> as in my opinion he seemed aloof in a concerning manner which reminded me of my own head coach at Cornell some 35 years before. But despite that lack of interpersonal connection, it was Harvard after all, so Noah and I kind of minimized the concern. But in fact, in my opinion the head coach's aloofness ultimately rose to the level of callousness, and it both harmed Noah's recruiting experience itself, but also the aftermath of the disappointment that came at early admissions time.

Thus, even if your child is lucky enough to be recruited by their dream school, still make sure that there is a real connection on a personal level with the coaching staff and that they feel that they can trust the coaches. It does not matter whether it's Division 1 or 3, the emotional and temporal demands of being a college athlete are enormous, and it is more than likely that the head soccer coach will be one of the (if not the single most) most prominent and overarching figures in your child's 4 years of college. If the "fit" and the connection between your child and the head coach is not a good one, it will likely significantly impact (negatively) your child's college experience.

Though I thought I knew about all the traps for the unwary in college soccer recruiting by the time my younger son Josh went through the experience in 2018, I found that in fact I did not. I learned a very

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<sup>9</sup> That head coach has since left the Harvard program; so to be clear, I am not referring to the current Harvard head coach, who was appointed in 2020.

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important specific lesson from the Emory ordeal, which will hopefully help your child's recruiting path.

As said earlier in this Introduction, I put relatively little of the blame on the Emory head coach and placed most of it on the Athletic Department and the Admissions Department. Why? The Emory head coach was new to the school<sup>10</sup>, and he simply had not had enough experience working with the Admissions Department, and thus, the lines of communication had not been properly developed and established, such that he fully understood the significance of the messaging coming from the Admissions Department. That's where the Athletic Department should have come in, and the Assistant Athletic Director who was the liaison to the Admissions Department should have been more involved so that the initial academic read messaging from Admissions could not have been misinterpreted in any manner.

After the head coach first went to Admissions in July for the early academic read on Josh, the feedback he relayed was merely the binary need for Josh to raise his ACT score by a point. But a reasonable inference must be that to the extent that Admissions had a concern about the number of AP classes, surely it messaged that concern in some manner at the time. It would be diabolical for the Admissions Department to

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<sup>10</sup> He had been hired the year before as an assistant coach and was thrust into the role of interim head coach on the eve of the season, as the then current head coach took an Athletic Director position elsewhere. He brought Emory to the NCAA Tournament final eight that season, and off that debut, had been recently named official head coach.

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hold off raising such a concern until merely two days before early admissions in December; and as angry as I was at the time, I still had to rationally conclude that there was no way that any such scenario had occurred. Rather, I logically concluded that there was a communications breakdown, and the new head coach's nascent relationship with the Admissions Department personnel had to explain this glaring error. That's where I believe the Assistant Athletic Director who was that department's liaison for the soccer program to admissions should have done a better job of ensuring that the dialogue and messaging between the coach and the admissions department was clear.

Don't get me wrong; I was plenty angry, just not so much at the coach, and more at the administration. I waited until we had quickly pivoted to Brandeis and everything was on track for Josh there (as I didn't want to look like I was looking for any relief), and then wrote to the Emory President, the Athletic Director and the Director of Admissions. I told them that we had already moved on to another school, but that they needed to look at their internal communication policies, so that this would not happen so late to another recruit. I heard back from the Athletic Director with an apology and statement of commitment to do better, but time will tell.

Here is the lesson from the Emory fiasco: when doing due diligence on the coach, look into how long he/she has been at the school. If a good number of years, then you can reasonably conclude that the bumps and grooves between the coach and the admissions people

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have been worked out and established (but still confirm such). Ask the coach specifically about the following: a) communication directly with Admissions, and the coach's confidence in that; b) how involved is the Assistant AD responsible for the soccer program who liaises with the Admissions Department; and c) whether a recruit who has ever received a positive initial read (i.e., the coach's understanding of such) has ultimately not been admitted (and if so, the circumstances of each such case).

I learned that lesson instantly when the Emory head coach contacted us with the shocking news a mere 2 days before Early Admissions; and so when we went back to the Brandeis head coach Gabe Margolis, the second question we asked (the first of course being whether he was still interested in Josh) was about Gabe's communication experience with the Admissions Department. Gabe quickly assured us that between his head coach and assistant coach positions, he had been at Brandeis for 13 years, and that his relationship with the Admissions Department was established and strong. He repeated that Josh's pre-read had been positive, and that in his experience there should be no problems come Early Admissions II time a few weeks later; and thankfully, that's the way it went.

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## Get on the Radar of College Coaches

**A**s parents, we have all been there: At the first beginnings of the club soccer journey (when our kids may be as young as 9 or 10) we are encouraged by a charismatic and convincing DOC that “the Club” is the best path to gaining entrance to the college of choice, or even to a playing scholarship from the dream school. If you are reading this book, you know that the club soccer path is a long and winding one, with many ups and downs. One thing is clear, while in today’s world playing club soccer may in most cases be necessary to be recruited, playing for the club alone won’t guarantee that your child will be recruited.

Almost all youth soccer clubs play in “Showcases” but they have varying value. Some exploration of showcases is the subject of Chapter 6, but as a topline point, the likelihood that the recruiting coach of the school of your child’s dreams will attend showcase events involving your club is a measure of several factors, including the reputation of the showcase and the practical reality of the college soccer program’s travel budget. As to this last point, it is important to keep in mind that no college soccer coach has the resources of, for instance, John Calipari (University of Kentucky basketball coach), who, when hearing about a player of interest out of state can just take a chartered plane and show up to that player’s high school game. Separate and apart from showcases, there is no guarantee that a recruiting coach from your dream school(s) will appear at your club’s games with any frequency, if at all. Since as a practical matter virtually no coaches will appear at your child’s Fall regular season games as a result of the fact that they are coaching their own college games, that limits possible appearances (other than tournaments and showcases) to their Spring scheduled games.

As soccer is a so-called “non-revenue” college sport<sup>11</sup>, the recruiting resources of soccer programs are limited indeed. Given the modest recruiting travel

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<sup>11</sup> In contrast with the revenue sports football and basketball that generate large sums of money for universities, which reward such programs with vast resources, including large coaching staffs and recruiting budgets, and enjoy an ample number of athletic scholarships.

budgets, recruiting coaches must pick and choose as to which tournaments, showcases, club games and players it can afford to travel to and see in person. There are a small percentage of youth soccer players who through their playing exploits, exposure and/or reputation land on the radar of a number of coaches at a relatively early stage and as a result are proactively recruited, but the vast majority of players who will end up becoming college soccer players have to engage in proactive efforts in order to attract the interest of their desired college(s). This is especially so given the modest recruiting budgets of college soccer programs as noted above.

Recommended proactive efforts to attract a program's attention involve a combination of a) writing to the coaches (the recruiting coach, as well as the head coach if his/her email is available (as it is not in all cases)) to initiate a dialogue and to get on the radar of the coaching staff; b) providing a playing and academic resume; and c) submitting a playing highlights video.

It is important that this effort is done in a comprehensive (including each of the three elements above) and professional manner, for the recruiting coach is deluged with emails and videos on a daily basis, and your child wants theirs to be noteworthy. Yet, for the same reason (as theirs ought not to be burdensome), their submissions should be concise -- that means emails and videos of an appropriately concise length -- lest the coach becomes turned off and does not review all of your materials (potentially

missing something you and your child deem to be important).

## **Introductory Email**

Your child's introductory email should contain the following elements:

- A description of why they are interested in and enthusiastic about the school and the program.
- Their academic background, and why they would be a good candidate for admission to the college.
- A brief description of their playing background (including position(s) and club and school for whom they play) to catch the initial interest of the coach (a more in-depth description will be contained in the accompanying playing resume);
- Reference to the playing and academic resume attached to the email.
- Reference to the link to their highlight video (ideally to youtube.com) included in the email.
- Their contact information.
- An expression of thanks for taking the time to review the submitted materials, and a restatement of their interest in the school and the soccer program.

## **Playing and Academic Resume**

Your child's playing and academic resume should contain the following elements:

- In the top area: a) their name; b) their current club; c) their age group; d) their date of birth; e) a picture (if possible, but not necessary); f) their height and weight; g) their contact information



(email and phone number); and g) their nationality and country of which they are a citizen.

- Their academic information should include: a) their high school; b) their graduation year/class; c) their grade point average (GPA); and d) their SAT and/or ACT score (if they do not have one yet, note that);
- Your child's playing information should include: a) their playing position(s); and b) a year-by-year (e.g., 2022-23) listing of:
  - Club(s) they have played for.
  - Team within such club(s).
  - High school they play for (if any).
  - Honors/significant playing accomplishments. These may include, for instance: a) participation in U.S. National Training Centers; b) selection for U.S. Club Soccer ID2 Camps; c) any international training opportunities (of some challenge and pedigree – not just something anyone can pay for); d) selections to college ID Camp All-Star teams; e) selection to any combine or showcase Best XI's or All-Star teams; and/or f) any individual regional or national player ranking (such as by Top Drawer Soccer).
  - Playing statistics (i.e., goals, assists, shutouts, etc.).
  - Significant (one that a college coach would recognize as such) team championships.

## **Highlight Video**

Your child's playing highlight video is an essential component of their submission to college coaches, and the hope that they land on their list of possible prospects. How one ensures that valuable playing highlights are captured, and how one produces and organizes the video is the subject of the following chapter.