



Pro Skills Basketball's  
★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
ULTIMATE GUIDE TO  
**COLLEGE  
BASKETBALL  
RECRUITING**



BY: BRENDAN WINTERS

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
About Pro Skills Basketball	4
10 Steps to Playing College Basketball	5
<b>GENERAL INFO ON RECRUITMENT IN COLLEGE BASKETBALL</b>	<b>18</b>
About Division I, II & III	18
Recruiting Rules	21
College Coaches Perspective	21
Be Proactive	24
<b>PLAYING DIVISION I, II &amp; III</b>	<b>25</b>
The Truth About DI	25
The Truth About DII	30
The Truth About DIII	33
<b>UNDERSTANDING NCAA RULES</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>MORE ABOUT THE RECRUITING PROCESS</b>	<b>37</b>
AAU	
• Role of High School & AAU Together	37
• Unfortunate Problems with AAU	37
• Benefits of AAU	39
• Finding the Right Team	44
Evaluation	52
• Interview with Paul Biancardi	57
• 5 Things Colleges Coaches Look For	57
• Exposure Camps	60
• Recruiting Services	63
• Highlight Videos	67
• Emailing College Coaches	69
• How to Use Social Media	72
Choosing a School	74
• Bigger v. Better	74
• 3 Tips for Parents & Players	77
• Alternative Options: Prep School and Junior College	79
<b>ABOUT THE AUTHORS</b>	<b>83</b>
Brendan Winters	83
Logan Kosmalski	85 <sub>2</sub>

# INTRODUCTION

My name is Brendan Winters, and I'm a former Division I basketball player at Davidson College and professional European player. In 2009, my Davidson teammate, Logan Kosmalski, and I started Pro Skills Basketball, which at the time was simply just a summer basketball camp in the Charlotte, NC area for kids. We really enjoyed the camp and coaching youth basketball, so when we were ready to retire from playing professionally in about 2011, we decided to pursue Pro Skills full-time.

We soon added "club" or "AAU" teams to our offerings, and soon started up 10th and 11th grade "showcase" teams in order to help our older, better players get recruited to play in college, just like Logan and I were. Our teams ended up being very successful, and as of the writing of this eBook, we have over 50 players playing at the Division I, II, III and Junior College levels.

As we helped these players navigate the college basketball recruiting process, we naturally had to answer all of the questions from parents and players about the actual recruiting process, and these became the most frequent questions we were asked. After dealing with the same issues and answering the same questions over and over, we decided to start writing blog posts about all of the subjects involved in college basketball recruiting so that we could help as many parents and players as possible navigate the murky waters.

The topic really seems to confuse and frustrate parents and players, and for good reason ... it's legitimately confusing! There are just so many variables in the equation from skill/talent level of the player to NCAA on and off-court rules to college coach evaluations to strategies for parents and players to use. Moreover, college basketball recruiting is different than college football and college baseball and all of the other college sports, so just because a parent might know how recruiting works in another sport doesn't mean it works the same way in basketball.

So, this eBook is simply a compilation of most of the blog posts we've written about college basketball recruiting and ordered in a more reader-friendly format, rather than just a collection of random blog posts. We really hope that you find this eBook helpful and informative, and if there's anything we can do to help further, please let us know by going to our website at [www.ProSkillsBasketball.com](http://www.ProSkillsBasketball.com) and contacting us!



# ABOUT PRO SKILLS BASKETBALL

**At Pro Skills Basketball, our mission is to empower young athletes through a culture of tenacious self-improvement and the genuine desire to motivate players and improve kids' lives.**

Pro Skills Basketball was founded by Logan Kosmalski and Brendan Winters, two former Davidson College Wildcat players, in 2009 while the duo was playing professionally together in Germany.



The organization's name was chosen because both Logan and Brendan wanted to teach kids the skills that they had learned throughout their careers as they ascended to the professional ranks.

That summer, Pro Skills Basketball began as a week long camp in Lake Norman, NC and was directed by Logan and Brendan while they were home during their pro basketball off-season. From there, it grew over the next few summer off-seasons to include 4 weeks of summer camp. When the pair decided to retire from professional basketball in 2011, Logan and Brendan chose to pursue Pro Skills Basketball full-time and expand it from a simple camp to a full-service youth basketball organization that includes training, clinics, camps, and AAU teams.

Since then, the organization has exploded into other cities throughout the country, starting with Ross Schraeder in Denver, CO in 2013, and has become one of the national leaders in youth basketball development. In 2017, Pro Skills officially opened up in China.

PSB not only teaches kids on the court, but also teaches life lessons off the court as well through their acronym F.O.C.U.S., which stands for Fun, Overcome, Compete, Unity, and Sacrifice. Pro Skills Basketball's vision is to positively impact the youth basketball culture around the world!

A black and white photograph of a basketball player in mid-air, shooting a ball into a hoop. The player is positioned in the lower center of the frame, looking upwards. The basketball hoop and backboard are visible at the top of the image. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

# 10 STEPS TO PLAYING COLLEGE BASKETBALL

The odds of a high school basketball player making it to the “next level” to play college basketball is slim, regardless of division. In fact, only 3.4% of high school players go on to play college basketball. Of those college players who aspire to go on and play professional ball after graduation, only 1.2% will ultimately be drafted to play in the NBA.

In total, that means then that only 0.03% of high school basketball players will ever make it to the NBA. The numbers are truly staggering, and they are even more surprising when you consider the number of scholarships that are available as compared to the number of high school basketball players who hope to play in college.

Before we dive too much deeper into the statistics, though, it’s important that we take a closer look at how high school players make it into college basketball. Do you know what it takes to be able to play on a DI, DII, or DIII team? Your first step is to gain a thorough understanding of how it all works.

# MEN'S BASKETBALL FACTS



541,054 high school players

- 3.4% of high school players will play in college.
- 1.2% of college players will be drafted into the NBA.

Having played basketball at the collegiate level myself and having coached many players that have gone on to play college basketball, I have gained an incredible amount of insight into the process. So, I've taken that knowledge and created a checklist on how to play basketball in college.

Even with this checklist, however, there is no guarantee that a player will go on to play basketball in college. There are simply too many different factors that can affect your chances, and it's certainly not an easy process, but the list can be useful as a guide to aspiring players and their parents.

This checklist follows a logical order, and each item is dependent on the last. That is, if you can't mark an item off with confidence, then in my opinion, it greatly decreases your chances of playing basketball in college.

This is especially true for the first 7 items on the list.

# 01

## MUST LOVE THE GAME OF BASKETBALL

This may seem obvious, but it's clear that not all players love the game. Oftentimes, players love the attention they receive or the awards they get, or they play because it makes their parents happy. At the end of the day, however, players who play for any reason other than a love of the game typically don't last at the college level.

Why? Because college basketball is hard! It's a full-time job! College basketball players typically miss the majority of school breaks, such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Spring Break. There is also much more pressure in college basketball.

Schools want to win games, and coaches' jobs actually depend on that happening. Practices are intense, often 3-hour-long "slugfests". Players must earn playing time, and they may sit the bench the entire game if they don't perform. Playing time will not be "given". So, if a player doesn't love the game, how will they make it through the roadblocks that are sure to come?

On the flip side, if a player loves the game, it shows. They practice, play, and watch basketball all the time. Of course, practicing and playing basketball will obviously help players (and more on that later), but watching basketball can really help young players, as well. Watching other high school games, as well as college and professional games can help players develop their "basketball IQ". It improves their general understanding and awareness of how the game should be played from a team and individual standpoint.

# 02

## MUST HAVE A SERIOUS WORK ETHIC

Players must have an above-average work ethic in order to develop the skills necessary to play at the collegiate level. Sacrifices will have to be made in order to get in the gym to work on your game. You'll miss parties and other social fun with your friends. You may have to delay your family vacation. It's a lot to give up, but these are all things that players with a serious basketball work ethic don't mind. They are willing to pay the price and want to be in the gym all day, every day.

## MUST HAVE ADVANCED SKILLS

# 03

To be blunt, if a player is not on his or her varsity high school team then there is no reason to be concerned about playing college basketball. To take it one step further, the player should be one of the best, if not the best, on their high school varsity teams.

How does one make the varsity high school team? It's simple. They must develop the necessary basketball skills over the course of several years of practice. This may include training, clinics, camps, and/or playing AAU. Regardless, they must develop their skills to such a degree that they are a standout on the varsity high school team. If a player is not on the varsity high school team, stop reading here, and get in the gym to work on those skills!



# 04

## MUST HAVE PHYSICAL TOOLS

Not all players are built like Lebron James, Dwight Howard, or Anthony Davis, and that's okay. However, all players must have certain physical tools that enable them to play basketball in college, unless they have an outstanding attribute in another area (for example, a very short player with blazing speed). Some of the physical tools include:

- **Height** – It's commonly understood that basketball is a sport that is better suited to those of a taller stature. The taller, the better, in most cases. Again, a short basketball player certainly can defy those odds. Players like Mugsey Bogues or Spudd Webb are excellent examples of this, but they made up for it in other areas. Mugsey Bogues was short, but he compensated with strength and speed!
- **Coordination** – Simply put, players need to be able to pass and catch, dribble, shoot, and so on. They need to be able to do that, all while running, jumping, sliding, and more.
- **Athleticism** – College players need to be decently athletic. Again, players don't need to have Russell Westbrook athleticism, but they should be able to jump, slide, and run at a reasonable level.
- **Endurance** – Out of shape, overweight players who can only run up and down the floor a few times will never make it, no matter how talented a player may be otherwise.

I was not the tallest, most coordinated, most athletic, or the player with the greatest endurance, but my performance was average or above average in most of those areas, which gave me a better chance of playing basketball in college. If you believe that you need to improve upon your athletic abilities, there is a wealth of online resources that will help.



## 05

## MUST HAVE GOOD GRADES

Although this has been placed at #5 on this list, it is still one of the most important aspects of playing college basketball. The better a player's grades are, the better chance they have to play college basketball at some level. The NCAA even has a minimum grade point average that players are expected to meet, or they won't be allowed to play.

Another key point to consider is that having outstanding grades will open doors to other college basketball options, such as many DIII or Ivy League schools, that wouldn't be open to player with average or below average grades. If you want the best chance of playing basketball in college, earn excellent grades.

## 06 MUST BE REALISTIC

Not all players can play at colleges like North Carolina, Kentucky, Duke, Kansas, and so on. In fact, not all players can play Division I basketball at all. Division II and III are excellent options for many players, while some players may even need to attend junior college first. It may also be good to consider a Prep School to get some extra basketball attention and possibly an extra year of high school. I did that, and it worked wonders. Regardless of the route taken, though, the fact is that players and parents must be realistic about their playing level.

In my opinion, this is one of the areas that most players and parents struggle with; they are simply not realistic. So, how does a player or parent know if they are being realistic? Well, it's a matter of comparison, and the answer will be unique to every player. For instance, if a player wants to play at Duke, but isn't considered one of the top 25-50 players nationally in his or her class, the chances of that player playing at Duke are slim to none. This is an example of an unrealistic expectation.

If a player thinks he or she is a Division I player, but isn't being "recruited" (phone calls, emails, letters, and other communications) by any DI schools, then that player probably does not have realistic expectations. In the words of my good friend and ESPN Recruiting Analyst, Paul Biancardi, "the market sorts players out." By that he means that, generally speaking, a player will get recruited heavily by schools on the level that he or she is capable of playing, whether that's DI, II, III, or JUCO. Now, I'm not telling players not to dream and have goals, but they also need to be realistic.

**We have now established up to this point that a potential college player loves basketball, has a great work ethic, and some advanced skills. They are also playing on their high school varsity team, have some physical tools, good grades, and have a realistic perspective on their basketball skills. Now that a player meets these requirements, the next 4 items are steps that a player can take to improve their chances of playing college basketball.**

## **07** FIND THE RIGHT AAU TEAM

AAU has gotten a bad rap for various reasons, but it's also an excellent tool for players, as certain tournaments in the spring and the summer allow college coaches to come watch potential recruits in a short period of time and in one location.

These "showcase" tournaments are called NCAA certified events, and there are usually 2 weekends in April and 3 weekends in July dedicated to this "recruiting period". Because of this, finding and playing on the right AAU team is crucial for players who hope to play in college.

There is a whole list of things to look at when it comes to finding the right AAU team, but the two main concerns for the purposes of playing basketball in college would be "fit" and "tournament selection".



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FINDING AND PLAYING ON THE RIGHT AAU TEAM IS CRUCIAL FOR PLAYERS WHO HOPE TO PLAY IN COLLEGE.

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Does a player fit into what the AAU team does? For instance, if a player is a superior athlete and is good in transition, then he or she may be suited for a team that gets up and down the floor quickly and pushes the pace. If a player is more of a half court player that needs to run through an offense, a slower, more deliberate offensive/defensive team may be better.

As for tournament selection, there is only one thing to consider: does the team play in “showcase tournaments” where college coaches can come watch?

We'll talk more about AAU and college coach evaluations in later chapters.

# 08

## ATTEND ELITE AND/OR SHOWCASE CAMPS

If a player has some particular colleges in mind, then it's oftentimes a worthwhile investment to attend that specific college's "elite" camp. A lot of their recruits come and play for a few days. Not all schools do this, but most do some version of an "elite" camp, and players can typically find this information on that college's basketball team website.

For example, Yale has an elite camp during which they look at players, but also many DIII coaches attend as most of the players at Yale elite camp have very good grades, and obviously not all can play at Yale or even play Division I.

"Showcase" camps, on the other hand, are typically privately run by organizations not affiliated with any particular college. In fact, much like AAU, the showcase camp space has been over-run and is often times full of people that make all sorts of claims and promises, but in reality, have no real pull and/or can't follow through.

Most will claim that they can get kids Division I scholarships and such, but most of the time that is simply untrue. There are some good showcase camps out there, however. Players and parents just need to do the proper research beforehand. (Also note: DI coaches are not allowed to attend showcase camps unless they are during one of the aforementioned NCAA live periods.)

To me, the main benefit of showcase camps is they are potentially good opportunities to compete with and against other players of similar ability and who also have dreams of also playing college basketball.

This topic will be covered in greater detail later on in this book.

## 09

## CREATE A BASKETBALL HIGHLIGHT VIDEO

No, I do NOT mean a “mixtape” with bad hip hop background music. I mean a legitimate, at least semi-professional looking video with highlights and a half game or full game. These two parts can be on the same video or on a separate one, but coaches need to see both.

Often times, a basketball highlight video is the first introduction a college coach has to a player. If you are lucky, this can become a gateway for becoming a future recruit. The highlights are put on the video for a college coach to determine a player’s strengths while the half or full game allows the coach to get a much better feel for the player’s overall game, including their weaknesses. And yes, all players have weaknesses!

If a player or parent is willing to spend the time, knows what they are doing, a basketball highlight video can be put together on services like Krossover and Hudl.

Later on, I'll go into greater detail on how exactly to create a highlight tape.

# 10

## CREATE A LIST OF COLLEGES AND EMAIL THEM

The final step in the checklist to increase a player's chances of playing basketball in college is to create a list of REALISTIC college teams that you could potentially play for, and get the coaches email addresses. Feel free to add in a few "dream" schools as well, but just understand them for what they are - DREAM schools.

There are a couple ways to go about getting the college coaches emails, but the best (and free way) is to simply Google "[name of college] staff directory" or "[name of college] athletic staff directory" or "[name of college] [men's or women's] basketball staff directory". Most coaches emails can be found this way, but it can be much harder to find the emails of coaches at major DI programs, such as Duke, Kentucky, UNC, Kansas, etc.

Once a player has the list of schools and corresponding emails, that player should create a personalized email for each particular college's coaching staff and send them an email.

Again, we'll cover this topic in greater detail in a later chapter.



To repeat myself, none of these 10 checklist items guarantees that a player will have the opportunity to play college basketball, but they will certainly increase a player's chances of playing at the next level. Remember, while playing basketball in college certainly seems glamorous and exciting, which it can be at times, it's also a very serious, pressure-packed, full-time job.

If a player does not LOVE the game, have a serious work ethic, the minimum physical tools, advanced skills, and a realistic mind set, playing basketball in college is going to be a very difficult goal to achieve. But if a player has all those requirements, and then finds the right AAU team, possibly attends an elite or showcase camp, creates a legitimate basketball recruiting video, and emails coaches at realistic level schools, then that player will put him or herself in a much better position to potentially play basketball in college!

# GENERAL INFO ON RECRUITMENT

## IN COLLEGE BASKETBALL

In this ultimate college basketball recruiting guide, it is my goal to answer many of the basic questions and misunderstandings when it comes to college basketball recruiting. Let's start by first answering the question, what exactly does recruiting even mean? Well, the NCAA says:

*"Recruiting happens when a college employee or representative invites a high school student-athlete to play sports for their college. Recruiting can occur in many ways, such as face-to-face contact, phone calls or text messaging, through mailed or emailed material or through social media."*

This quote is taken directly from a NCAA website page dedicated specifically to recruiting. I would recommend to start there as it covers definitions of recruiting terms, campus visits, national letters of intent, and the recruiting calendars.

## ABOUT DIVISION I, II, & III

Now let's move on to talking about DI, II, and III and the differences between them from a basketball standpoint. If you want to read about the differences from an athletic program and school standpoint, you can find that in the pages that follow.

## DIVISION I BASKETBALL

Obviously, the majority of players and parents dream of playing Division I college basketball at schools like Duke or North Carolina or Kentucky or UCLA or some big-time program like that, but for the vast majority of players that's just not realistic, and to go even further, it may not even be realistic to play at the Division I level.

Typically, Division I schools are broken up into "low-major", "mid-major", and "high-major". There's a lot of debate as to what categories certain schools fit into, but for argument's sake, you can think about schools in, to use a football term, one of the "power 5 conferences" of ACC, SEC, Big 12, Big 10, and Pac 12 as high-major. For basketball, you can probably add in the AAC conference schools as well, and perhaps 1-2 others.

Mid-major schools are where it really gets murky, but you could think of some really good conferences, like the A-10, WCC, Missouri Valley, etc.

However, there are definitely random teams, like Gonzaga, in mid-major conferences that are or should be considered high-major schools due to past and current success.

Low-major may be even harder to define as it may be an entire conference, but could also just be specific teams. For example, when I was playing college basketball at Davidson College, we played in what was probably considered a low-major conference, the Southern Conference, but we were considered a mid-major team along with a couple other teams in that conference.

The point is, the whole thing is a bit murky, but there are definitely some sort of "levels" to Division I schools that often times parents are not aware of. The good thing, however, is that all DI schools offer full basketball scholarships with the exception of Ivy League schools. So the main attraction of a DI school is the opportunity to go to college for free, which is amazing if you're good enough to earn a college basketball scholarship. You do however still have to be academically eligible, which means having the right mix of high school classes, GPA, and test scores.

## DIVISION II BASKETBALL

Moving on, Division II college basketball is the next step "down" from Division I, but it is still a great quality of basketball. In fact, DII teams often beat DI teams when they play in pre-season games, so in some cases, it may not even actually be a step down from DI in terms of actual play ... it's just the perception!

For instance, we have a DII school here in Charlotte, NC where I live called Queens University, and they are a great DII basketball program. Their roster has quite a few DI transfers, and earlier this season, they beat DI VCU in a pre-season game. However, I see kids and parents who wouldn't even sniff the court playing for Queens, thinking they are too good for them!

DII colleges don't offer as many full scholarships as DI, but they still have quite a few scholarships to give. Often times, players are on partial scholarships at DII schools.

Also, in general, Division II schools are not quite as good academically as most Division III schools and many Division I schools. Often times, DII players do not quite qualify academically to play DI or DIII college basketball. The DII academic requirements are a bit lower at DII schools. For instance, at a DI school, you must have a 2.3 GPA coming out of high school whereas you only need a 2.0 GPA to be eligible for DII among other things.

## DIVISION III BASKETBALL

Lastly, Division III college basketball typically does not offer any athletic scholarships and does not lower their entrance standards for basketball players.

DIII basketball is, again, a very high level of basketball and, in many cases, filled with kids who just weren't quite good enough to be DI players, but had outstanding grades and chose to attend a high academic institution.

Regardless of DI, II, III, playing college basketball is not an easy thing to do and each level has its positives and negatives. The main issue I see with kids and parents is they are way too quick to blow off DII and DIII because they think they're "too good" for that level when in reality they might not be good enough yet to even play at the DII or DIII levels.

My advice to kids and parents is to take some time and do some research and go watch some practices and games of DII and DIII teams before making assumptions. In most cases, they're surprised to see the quality of players and teams at that level.



## COLLEGE BASKETBALL RECRUITING RULES

There are way too many rules in college basketball recruiting to list out in this guide!

There are rules for when college coaches can start making phone calls, sending mail, texts, etc. to young basketball players. Rules on what dates college coaches are allowed to watch players in live action, rules when players can visit a college campus and what interactions they can have with coaches, rules on the grades and test scores players need to have to qualify, and on and on.

Moreover, the rules are often different depending on if it's Division I, Division II, or Division III!

Instead of getting into all of that here, I would, again, recommend that you go to the [NCAA webpage](#) on recruiting and there you'll find great links and information on all of the rules for college basketball recruiting.

## FROM A COLLEGE COACH'S PERSPECTIVE

One of the best exercises players and parents can do is put themselves in the shoes of a college coach so to speak, so let's look at college basketball recruiting from that perspective. On the following pages, we'll take a look at all of the factor coaches consider when they're looking at potential recruits.

## **#1 Do You Deserve a Basketball Scholarship?**

Coaching at the college level is full of pressure, and it's the job of the coach to win games. If they don't win games, they will get fired, so a coach's job literally depends on the play of 17-22 year old kids. If they don't recruit good players that fit their system, they lose games, get fired, and now have to look for another way to take care of their families, so they don't just give out scholarships to any player or parent who simply thinks they deserve one.

It doesn't matter what you or your parents think ... it matters what college coaches think. College basketball coaches treat their athletic scholarships like gold and are looking for the absolute best players possible. If you're good enough, they will recruit you.

## **#2 Limited Basketball Scholarships Available**

Speaking of looking for players to recruit, many times players and parents think they are pretty good because they are one of the best players, if not the best, at their high school or in their town/city. Well, that's great, but it's a BIG world out there.

College basketball coaches are not only looking throughout the US for players but looking internationally as well. There's a lot more players in the world than there are scholarships available.

## **#3 Do You Fit the College Basketball Program?**

One thing that parents and players often don't take into account is "fit". College coaches need to recruit certain positions every year. They don't need to take a point guard every single year or they'd have a small team full of point guards. In the same way, they don't need centers or shooting guards every year.

Also, some coaches like to recruit athletes while some prefer kids that can shoot and so on. The top teams (high-major DI) are able to recruit kids with elite size, athleticism, and skill, but the fact of the matter is there's only a very limited number of those players. Hence, the label "elite".

From year to year, the needs of the coaching staff change, and sometimes you're just not going to be the right fit for that particular year or that particular program/coach.

## #4 No Excuses

Enough with the excuses! Parents and players sometimes have too many excuses as to why they aren't getting recruited. "My high school coach sucks." "My AAU team stinks." "I'm too short." "My teammate is taking all the shots." And on and on and on. Enough!

College coaches don't care if you go to a city school, country school, play for a big AAU team or small team, are 5'8" or 6'10" ... as long as you can play basketball at a high level and potentially help them win, that's what matters! If you can play, you can play!

Players are rarely ever "overlooked", especially in today's world of social media. If you can play at that level, coaches will recruit you no matter what, plain and simple. If you're not being recruited, 98% of the time it means you are just not good enough ... at least not yet.

## #5 What Exactly Are Coaches Looking For?

Want to know what college basketball coaches look for in recruits?

Well then continue reading on as I cover all these topics in much greater detail in the coming pages, including interviews with college coaches and scouts!

# THE BASKETBALL RECRUITING PROCESS

A lot of parents and players mistakenly think that college basketball recruiting starts in middle school, so they spend all sorts of time and money on "showcase" camps and tournaments and worry about rankings. To a very select group of elite level players - I'm talking the top 10-20 kids in each class - yes, recruiting may start in 8th grade. The Duke's and Kentucky's of the world may start reaching out to a few players.

For most players, however, Division I recruiting doesn't start until 10th grade at the earliest, and more likely, not until 11th grade. For DII and DIII, they wait even longer until 11th and 12th grade because they typically are cherry-picking the kids who don't end up going Division I.

Often times, DII and DIII kids won't commit or sign with a college until the spring of their senior year!

Again, think about it from a college coaches perspective. College coaches have to coach their teams AND recruit players for future teams. They are essentially coaches and general managers. It's an extremely difficult and time-consuming job, so they don't have the time to watch and recruit middle schoolers when they have to make sure next years recruits are locked up (current seniors).

And once that is done, they have to start recruiting for the following year (current juniors). Then if they have time, they may start recruiting for the class after that (current sophomores), but often times, they just don't have the time or energy to do that, so how/why in the heck are they going to recruit 7th, 8th, and 9th graders?!?!?

## BE PROACTIVE

The last thought I'll leave you with is that parents and players should be proactive in the recruiting process.

### Step 1

This means you should talk with your high school and AAU coaches and come up with a realistic list of schools that the player might be able to and would want to play for. Tip: Your list should probably not include Duke, UNC, Kentucky, Arizona, etc.

### Step 2

Then, as we've talked about, you should email those schools introducing yourself, letting the schools know about your interest, and provide a highlight tape and game film links for the coaches to evaluate. Plenty more to come on this subject!

## WRAPPING UP

College basketball recruiting is a confusing subject with a lot of different variables. Players and parents need to do their research before making assumptions.

Don't get fooled into spending a lot of money and time on the wrong things, such as showcases and rankings and traveling the country, especially at early age. Spend time and money developing skills through training, strength conditioning, and enhancing athleticism, as well as with a good AAU team, because at the end of the day, skill is KING, so if a player is truly good enough, he or she will get recruited no matter what. Continue reading for more details on all of these topics!



# PLAYING DIVISIONS I, II & III

## THE TRUTH ABOUT PLAYING DIVISION I BASKETBALL

Do you think you have what it takes to play Division I College Basketball?

Growing up, I remember turning on ESPN and tuning into Duke v. North Carolina or Kentucky v. Louisville or UConn v. Syracuse or UCLA v. Arizona and thinking, “now, that’s what I want to do and where I want to be.”

And I’m sure this is the same experience that many kids around the nation are still having today as well. They see the bright lights, masses of fans, sweet uniforms and shoes, all the publicity, and everything else that goes along with big time DI college basketball, and think they want that.

However, the truth is, 99.99% of players will not reach this level, and even if they do, it’s not all bright lights and amazingness as seen on TV. No matter what level of DI college basketball, whether low-major, mid-major, or high-major, there are certain truths that many players and parents typically don’t know.

I was lucky enough to have played DI at Davidson College from 2002-06 (pre-Steph Curry FYI), and although I felt prepared to play there, if I had known the real truth about playing DI college basketball, I would have been even better prepared.

As already established, many players and parents think they are “too good” to play at the DII and/or DIII levels, which in most instances is not the truth.

Division II and Division III college basketball is actually played a very high level and is a great fit for many aspiring college basketball players, but you can read more about it in those previous blog posts if you want.

However, many kids refuse to give DII and DIII a chance because they want to play DI college basketball. And to be clear, “want” is the key word here.

Just because a player wants to play does not necessarily mean the player is actually good enough or that the player knows and/or understands what it takes to get to the DI level and what is required once at that level. In fact, most players and parents don't know the truth about DI basketball.

Well, as a former Division I college basketball player, I'm here to open some eyes. In my opinion, there are 4 main truths that players and parents should know about playing DI college basketball.

### 1. It Teaches the True Meaning of Hard Work

Most high school players think they play or work hard. I know I did, but it wasn't until I got to Davidson that I found out that the intensity with which players must work is on a whole other level.

Coaches require 100% effort all the time, and if a player is not giving MAX effort, he or she will quickly be corrected (a.k.a. yelled at).

You cannot hide or coast at this level!

Players are too good, so you'll be exposed if you try. This is the #1 thing I learned my first day on campus, and this is the number one thing I hear from former and current DI players...the work is some of the most intense they've ever done.

## **2. It's a Full-Time Job**

This sort of ties into number one, but this has to do specifically with the amount of work required at the Division I level. It's like having a full-time job.

In the off-season, players might have class, individual/small group workouts, weights, conditioning, and pick up all in one day! Trust me, those days are awful! Add onto that, point number one about the ultra-high intensity required every practice or workout or game, and this makes the workload even more difficult. In fact, every year, there are freshman who don't even make it through the fall preseason because the work required is so much and too intense.

Moreover, it's year-round.

Want a Thanksgiving Break, Christmas Break, Spring Break, and Summer Break? Nope, sorry, there's usually workouts, practices, and/or games. Players might get 2-3 days for Thanksgiving and 3-5 days for Christmas if they're lucky.

If they get a Spring Break that means they didn't make the NCAA tournament most likely, and most programs make players at least attend some summer school that takes up most or all of Summer Break.

## **3. It's Pressure Packed**

College basketball is a multi-hundred-million dollar business. In order for schools to maximize these revenues, they NEED to WIN. If they don't win, they fire the coach, so all of this adds up to DI college coaches having a tremendous amount of pressure on them to win games.

Because of this, coaches are going to play and recruit the guys that give them the best chance to win, which means bringing in really good freshman every year, taking really good junior college transfers, and/or already established graduate transfers. You better perform, or you ain't playin'!

Secondly, at the DI level, players are in the spotlight, so the pressure from outside influences, such as fans, other students, alumni, the media, etc., can be extremely intense. And these voices are all magnified by social media, which can create an enormous amount of pressure on players if they pay too much attention to that stuff.

Add the pressure from inside the program together with the pressure from outside, and it can create an unbelievably intense atmosphere that many players simply don't handle well or aren't prepared to handle.

#### **4. Playing Time is Not Guaranteed**

This sort of ties into number three, but I'd like to take it a step further. Playing time is not guaranteed in college basketball, especially as an underclassman. As we stated, you aren't going to play if you can't help the team win (a.k.a. help the coach keep his job). The coaches literally feed their families this way. This is not high school where he or she is making their money from teaching at the school and just doing basketball for fun.

First of all, freshman have upperclassmen who are more experienced and usually stronger and more skilled that they have to compete with. Then there's also other players typically in the same class that they are competing with for minutes. And we already mentioned Junior College transfers and graduate transfers on top of that.

Think you're going to come in and start right away as a freshman? Shoot, you'll be lucky just to get a few minutes a game (if that) in most cases!



“

YOU CANNOT HIDE OR COAST AT THIS LEVEL!

”

ESSENTIALLY, WHAT IT ALL ADDS UP TO IS THIS:

- About 40% of all men’s basketball players who enter Division I directly out of high school depart their initial school by the end of their sophomore year.
- 633 men’s basketball players transferred schools in 2016.
- Of those 633 transfers, only 46% transferred to another DI school. Most of “the others typically left for Division II, NAIA or 2-year colleges.

I don’t mean to be negative or the bearer of bad news, but players and parents need to know these things about DI college basketball. They’ll help parents and players make more informed decisions and be much more prepared if they’re good enough and lucky enough to play at that level.

# THE TRUTH ABOUT PLAYING DIVISION II BASKETBALL

There are so many incorrect assumptions and uninformed opinions out there that need to be corrected so that parents and players can make better decisions when choosing a college or university at which to play basketball, especially if Division II schools are an option.

As I've said before in past blogs, I hear and see kids and parents turn their noses up all the time at anything that's not DI. And that's a shame because DII and DIII have a lot of great things to offer. Also, sometimes, kids aren't necessarily even good enough to play at the DII or DIII level.

The problem is they just don't know the truth about Division II basketball, so in this article I've listed 5 things that parents and players **MUST** know about DII college basketball.

## **#1 This is High-Quality Basketball**

The quality of basketball at the DII level is very HIGH. Sometimes, it's even better than DI basketball depending on the program and game.

In fact, DII schools beat DI schools in pre-season games every year. Once again, I'll highlight Queens University here in Charlotte, NC. They beat DI VCU earlier this season in a preseason game!

VCU is a dang good DI team, so what does that say about Queens?

Moreover, the scoring is actually higher than at Division I schools and the shooting is a little better too.

There were 0 teams in Division I that averaged over 90 points in 2015-16, yet there were 3 in the South Atlantic Conference alone (Lincoln Memorial, Lenoir Rhyne and Newberry).

## **#2 Scholarships Are Available**

A big misperception of DII is that there's no scholarships available. While there are less available than Division I, there are still typically a good amount of full scholarships per DII team, but it can vary by institution.

## **#3 Not Everyone Can Play D2 Basketball**

Just because a player isn't getting recruited by DI schools doesn't automatically mean that they can then go play DII.

Some players think or say, "If I don't go DI, I'll just go play DII." Well that's not necessarily the way it works.

You have to be good enough to play DII! Don't believe me?

Go see a high-level Division II game like Queens, Lincoln Memorial, Augusta University or USC-Aiken and honestly examine if and where you would fit in those games (if at all)!

## **#4 You Can Still Go Pro**

You can go pro out of Division II schools, whether that is the NBA, D-League or Overseas.

In fact, players such as Scottie Pippen, Dennis Rodman, and Ben Wallace played at DII schools.

One of my favorite teammates of all-time overseas was a point guard named Zach Whiting who played DII at Chaminade in Hawaii. (Shout out to Zach!)

Back to Queens, they had 3 players last year sign pro deals and have had 7 in the last three years!

In many overseas leagues Division II players have long fruitful careers because they are used to the high shot volume, carrying the scoring loads, and being relied on in pressure moments just as they were in college.

## #5 Hundreds of D1 Players Transfer to D2 Every Year

Division II schools don't take ALL transfers, but there are a ton of D1 basketball players that transfer to DII programs every year.

Most Division II schools have a blend of high school, D1 and Juco transfers to suit their roster needs, but every single year there are 700-800 Division I transfers. This is because most D1 teams have 13 scholarship players and only play somewhere between 7-9 guys, which leaves many players unhappy.

Instead of transferring to another D1 school and having to sit out an entire year, they transfer to a DII school and typically don't have to sit out much time, if any at all.

Ultimately, this goes back to the high quality of basketball at the DII level...with so many D1 transfers, including high-major D1 players, the brand of basketball at the Division II level is really good!

## WRAPPING UP

High school players and parents need to do their research and go check out some Division II games before making any sort of rash judgments or decisions. DII basketball is a great option for many players, but not for everyone.

At the end of the day, however, playing basketball in college is not easy at any of the 3 levels.

It demands high-level skills, athleticism, basketball IQ, and most of all, dedication and hard work.

If a player is lucky enough to have the opportunity to play Division II basketball, they should count their blessings and think long and hard before dismissing it as not being good enough because, as we just talked about, the majority of the time, they're wrong!

# THE TRUTH ABOUT PLAYING DIVISION III BASKETBALL

By: Logan Kosmalski

Growing up, I knew next to nothing about Division III men's basketball. I grew up with dreams of playing Division I basketball and making it to the NBA.

I ended up playing Division I basketball and professionally overseas for a few years, all the while having no knowledge of the world of Division III basketball.

Sure, I had heard of Division III basketball players overseas. I knew of guys like Ben Wallace and Terry Porter who played NAIA or Division III basketball and ended up in the NBA.

But my knowledge of Division III was minuscule at best. It wasn't until my brother got hired as the head coach at Swarthmore College did I take an active interest in learning about Division III colleges.

Having witnessed my first Division III basketball game in person, I felt compelled to write about the experience and hopefully inform young basketball players on what they should know about Division III hoops.

## **Division III Basketball Teams**

First thing a high school player should know is that Division III basketball players and coaches WORK HARD. I have seen a few Swarthmore basketball practices and there is ZERO difference in the level of intensity and focus.

Good Division III coaches hold their players accountable and demand focus from their players just as much as division I coaches. Bill Nelson, who has been at John Hopkins University for 29 years, would not have won almost 600 games by taking it easy on his players or cutting them some slack because "hey, it's only division III hoops". Nope!

Watching the Swarthmore squad take on Franklin and Marshall University (whose coach is Glenn Robinson, which just passed 900 wins!) I couldn't help but notice that the coaches coached and the players played with Division I level basketball intensity. So if your focus is becoming a better player, Division III hoops is a great option.

## **Division III Basketball Recruiting**

Another thing players should know is that yes, Division III coaches recruit. I think a lot of high school players mistakenly think that if they aren't getting recruited by Division I schools, that they can always go play Division III basketball. FALSE.

Just like Division I coaches, if a Division III coach feels that you will help his program win, he will send you recruiting letters and questionnaires. He will call you and relay his interest. He will come to your games and talk to your parents. A Division III coach will let you know that he wants you.

## **Division III Basketball Scholarships**

Next, players should know that there are NO Division III basketball SCHOLARSHIPS. This is an important factor and one that should not be overlooked. While there are technically no athletic scholarships, hopeful student-athletes can apply for financial aid which can make what is usually a top-notch education, more affordable.

But there are some positives to not giving scholarships. The main positive is that when you watch a Division III basketball game, you are watching players that WANT TO BE THERE.

Players do not view Division III basketball as a short stop-off on their way to fame and riches to the NBA. They are not playing for the attention they will receive on Sports Center or from the tens of thousands of spectators (there were probably 500 people at the game I attended, but they did get loud!). They are not playing for the sweet gear they will receive from Nike or for the sick locker room set ups.

Take this excerpt from an interview with Bob Semling, the head coach at the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point: "Basketball is so pure at this level," Semling said during his postgame news conference Saturday, which consisted of him and me talking behind a black curtain that separated the portable dressing area from the portable playing surface. "Guys are holding down summer jobs, and they are great students. There are no issues when you coach at this level. No egos. These kids just play for the love of the game."

Playing in Division III hoops, players can develop a fraternity and life-long friendships with guys who play basketball for the purest reasons. If you've ever spend time on a team with selfish people or teammates that are only out to further their own agendas, this will no doubt sound refreshing to you.

Lastly, high school players should know that if they have dreams of playing in the NBA or playing professionally overseas, yes it is possible to do so after playing at the Division III level.

Does playing Division III basketball lower your chances of playing in the NBA? To be fair, it probably does. But to be realistic, that's like lowering your chances from 0.9% chance to 0.4% or something like that.

Playing in the NBA is a tall order, regardless of where you go to school. Also, there are numerous examples of non-Division I players making absolutely tremendous basketball playing careers for themselves after playing Division III.

Also, take the example of Andy Panko, who played at Lebanon Valley College in Pennsylvania. After a short stint with the Atlanta Hawks, Panko is now in his 16th year of professional basketball in Europe. He has played for some of the top teams across the continent and in 2012, won the MVP of the highly competitive ACB league in Spain. Panko can more than likely choose to work or not work once he retires from basketball ... all after playing Division III.

## WRAPPING UP

Do not look down on Division III basketball schools! High school players should not feel disappointed if they only get recruited by division III schools and should not overlook schools just because they are Division III.

Bigger isn't always better! High school players should be excited to play Division III basketball if given the opportunity. And if you are a fan and you live in an area where you can go watch a Division III basketball game, I strongly encourage you to do so. You will never see the game played at a purer level!

# UNDERSTANDING

## NCAA RULES AND REGULATIONS

Recruiting for college basketball, and all the other sports for that matter, is filled with many rules, regulations, and unfamiliar terminology. It would be virtually impossible to go over all of the details of it in this book, especially considering there are different rules for Division I, II, and III as well as the fact they often change from year to year.

Instead, what I'd like to do is point you to some helpful links straight from the NCAA website. That way if the rules and regulations change, the NCAA will change them on their website and you'll be able to get the information directly from the source!

- [NCAA WEBSITE](#)
- [NCAA ELIGIBILITY CENTER](#)
- [NCAA DIVISION I](#)
- [NCAA DIVISION II](#)
- [NCAA DIVISION III](#)

The above links are some of the most important pages on the site, but you should definitely also click around the website as it's full of tons of helpful information!



# MORE ABOUT THE RECRUITING PROCESS

## THE ROLE OF HIGH SCHOOL AND AAU BASKETBALL TOGETHER

Often times people describe high school basketball and AAU basketball as incompatible, one is good/positive and one is bad/negative, and typically, AAU basketball bares the brunt of the negativity. While AAU certainly has it's downfalls, it also has a ton of benefits, and we'll cover both the negatives and positives in later chapters. Regardless, I firmly believe that high school basketball and AAU basketball can and should co-exist. If done right, together, they can compliment each other and help kids become the best players they can be, and moreover, greatly increase a player's chances go on to play basketball in college.

Let's start with high school basketball and the benefits it gives players hoping to someday play in college. First, and most importantly, the structure of high school basketball is much more similar to the college basketball structure than AAU. In high school, teams practice pretty much everyday and only play once or twice per week. High school teams also typically have multiple offenses, defenses, out of bounds plays, etc. They also often times scout their opponents and put together scouting reports, which can involve watching film of the other team. Because this structure is so similar to the college level, college coaches want and need to see how potential recruits function and play in this environment. If players don't do well in this highly structured environment, how are they going to do well in college where it is even more structured?

On the flip side, many AAU team don't practice at all, and if they do, it's just a glorified scrimmage with very little teaching. Also, AAU teams don't typically vary their offenses and defenses or scout their opponents and have to follow a game plan. AAU teams usually play 4-8 games over the course of a weekend, so they're not as spread out as in high school. All of this is to say, the structure of AAU basketball can almost be seen as the opposite of high school or college basketball.

However, there are benefits to this AAU structure as it pertains to the player's development and recruitment. Number one, the loose structure allows players to work to improve their skills on their own in the high school off-season if they choose, and if their AAU team actually runs great practices, even better. Also, many AAU tournaments during the NCAA live periods get hundreds of college coaches there to watch because these college coaches are A) able to see a lot of good players over the course of a single weekend, and B) they're able to see those good players in multiple games over the course of that weekend. So at a single AAU tournament, college coaches can evaluate way more prospects than at high school games that they can then add to their recruiting list. Coaches are then able to take that list developed during AAU season and go watch these players during the high school season in order to see how they function and play in a structured system more similar to college.

Are you seeing the picture now? Yes, both high school and AAU basketball are very different, and in fact, may be opposites, but that doesn't automatically mean one is good and one is bad. Both AAU and high school basketball should compliment each other, and when both are done right, they can greatly positively impact in a player's recruitment!

Now, let's dig deeper into the hottest topic raging in the youth basketball development landscape today ... Is AAU destroying American basketball?

# BENEFITS OF AAU BASKETBALL

As an AAU coach and club director with Pro Skills Basketball (PSB), I'm obviously a proponent of AAU, but only when done the right way.

I'm not an outsider taking shots at something I know nothing about. Rather, I simply think that some of the problems with AAU basketball could be solved if parents, coaches and organizations were, number one, aware of the issues, and number two, took some relatively easy steps to correct the problems.

Regardless, for this blog post, I want to flip the lens and examine the benefits of AAU basketball.

Again, I'm talking about AAU basketball as the "catch-all" term like Kleenex and not speaking specifically about the real AAU basketball organization, although many, if not all of the benefits, do apply to the real AAU.

My last caveat is that, when talking about the benefits of AAU basketball, I'm talking about AAU done the right way.

What does that mean, you may ask?

To me, that means the team is coached by an experienced and knowledgeable coach, has positive and supportive parents, focuses on skill development and teaching over winning championships and/or going to "showcases" at a young age. AAU basketball done right focuses on the bigger, long-term picture over the short-term, win-at-all-costs mentality. That's why it's vital that players find the right AAU program or team, and once they do, AAU becomes highly beneficial! The 6 benefits of AAU Basketball are:

## **#1 Play Against Great Competition**

Games are the best place to take the skills learned in practice and workouts and try to implement them in a full-speed environment, and AAU basketball offers the opportunity to do this against a lot of great competition.

Yes, there are varying levels of competition in AAU, but most teams should be able to find the right level for them ... one that will challenge them, but also doesn't completely overwhelm them.

There are many ways coaches can try to simulate games in practice, but no matter what, it's just not the same as playing against another team with coaches and players who are trying to do whatever they can to stop you, and AAU basketball offers a tremendous platform to do this.

## **#2 Learn to Earn**

There's no denying we live in an everyone-gets-a-trophy age, especially in recreational basketball, but typically, this isn't found in AAU basketball.

Because of the inherently competitive nature of AAU, teams and players must learn to earn playing time, points, rebounds, wins, championships, and ultimately, trophies. Not everyone gets a trophy in AAU basketball!

This is a great lesson for later on in life when, as adults, you must compete for jobs, awards, salary raises, etc. These things are not just given out like playing time, trophies, etc. are often times in youth sports today, and AAU helps to fight against this cancer of expecting to be given whatever you want and not earning it.

## **#3 Learn to Deal with Adversity**

AAU basketball is competitive, so players will come across players and teams that are better than they are. This means there will be tough losses, tough games individually, and players and teams will inevitably have to deal with some adversity, and if you play AAU basketball long enough, there will be quite a bit of it.

Young players learn from the minute they start playing AAU that they will face some obstacles and they dang sure better learn to overcome them, or they won't last long.

Again, this teaches great lessons for later on in life, which are grit, determination, and toughness ... all tools that will certainly come in handy when they hit roadblocks in their lives.

## **#4 Learn How to Be Part of Team**

In competitive basketball where playing time is not equal, opponents are tough, and there's more than a little adversity, learning to be a good teammate is more important than ever.

This means placing the team over self, shelving your ego a little bit, learning to take instructions from a coach, and getting along well with other players.

Well, all of this is tougher to do in the competitive environment that AAU fosters, so AAU offers players many great opportunities to learn to be a good teammate.

Do all players learn to do this?

Of course not! But guess what?

For those that do learn to become a good teammate, it typically translates to, later on, being an employable adult!

## **#5 It's Fun**

Last, but not least, playing basketball is fun! This may seem obvious, but this is often times lost on adult coaches and parents who become overly-competitive and wrap their egos in their child's individual performance and team record. They forget that basketball is a game, and games are meant to be fun no matter what level they're played on.

Some of my best childhood memories are from my days playing AAU basketball, whether that be on the court with my teammates or off the court hanging out. Playing AAU basketball is fun if the team and adults' focus is in the right place!

## **BONUS: #6 Opportunity to be Seen by Many College Coaches at Once (high school age only!)**

One of the biggest benefits of AAU over high school basketball for players who want to play in college is that AAU, due to NCAA rules on "live" periods, gives older players the opportunity to be seen by a ton of college coaches on certain 3-5 day periods every year.

Again, this is concerning high school players only!

College coaches DO NOT care about 1st-8th graders. College basketball recruiting does not usually start until 10th grade if you're lucky.

If you want to learn more about the college basketball recruiting process, check out this article on the subject. (Side-note: Yes, I'm very well aware that for the top 5-10 players in the whole US, some sort of recruiting may start in like 8th grade, but this article is geared toward the other 99.999999% of players in the world!)

Back to my point, AAU basketball is the most beneficial and efficient way for players to get exposure to college coaches who could potentially recruit them.

Beware, though! As my guy Paul Biancardi says...

"Players better be more concerned about improving their games than getting exposure, because there's a big difference between exposure and getting exposed!"

## WRAPPING UP

Obviously, there are other benefits of playing AAU basketball, but these are my top 5 (and 6 for high school players).

While there are certainly problems with AAU basketball, I believe the benefits of playing on an AAU team or for a club that does it the right way, greatly outweigh the problems.

# THE UNFORTUNATE PROBLEMS WITH AAU BASKETBALL

Before we get into the problems with AAU basketball, let's clear up a few things...

First of all, AAU stands for Amateur Athletic Union, which is a single organization, and a good one at that. Unfortunately for the Amateur Athletic Union, AAU basketball has become an all-encompassing term used to pretty much describe all competitive grassroots of basketball outside of school ball.

It's similar to how Kleenex has come to mean "tissues", even though Kleenex is actually a single brand/company. In this article, from here on out, when I talk about AAU basketball, I am talking about AAU in the general, all-encompassing sense, not specifically THE Amateur Athletic Union Basketball.

Secondly, I am an AAU coach and the director of Pro Skills Basketball (PSB) Select, Charlotte's Premiere AAU basketball club, so this article is not a case of an outsider spewing uninformed opinions. In fact, I'm a proponent of AAU basketball. If I wasn't, I wouldn't do it or be involved with it.

There are some amazing benefits to AAU, but there are plenty of issues as well, which is what this article will be focused on.

Why? My hope is that some people may read this, get a clearer understanding of why something is a problem, and perhaps, work to correct the problem.

Thirdly, most of the information that is provided below are not new ideas or discoveries. While it did take me a couple of years to come to the below realizations on the PROBLEMS with AAU basketball, there are plenty of other people that discovered them before me, and in some cases have also written about them.

My thoughts are, however, developed from my point of view and my unique experiences in coaching AAU teams and directing an AAU basketball club over the last 6-7 years full-time.

The last point to make before we get into the weeds is Americans are the best basketball players in the world! This is objective and has been/is proven through the NBA, USA Basketball, and American participation in international events, especially the Olympics.

So I'm not one of those critics whining about how American basketball is terrible and use AAU as the scapegoat as Kobe Bryant did not too long ago. However, it is clear that international players are slowly but surely catching up to the level of American basketball players.

It's obvious in the increase in international players drafted into the NBA in the last years as well as international teams performances in the Olympics and other such events.

Furthermore, I believe European players as a whole have a better feel for the game (aka. basketball IQ) and are generally more skilled when it comes to shooting and passing than Americans. Now don't get me wrong, there are plenty of skills American players, like Steph, Lebron, Klay, Chris Paul, etc., but if you look at the youth level, the skills of players, in general, are not great, and I believe much of that has to do with AAU at the youngest levels in grades 1-8.

### **Sacrifice Development for Winning**

To me, the biggest problem is the enormous emphasis on winning that too many AAU coaches of young teams focus on during the critical years of skill development.

It's not a secret what the key is to win a lot of games or at least be competitive in the younger years ... you simply have to get your team to run a zone trapping full court press and fall back into an aggressive trapping half-court zone OR a soft zone focused on forcing outside shots.

There are a few reasons why this strategy works and presents problems for younger players and teams. Firstly, the way to beat a press is to be strong enough to step through double teams to make a pass and/or make skip passes over the defense.

However, most of the time young players are not strong enough at that age to do either of these two things. As a result, they turn the ball over leading to fast-break layups for the other team.

In the case that a team has 1 or 2 players that have advanced dribbling skills and can break the press by themselves, those 1 or 2 players end up dominating the ball the entire game, leaving the other players to get stuck watching and not really having a real active role in the game.

Moreover, if a team has a really good press and is able to turn the opposing team over every possession every game, then the game becomes more of a track meet where the only shots taken are fast break layups.

In this case, there is no offensive skills or concepts learned other than to make fast break layups. Eventually, as teams get older and kids get stronger in the later high school years, this strategy of pressing the whole game usually doesn't work and that team now has to actually figure out how to play basketball in the half court, which they've NEVER had to do before.

They've essentially wasted the first, and most important, years of their basketball development and now there is not a solid foundation on which to continue building on.

The reason to play a soft zone with a strategy of forcing the other team to shoot outside the 3 is similar to the reason for pressing. Kids are, again, not strong enough to make outside shots or at least consistently make outside shots to beat the packed-in zone. Also in the strength area, kids are not strong enough to throw skip passes over the defense, which is one of the most effective weapons against a zone.

What ends up happening is you have 3rd graders jacking up contested 3 point shots with terrible form for a whole game because they're not strong enough to shoot with good form, not smart or experienced enough yet to penetrate the zone off the dribble, and not strong enough to throw skip passes.

Heaving up contested 3's consistently with bad form doesn't sound like a great plan for youth basketball development.

And let's not forget about the defensive end!

### **Why Man-to-Man Defense?**

If kids grow up playing zone the majority of their young basketball career, what happens when they get to high school, or if good enough, to college and they are asked to play predominantly man-to-man defense?

They have no idea how to play it, especially help-side off the ball. Can you name another college team besides Syracuse whose defense is, the majority of the time, zone?

Maybe there's a few other, but not many! That's because most teams play man-to-man at the higher levels and will only play situational zone. For that reason, kids need to begin to learn how to play man-to-man defense at a young age, and unfortunately, many do not.

Don't get me wrong, zone definitely has its place, and kids should learn how to play it, but in my opinion, man-to-man should be the defense primarily taught and played.

The thing is, zone is much easier to teach. "Johnny, just stand there and guard anyone who comes into that area. That's all you gotta do!" Man-to-man requires a lot of effort and proper teaching, which leads to the next problem with AAU basketball ... too many games and not enough practices.

### **Practice Vs. Games**

*We're talking about practice...practice? Yes!*

At PSB Select , we practice twice per week for 2-3 hours total as a team and only allow our teams to play two tournaments per month on average. I'm not saying we have the perfect formula, but we are very conscious of the practice to game ratio, which USA Youth Basketball has a whole set of awesome guidelines and a guidebook on.

However, the majority of AAU teams don't practice enough and play too many games, and this happens for a couple of reasons.

Number one, which goes back to misplaced focus on winning, but often times teams simply want the most talented kids possible, so they'll take players from all over the place regardless of where they live because they believe talent is more important than skills.

This situation then makes it virtually impossible to practice because there is not a time or place that works for the whole team. Instead, teams simply go to tournaments, roll the ball out, and try to "out-talent" the other team.

With no practices, how are players individual skills really supposed to get better?

## Showcase for What?

One of my major pet-peeves in youth basketball at the youngest levels is when I hear and see young teams traveling all over the country to play in “showcase” tournaments. I’ve heard of 2nd-grade teams taking plane flights across the country to go play just 3-4 games in a tournament that takes up the entire weekend.

That time could be much better spent practicing at home rather than on a plane or driving or in a hotel ... and all that just to try and win a 2nd-grade or 5th-grade or whatever-grade tournament?!?!

And one more thing with these young so-called showcase tournaments, who exactly are the teams and players getting showcased to? Certainly not college coaches because that doesn’t start for the majority of players until 10th or 11th grade.

*Scouts, you say?*

Well, who exactly cares what a scout says about a 6th grader? Again, not college coaches. These “showcase” tournaments for young teams are an absolute scam that are just a way to make money off of naive parents and coaches.

## WRAPPING UP

There are plenty more issues with AAU basketball, but these issues that start at the youth level create the biggest long-term problems because many kids end up in high school with ABSOLUTELY no basketball foundation on which to build on.

As you'll see in the next chapter, I'm a proponent of AAU basketball, but I do think changes need to be made and AAU coaches and organizations need to be held to higher standard in order to fix the bigger picture, long-term problems.

# FINDING THE RIGHT AAU TEAM FOR YOU

Finding the right AAU team for your child can be difficult. There are so many AAU options out there in the youth basketball world today. Navigating through these options can be confusing, overwhelming, and frustrating for parents. There are many different factors to take into account when choosing an AAU basketball team that fits well not only with your child, but also with your family's values. But don't worry! Having been involved with AAU basketball full-time for the last 4 years as the Co-founder and Director of PSB Select in Charlotte NC, I am here to help try to answer some of those questions and concerns.

Below are a list of factors you should take into account when deciding on the right AAU basketball team for your child.

## **Goals and Mission**

To me, this is one of the most important factors when deciding on an AAU team. I've seen so many different reasons for AAU basketball teams to be around – sometimes good and sometimes, in my opinion, not so good, but it really depends on what you value.

Some questions to ask any AAU basketball organization would be the following:

- Does the AAU team or organization actually have a mission statement or intended goals, and do they seem to live up to that?
- Does the AAU team care about player development? Or are they more interested in playing a ton of games?
- Does the AAU team focus on having a good time with friends regardless of wins and losses? Or is this a cut-throat AAU team that wants to bring in as much talent as possible and try to win national championships?
- Can you feel the positive or negative influence from the AAU organization's culture?
- Is playing time earned by players or divided equally among them?

The goals and mission here at Pro Skills Basketball (PSB) are stated clearly on our website: Our teams are instructed by experienced and knowledgeable coaches whose focus is the improvement of our individual players, not simply winning championships. Our mission is to prepare players for the next level of their basketball careers while also teaching them life lessons that will lead to success off the court as well.

For some people, these goals and mission may not fit what they value or are looking for in an AAU basketball team, and that is totally fine. We know we are not the right fit for every player and family and vice versa, but it's better to know this ahead of time before you commit to something that won't end up working out!

## **Coaching**

Obviously, coaching should be a huge consideration when choosing an AAU team. After all, this is one of the main contributors to your child's development and overall basketball experience.

- Is the team coached by a parent of a player on the team? Is he or she fair, or do they unfairly give their child more playing time?
- What experience does the coach have?
- Is the coach positive or negative?
- Is the coach quiet or loud? Does he or she scream and yell at players and/or refs?
- Does the coach act in a way that is a good role model for the kids?
- Has the coach been put through a background check?

Our goal is always to get experienced, knowledgeable, positive and non-parent coaches. We then put them through background checks and require them to become USA Youth Basketball Licensed. It's not easy, but we believe it's worth it!

## **Practices**

Practices are where players develop their skills and teams get better and ultimately win games. However, if practices are poorly run, there may as well not even be practices because it's all for nothing.

Some questions to ask about practices include:

- Does the team practice? How often? When? Or is this a team where players just show up for games?
- Is there skill development in practices? Or is it all scrimmaging?
- Does the coach actually coach/teach in practices? Or do the players do whatever they want?
- If there are practices, do all players attend?

In our experience, most AAU basketball teams either do not practice or they “practice”, but it’s more of a “roll the ball out and play” type of situation. We, on the other hand, require our teams to practice twice a week, and skill development is a big part of that along with controlled scrimmaging and situational play.

## **Games**

For most people, this may be the most important factor to their decision in choosing the right AAU team. For us, it is not, but some questions about games to consider include:

- Does the team play in tournaments or leagues or both?
- Does the team play AAU, USBA, YBOA, USSSA, NTBA, and/or non-sanctioned events?
- Does the team travel out of town for tournaments?
- Does the team play in “showcase” events?

The types of games our teams play depend on the season (fall/winter or spring/summer) as well as the age group and skill level of the team.

For instance, our younger AAU teams will not travel to play because we think that time and money can be better spent elsewhere at that age. Conversely, beginning in 10th grade because that is typically when colleges start recruiting players, we have “showcase” teams that travel where necessary to NCAA Certified events where college coaches can come watch teams play.

## Cost

Clearly, the costs of playing on the team should certainly be considered beforehand. Most teams have an expense associated with them, but they can vary greatly.

- How much are the team fees?
- What do the fees cover?
- If the team travels, are those costs covered? If not, what are they?
- Is financial aid available?

Our PSB club team fees require a significant financial investment, but that is because our fees cover everything we offer, including coaches salary, practice time, leagues or tournaments, uniforms, insurance, etc ... not to mention we've dedicated our lives to this and it's our full-time job! We also offer financial aid for qualifying players in need, and every year give out thousands of dollars in aid!

## Other

Of course there are other questions to consider, but the ones above are the main factors to consider when finding an AAU team for your child. Other questions include:

- Is the team organized?
- Does the team communicate well with parents?
- What's the uniform situation?
- For older teams, do they help the players get recruited?



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## EVALUATION

### TIPS FROM PAUL BIANCARDI

My good friend, Paul Biancardi, ESPN's national director of recruiting, is the #1 resource when it comes to college basketball recruiting and was kind enough to allow me to ask him some questions about the topic.

Paul has coached at the highest level in the game as a head coach and an assistant. He was an assistant coach at St. Louis, Ohio State and Boston College before becoming the head coach of Wright State, where he was named Horizon League Coach of the Year in 2004.

#### **What is the biggest mistake you see kids make in terms of getting recruited?**

*Answer: They make two major mistakes in my opinion. First, they rush the process and make a quick decision sometimes without getting enough information and not doing their homework. Second is they play with the process. They lead programs on and string out their decision just to get more attention.*

## **What is the biggest mistake parents make in supporting their child's ability to play at the collegiate level?**

*Answer: They look at the highest level of competition and the biggest name for their child versus looking at the best opportunity. [Logan Kosmalski also answers this question with the later chapter "Bigger vs. Better".]*

## **What is the most important thing(s) players should do to get recruited?**

*Answer: Practice to improve and play to win. When you practice with the purpose to improve, your game raises up and people notice. Next play to win. Nothing attracts coaches more than you helping your team win. Lastly, be a person of high character. High character might not get you a scholarship, but a lack character will definitely prevent you from getting one.*

## **What is the most important thing(s) parents can do to help their child get recruited?**

*Answer: Love and support them, and try NOT to coach them. Encourage them. Feed them the right food for competition, keep them hydrated and invest in your child's passion for the game.*

## **Is it necessary to play on so-called shoe circuit teams to get recruited?**

*Answer: No, because the market will sort you out. But you do need to play outside of your area. Traveling outside your area is important.*

## **What should parents look for when deciding on an AAU team for their child?**

*Answer: A coach who is a teacher. Nothing is worse than a coach who can't teach and correct a player and a team. It's very important to find the right AAU team for your child and not only the right AAU team, but finding an AAU organization that has knowledgeable basketball coaches that can really teach your child the game and develop their fundamentals.*

## **At what age would you say it is important for players to start going to showcase events?**

*Answer: I would say high school is good if you want to go to a showcase event. Don't expect to be "discovered". Instead go out and compete with everyone there.*

## **What are your thoughts on player rankings? Do they matter in recruitment?**

*Answer: Rankings are a snapshot of a players performances over time, their productivity level, and their potential in the future. There are no guarantees to success, and that is a true statement, not a cliché. Every year there are many players that are not ranked that go to college and leave extremely successful.*

## **What resources would you recommend for parents and player to find more information on the college basketball recruiting process?**

*Answer: Everyone has advice on recruiting, but my question is who is giving the advice? What's their background in the profession & where have they played or coached. Is it their field of expertise?*

## **Any other thoughts on youth basketball, AAU, college basketball recruiting, etc?**

*Answer: If you want to be your best and have a chance to be successful in the game I will give you my best advice:*

- **Love the game.**
- **Respect the game.**
- **Prepare for the game.**
- **Learn the game.**
- **Improve your game.**

We want to thank coach Paul Biancardi for taking the time to answer these college basketball recruiting questions for us. If you would like to contact Paul or get more information, please follow him on [Twitter!](#)



## 5 THINGS COACHES LOOK FOR

*What do college basketball coaches look for in recruits?*

The spring NCAA basketball “evaluation” periods are coming up the next two weekends in April and then again repeating for 3 weeks in a row in July.

During this time, college coaches are allowed, per the NCAA, to watch AAU basketball teams in person around the country in order to evaluate potential college prospects.

I thought it’d be a perfect time to write about what these college basketball coaches look for when evaluating a potential college basketball recruit. Parents and players (and even AAU coaches) often times have no idea what college scouts are looking for in their evaluations, so they end up focusing their energy and efforts on the wrong things.

I personally went through the college basketball recruiting process (pre-Steph Curry era, before you ask haha!) and have coached and helped many players move onto play at the collegiate level through our PSB Select teams, so believe I have a good sense of what college basketball coaches are looking for. However, I am not a college coach and never have been, so I thought it’d be better for the answers to come “straight from the horses mouth” so to speak.

**Recently, I asked 5 Division I college basketball coaches of various levels what they look for when evaluating talent at AAU basketball tournaments during the NCAA evaluation period, and below are their responses.**

### **Coach #1 – Southeastern Conference (SEC) Team**

*“Tough question for me to answer! I just try to identify talent during this time and then I watch kids play as much as I can. I really like guys who play hard, who are skilled and who are consistent at what they do. But I look at them over a lengthy period of time...not just live period! Because most loaded travel teams don't practice much it's tough to see the level of execution they will need to play with at our level! So it's hit or miss!”*

### **Coach #2 – Colonial Athletic Association (CAA) Team**

*“Skill level. Toughness. Motor. IQ.”*

### **Coach #3 – Atlantic 10 Conference (A-10) Team**

*“Feel for the game, – can they pass, shoot, dribble, see the floor. Toughness – do they rebound, do they like to hit people, do they like to play defense and work at it. Attitude – how do they react when things don't go well, what kind of teammate are they.”*

### **Coach #4 – Ivy League Team**

*“In no order:*

*Passion...guys that show they hate losing but not in a way that distracts from the team (body language and responding to coach)*

*IQ...do they make the right plays and have a good feel*

*Skillset/athleticism...can they handle, shoot, pass, show athleticism outside of dunking in warm ups*

*Defend...what position can he guard. And could he guard the best players in our league at that position*

*Multiple efforts...don't just do one thing and stand”*

## **Coach #5 – Colonial Athletic Association (CAA) Team (different from #2)**

- Toughness (loose balls, how he reacts when getting taken out)*
- Competitiveness (hate to lose? Love to win? Does it matter?)*
- Shooting*
- Savvy (basically, can he play with an IQ)”*

If we boil all of these answers down and try to find the common threads, the top 5 things coaches are looking for, in no order, seem to be:

### **Toughness/Competitiveness/Playing Hard/Motor**

If you re-read above, you'll notice that every coach said some version of this. Playing basketball is not easy, so college coaches need kids that are going to be tough, competitive, will play as hard as possible, and have a high motor. And the great thing about this is this is something all players have 100% control over!

### **Skill Set**

Of course, you have to be very skilled to play at the college level. A couple of the coaches naturally mentioned shooting specifically, but also talked about passing and dribbling as well. Getting your skills to a high enough level takes years and years, but it's not all about scoring the ball!

### **Attitude**

This is a very under-rated trait that many players don't realize coaches look for. How does a player react after a turnover or a mistake by a teammate? Does the player have energy when sitting on the bench? How does the player react to coaching or being subbed out of the game?

College coaches don't want babies, whiners, pouters, and just generally players with poor attitudes! This is something that all players can absolutely control.

### **Basketball IQ**

If you don't have a good basketball IQ, it's tough to play at the collegiate or any professional basketball level. Basketball at that level is not simply a pick up game where it's a free-for-all, which is one of the reasons why a lot of AAU play doesn't translate at the next level.

Players must be able to think and run offenses and defenses, learn scouting reports, etc. Don't forget about the mental side of the game. College coaches sure don't!

## Defense

The defense in many AAU basketball games is laughable, or rather, non-existent. Often times, players feel that they can simply focus on their offense, and the defensive side of the game doesn't matter. False.

Players that earn a college basketball scholarship focuses on their defense as well. Remember Aaron Craft from Ohio State?

So there it is: the top 5 things college coaches look for during the college basketball recruiting period.

Parents, relay the message to your child. Players, try to implement the above 5 things in your games starting this weekend if you haven't already.

Lastly, coaches talk to your team and parents about these things. I guarantee it will help your kids be more successful on the court this spring and summer, and hopefully lead to college coaches taking notice!

## "EXPOSURE" CAMPS

### **The Truth About Showcase & Elite Camps (aka. "Exposure" Camps)**

Players often times attend basketball camps because they think they're going to get "exposure" to scouts and college coaches, so I wanted to provide some facts on the 2 types - showcase and elite, as NOT all basketball camps are created equal.

Let's start with the difference between showcase and elite basketball camps. Showcase camps are typically run by private organizations and companies with the goal of bringing in as many talented players as possible, having them play against each other, scouting them, and often times ranking them.

Elite basketball camps are put on by actual colleges and universities who try to bring in as many of their recruits as possible, as well as other talented players with the goal of increasing their talent pool from which they can recruit.

There are positives and negatives to both showcase and elite basketball camps , and to be clear, not all showcase and elite basketball camps are run in between the April and July live periods, but many are, especially college basketball elite camps. Showcase camps are typically run throughout the year, mostly in the fall, spring, and summer.

We'll delve a bit deeper into each basketball camp starting with showcase camps.

## **Showcase Basketball Camps**

For the most part, I think showcase basketball camps are a scam that suckers players and parents into paying money to come to an "camp" with the promise of getting kids exposure, which can lead to college scholarship offers. I put "camp" in quotation marks because typically all these events consist of is dividing players up into teams and simply letting them scrimmage or play games. There is usually no teaching or skill work or anything like that, so the term "camp" is not a great word for them.

Division I and Division II coaches are only allowed to evaluate prospects during official NCAA evaluation periods, so they aren't allowed to come to these camps. If there is an showcase camp held during a live period, there typically aren't a lot of coaches there anyway because they're at AAU events watching teams play.

The highly-rated, sure-fire D1 prospects are usually given free entry to these camps, so that later on, when they sign with a Division I school, the showcase camp can put that player on their list of "alumni" and claim that they helped that kid get a scholarship. Future players and parents will then see that and think "if it worked for that kid then it will work for me/my kid" when little do they know that player was going to get scholarship offers regardless of the camp.

Moreover, college coaches typically don't listen to these so-called scouting services that often times run these showcase or exposure basketball camps. They get blasted daily by all sorts of scouts and scouting services talking about this kid or that kid and most of the time the emails go to spam or the coaches just delete them without ever reading them. Think about it, the more kids a scouting service can say they helped play in college, the better for them, so they often claim kids are better than they are. A college coach then might go see kids claimed to be a prospect by this scouting service one too many times before they lose all trust and just stop listening altogether.

Again, these are generalizations, but true of the majority of showcase or exposure camps or scouting services. They're just trying to make money off players and parents hopes and dreams. Fortunately, there are some good ones out there, but parents and players must do their homework before paying money to attend.

The main positive most showcase camps have going for them is that since they do typically get a decent amount of talented players all competing to play at the next level, they are often times a good place for players to get a feel for who their competition is and where they fit in that mix.

Just don't expect to pay a couple hundred bucks, go to a camp or two, and then have college scholarship offers come raining down.

### **Elite College Basketball Camps**

Elite college basketball camps are a much more legit product all around as they are run by actual college coaches on their school's campus and they have a bit more of a true camp feel to them, so let's start with the positives.

Elite basketball camps are, like I said, run by college coaches, who are the actual decision makers when offering basketball scholarships, not "scouts". Going right to the source, skipping the middleman so to speak, and having the opportunity to showcase a player's skills in front of the actual decision makers is a great benefit.

These basketball camps typically have a serious skill work component and often times also film study and a college-style practice on top of scrimmaging and games, so the benefits to the player go far beyond getting "exposure".

Although one of the negatives of going to a DI elite basketball camp is that only DI school will have coaches there (obviously), there are typically other DIII schools that will come watch as well. This is a great benefit as these are more decision makers and more options for a player to potentially play college basketball.

Like I said, the main negative to an elite college basketball camp is that a player will play just in front of that specific DI school and no others.

Moreover, that school may only have 1-3 scholarships for that player's class and with a hundred players at the elite camp as well as thousands more throughout the country that aren't at camp, the chances aren't great that a scholarship offer will come out of attending an elite college basketball camp.

## WRAPPING UP

With all of that said about showcase and elite basketball camps, and not wanting to end on a negative note, I believe that these basketball camps are all tools that can be used in combination with others, like playing on a good AAU team for instance, to give players the BEST chance possible to play college basketball.

Showcase camps can be used to play against other good competition and to figure out where they stand in comparison to this competition.

College elite basketball camps can be used to get a better sense of a specific college and the college basketball experience, as well as the opportunity to play in front of the actual scholarship decision makers.

When used thoughtfully and in combination with other tools, showcase and elite camps can be useful on the journey towards getting a college basketball scholarship or recruited.

# THE TRUTH ABOUT COLLEGE BASKETBALL RECRUITING SERVICES

## WHY PARENTS AND PLAYERS SHOULD TYPICALLY NOT USE LARGE PAID RECRUITING SERVICES

College basketball recruiting services is a subject that fires me up and one I constantly get asked about by parents, so I want to delve into the truth about college basketball recruiting services in this post.

As I've said before, and I'll say again, I think the majority of showcase camps and recruiting services are a rip off that use the confusion and frustration of parents with the recruiting process to make "easy" money. I am not saying ALL of them are scams, but I do feel that most of them are!

### **There are typically 2 types of college basketball recruiting services:**

- Recruiting services where the parents/players are the client and they pay the service to help them get recruited by colleges. The service then provides information on player free of charge to colleges.
- Recruiting services where the college programs/coaches are the client and they pay the service to make them aware of potential recruits. It is typically free for parents/players in this case unless the evaluation comes from a "showcase camp" that the parent/player has paid for.

My opinion is that, in most cases, the big college recruiting services in scenario #1 above in which the parents/players are the client are definitely not worth it and parents should NOT pay for these services.

Why? Well, let's just think logically about it.

## **BASKETBALL RECRUITING SERVICES: REPRESENTING PARENTS & PLAYERS**

If a parent/player pays a recruiting service, that service now has a responsibility to get that player as many college looks as possible. With that in mind, the service will blast that player out to as many colleges as possible without even really thinking about player ability, fit, level, etc. - often times just taking a shot in the dark.

Because of this, college coaches end up getting hundreds of emails with thousands of kids on them, and most of the kids simply are not good enough to play at that level. So what happens is college coaches end up ignoring these mass emails as they are a waste of their time because it's like trying find a needle in a haystack.

If, for some reason, a college coach does happen to check into a player that the recruiting service claims to be good enough, the coaches typically discover that claim to be false and immediately lose trust in that recruiting service. Once this happens enough times (and it will!) that coach loses ALL trust in big recruiting services and won't even bother to open the emails anymore.

Furthermore, there is essentially an unlimited number of parents/players that are willing to sign up for these college scouting services, so the recruiting services that don't end up getting a player an offer to play college basketball by the end of senior season looks at it as no big deal because, hey, there are plenty of freshman, sophomore and juniors coming up to sell the dream!

## **BASKETBALL RECRUITING SERVICES: REPRESENTING COLLEGE COACHES**

Conversely, in scenario #2 above, if the college coaches are the ones paying for the recruiting service then the service has a responsibility to provide that school with the absolute best possible list of prospects for that school. The recruiting service will take into account player ability, fit, level, etc. because if they don't provide useful scouting reports with legitimate prospects then the college programs will simply drop them and stop paying for it.

And guess what? There is not an unlimited number of colleges like there are on the other side of the equation with players/parents, so the scouting service will be out of clients real quick, which means no more business!

In other words, the scouting reports will typically be of higher quality in scenario #2 because, in scenario #1, the scouting service is more about quantity of players they can get to sign up and pay rather than the quality of player.

It's just a numbers game in scenario #1 ... if they can get enough kids to sign up then surely a few of them will get scholarships and the service can then claim that they got those players the offers (which may or may not be the case).

So what would we advise?

Be your own recruiting service and don't waste money paying someone else to do a job you can do yourself!

How? Well, it does take some time and effort, but you just have to be proactive as we've already established, and we'll go over a couple of the most important steps in the next sections - highlight videos and emails.

And if you do decide to go with a paid recruiting service, try to use a smaller, more personalized service that has actual relationships with college programs. There are some decent ones out there. Just don't say I didn't warn you if it doesn't work out!

## HOW TO MAKE A BASKETBALL HIGHLIGHT VIDEO

By: Logan Kosmalski

There is little doubt that a well planned basketball highlight video is an important part of the college basketball recruiting process. A good highlight video can gain you the attention that you seek, and a bad highlight video can have you thrown into a pile, never to be acknowledged again.

It sounds harsh, but that is the world that college basketball coaches live in. Having friends, family and acquaintances in that line of work, I have seen it first hand. Here are 5 tips on how to make the best basketball highlight video.

### **1. Keep the Highlight Video Short**

College coaches are incredibly busy; between planning practices, creating schedules, organizing players and staff, making recruiting calls, the list goes on and on. A college basketball coach's time is very limited. The last thing a coach wants to do is sift through a 7 minute highlight video that includes clips of a player shooting free throws.

Highlight videos should be 3 to 3 ½ minutes long MAX! This means that you are going to have to cut out clips that may show diversity or defensive ability, but no coach wants to watch more than 3 ½ minutes of highlights. Keep all of your clips short and to the point!

## **2. Include an Entire Game after your Highlights**

The purpose of any highlight video is to get the coach's attention. But coaches aren't dumb. They know that any player can put together 3 minutes of highlights and make themselves look like an All-American.

If you are fortunate enough to get their attention with your basketball highlight video, they will want to see you perform in an unedited game. A highlight video might suggest that you can shoot or pass, but coaches know that there is so much more to a player than highlights.

Can a point guard handle **pressure**? Can a shooter make the correct read when coming off of a screen? Does the player take care of the ball? Does the player encourage his or her teammates? Does the player talk on defense? These are all the things coaches look for in a full game.

## **3. Skip the Music and other Bells and Whistles**

The first thing a coach is going to do if you are lucky enough to have one of them pop your DVD into their computer or click the video **link**, is turn the volume down. The bells and whistles are a distraction and a coach does not care how cool it makes the highlight video look or sound. This is not a "mixtape" to get you more followers on social media. This is a tool used to help you get recruited!

Also, you don't need to use unnecessary graphics in your basketball highlight video. Highlight videos that pause and add circles or arrows only serve to slow the film down and take up more of the coach's time. If a basketball player thinks that they are hard to find in a "highlight", **then unfortunately** it is not a highlight and should be left out of the video.

## **4. Focus the Video on a few of your Strengths**

When coaches watch film, there are a few things that can really catch their eye: can the player shoot? Can he or she get to the basket and finish? Can they create baskets for themselves and their teammates? Can they pass? Can they rebound? Can they block shots?

Players should focus on their three best skills and organize the clips accordingly. It is much more powerful for a coach to see 10 straight clips of a player knocking down 10 straight three pointers than it is to show one three pointer, one pass, one drive, then another three, then a free throw and so on. Check this highlight video out for a good example of breaking down highlights by skill.

For example, if a player wants to highlight their shooting ability, their passing ability and their driving ability, they should structure the film with 8-10 clips of outside shooting, followed by 5-10 clips of good passes and 5-10 clips of driving and finishing at the rim. At the end, if time permits, players can add in hustle plays or other clips that don't fall into the three areas of focus. This structure creates a much more powerful and memorable highlight video.

## **5. Include all the Necessary Information**

Again, coaches must maximize their available time. The last thing a coach wants to do is become interested in a player's film, only then to be frustrated by the fact that they can't find their contact information. Players should include an opening screen with the following information:

- Name
- City
- High School
- Graduation Year
- Grade Point Average
- Jersey Color and Number
- Contact Information (email and phone number)
- High School Coach's Contact Information (email and phone number)
- Height
- Position

It is also helpful to include a clear headshot within this screen.

There are many details to consider when making a basketball highlight video. We hope you find these pointers helpful and that they lead to the attention you are seeking.

## HOW TO EMAIL COLLEGE BASKETBALL COACHES FOR RECRUITING

### **5 Tips To Get Your Email Noticed by College Basketball Coaches**

Emailing college basketball coaches is a proactive step to let them know as a player you are interested in their basketball program, and hopefully, create some interest from the college coach in recruiting you.

So, what I'd like to do is explain the process of emailing college basketball coaches starting with creating a list of possible schools, how to find a college coach's email addresses, what to include in the email, and finishing with how to send the emails.

#### **1. Come Up With a List of Possible Colleges**

Coming up with a list of **REALISTIC** possible colleges to play basketball at is probably the **HARDEST**, but most important step. It's extremely difficult because the majority of parents and players are not very realistic about the level at which they or their player can potentially play.

Realistic is the key word here. We're not talking about colleges that a player dreams about playing at. We're not talking about the Duke's, Kentucky's, Arizona's, North Carolina's, UCLA's, etc. of the world. These schools pretty much have their recruits locked in by the time players are in 9th or 10th grade, and they're all top 50-100 players.

So, for the rest of the players, how do you come up with a realistic list of colleges at which you could potentially play?

Firstly, do not ask mom and dad (unless they have played at a high level). Instead, ask the high school coach, AAU coach, local scouts, etc. the level at which they think the player can play.

It may be DI, DII, or DIII. Depending on the answers a player gets, he or she should then start doing some research and come up with a list of colleges that they are interested in.

## **2. Find the Email Addresses for Your List of Colleges**

Most times, finding the emails for college coaches is as easy as doing a Google search and then clicking a few links.

For example, if you wanted to find the emails for the coaches at Division 2 Anderson University in South Carolina, simply Google “Anderson University basketball” and click on the link to their basketball page.

On that page, there is a link that says “More+”, and if you put your mouse over that page, you will see a drop down for coaches, click on the coaches’ page, you’re then taken to a page that lists all their coaches and has their emails. Copy and paste! Follow the steps below and you will land on the coaches’ page here.

Not all of them are this EASY. For instance, you’re not going to find any big-time DI college basketball coach email on the school’s website.

For the low-major and mid-major, often times it’s just a matter of searching a little bit. A little trick, I’ve learned to use is to Google “[insert name of school] athletic staff directory” and that usually provides a link where you can find the basketball staffs’ emails.

## **3. Compose the Emails**

Ok, at this point you have your list of realistic colleges that you’re interested in playing for and you’ve collected most, if not all, of their emails. Now you need to create the emails, and each email needs to be personalized for that school. Do not send a mass email to all of the schools. That will turn off the coaches.

Instead, take the following steps:

- Personalized Introduction - write the email to the actual coach(es) and let them know why you are interested in their specific school and basketball program.
- Academic & Basketball Background - include all applicable academic information (school, class, GPA, test scores, etc.) as well as basketball information (school, AAU team, position, stats, etc).
- Contact Info - include all contact info for yourself, your parents, high school coach, and AAU coach.
- Links to Highlight Tape - include all links to your basketball film, which could be half games, whole games, or highlight videos. "Mixtapes" are highly discouraged as these are often times style over substance. We wrote an article on how to create a highlight video.
- Game Schedule - provide a game schedule for your high school and/or AAU team where the coaches can potentially come watch you play.

Below is a sample college basketball email that I created from my high school self to Coach Bob McKillop at Davidson.

*Dear Coach McKillop,*

*My name is Brendan Winters, and I'm a 6'4" shooting guard in the class of 2001 from Mullen High School in Denver, CO. I'm extremely interested in playing basketball at Davidson College because of the way you run a motion offense tailor made for shooters as well as the top notch academics off the court.*

*I averaged 17.3 ppg, 8.2 rebs, and 3.2 assists this past high school season and had a 3.8 GPA. I have a two-part SAT score of [insert score] and three-part SAT score of [insert score].*

*I play AAU for Pro Skills Basketball, and we'll be playing the NCAA live periods this spring and summer at [insert name, location & dates of all tourneys]. I don't have the game schedules yet for these tournaments, but when I get them, I will email them to you.*

*This is the best email address for me, my phone number is [insert phone number], and my home address is [insert address]. My parents, high school coach, and AAU coach contact info is below as well.*

*[name of parent(s)] - [insert phone number]*

*[name of high school coach] - [insert phone number]*

*[name of AAU coach] - [insert phone number]*

*Lastly, I've included links to some of my game film as well as a highlight tape, which I hope you will take a look at. Please let me know if you need any other information, and I'll be happy to send it to you.*

*[highlight & game film link(s)]*

*Thank you for your time, and I hope to see you at our tournaments!*

*Sincerely,  
Brendan Winters*

#### **4. Proofread the Email**

This may seem like a small step, but it shows a player's attention to detail, which is a HUGE thing for college coaches. Make sure there are no grammatical errors or wrong info or broken links, etc.

#### **5. Send the Email & Follow-Up**

If done correctly, a player should start getting some replies somewhat quickly. If a player doesn't get any replies, the issue is either that the email got lost in the inbox of the coach, which can happen due to the craziness of college coaching, or the schools chosen weren't realistic, and the college coaches watched the film and didn't think the player was a good fit for their program and/or level.

Either way, players should always follow up with at least one more email at a minimum in case the situation was issue A as mentioned above. In the case of issue B, which the college coach may or may not tell a player directly, that player should then probably choose some "lower" schools and email them.

Keep in mind though that even if you hear back from a college coach that does not necessarily mean they are actually going to recruit you. They might, but a better sign of their actual interest in you is if they begin to call you, come watch you play, and even invite you to come to campus for a visit.

Emailing is just a proactive step in the process that can potentially help, but at the end of the day, it comes down to how you perform on the court!

# HOW TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media can be a great tool to aid college basketball prospects in their recruitment. Of course, social media can hurt a prospects recruitment as well if used the wrong way, and there have been plenty of articles written on this subject, including this ESPN article.

In fact, it has been said that social media has NEVER got a kid a scholarship, but it has most certainly lost more than a few kids scholarship offers. With that said though, I'd like to focus on the positive side of social media and provide tips on how basketball players can use it to help in their recruitment.

First, I'd like to make it very clear, again, that social media by itself CANNOT get an athlete a college basketball scholarship. The players on-court performance and off-court school grades will determine this, for the most part. Like I've written about before there are more than a few "checkboxes" that have to be checked off before a player even becomes a college prospect.

Once those are checked off, then there are some tools that can be used to aid in recruitment, such as a good AAU team, highlight films, emailing college coaches, etc. And the use of social media is just another such example of a tool that, if used properly, can help increase a prospects chances of getting recruited to play college basketball.

## **3 Tips on Using Social Media for College Basketball Recruiting**

### **#1 Be Where the Coaches Are**

Thus far, I've just talked about social media as a general catch-all term, but as we all know, there are many social media platforms, and they all function very differently. The ironic thing is that for college basketball recruiting, the BEST platform is perhaps the least popular these days ... Twitter! Pretty much every college basketball coach is on Twitter and uses it to get information, including on prospects to recruit.

Most coaches are on Facebook and Instagram as well, but they don't use Facebook that much for recruiting purposes, often times reserving it for more personal use. While many coaches generally use Instagram to follow recruits, it's not as useful as a tool for recruiting because it's functions mostly a photo and video sharing platform whereas Twitter can be used as that plus a newsfeed as well.

As for Snapchat, while it's popular with the kids, it's not so popular with the coaches for recruiting, especially the older ones. However, I have noticed the young college coaches getting on there more and more, and many of them do use that to track recruits, so players need to be very careful on there.

Snapchat is one of the main sources of trouble for recruits as the disappearing Snaps often times give young players a false sense of protection to post inappropriate material, so watch out!

Overall, my recommendation would be for all recruits to be on Twitter and Instagram if they're not already, and moreover, actively use both of those accounts as an aid in their recruiting.

So How can Basketball Recruits use Twitter and Instagram correctly?

## **#2 Use Twitter Correctly**

recruiting and the social media effect

Example of a great Twitter post by one of our PSB Charlotte players.

Firstly, follow the coaches, schools and programs that you are interested in and/or have a realistic shot to play at.

I know I always say this, but not every player can go play at Duke, Kentucky and North Carolina. Playing basketball at the Division II and Division III levels are the best option for many players, as previously written about, so follow those accounts accordingly too!

There are also a ton of great informational Twitter account about college basketball, recruiting, NCAA rules, etc, which provide great insight that parents and players can learn from.

Secondly, with Twitter, players can use it to push out their information, accomplishments, videos, schedules, and other useful information for coaches, whether that be through a player's own tweets or through retweets.

However, please note, some players and parents fall into the trap of tweeting and retweeting out EVERY SINGLE thing about them, which can be a major turn off to college coaches.

This gives coaches the impression that players who do this are in love with themselves and egotistical, which is never good for a team. So please understand here that there's a fine line with putting out enough information and putting out too much.

### **#3 How to Use Instagram**

Social Media and Basketball Recruiting

Example "edit" that we made for one of our PSB Elite players for his commitment to play at UNC Charlotte.

As for Instagram, like I said, it's not as useful because it's really only photos and videos, but it can be used to push out some photos and videos of the recruit, whether that's highlights or whatever it may be.

It is also often used by recruits to put out "edits" of, for instance, a player's final 5 schools (where they have offers from) or even the final choice of a recruit, but again, just beware of doing too much of this type of thing as it can be a major turn off for coaches.

To wrap up, I think all recruits who need a little EXTRA help getting recruited to play college basketball should use Twitter and Instagram, as long as they commit to using it properly, and be very aware of EVERYTHING they put out on social media, whether that's Facebook, Snapchat, or whatever.

Social media can certainly help a recruit, but it will not be the sole factor in getting them a scholarship - that must be done on the court and in the classroom. However, social media can (and has) most certainly lose a player scholarships.

Now get to tweeting and posting!

# BIGGER V. BETTER

By: Logan Kosmalski

Deep down, I knew something wasn't right. I was about to fulfill a lifelong goal, but if I was being honest with myself, I knew I was making a mistake in my college basketball recruiting process.

I had grown up in the gym. Following my older brother to tournament after tournament, attending camps all summer long, playing for school and AAU teams, and idolizing college programs like Duke, North Carolina and Kentucky.

Watching those teams on TV, I found my dream - to play BIG TIME college basketball. I had found personal and team success up until that point in my basketball career, and anything but playing high major basketball, I would be a disappointment to myself, my family, and everyone else that thought I was a good player...at least that's the way my 17 year old mind processed it.

I wasn't prepared for the college basketball recruiting process. I didn't have a list of priorities that I looked for in schools, and I didn't know how to find the right fit for me. In my mind, for college basketball recruiting, bigger was better. I couldn't possibly accept scholarship offers from schools like Davidson, Santa Clara or Northern Arizona. That would be a letdown.

So, as I sat there about to sign my letter of intent to Baylor University, I should have been ecstatic to play in the Big XII and be on TV playing against schools like Kansas and Texas, and I was excited, but somewhere inside, something wasn't right. Baylor had been the only Big XII team to offer me a scholarship and looking back at it now, there was a reason for that, but I was blinded by the bright lights.

## **Bigger is NOT Always Better in College Basketball Recruiting**

I found some personal and team success while at Baylor and met a lot of great people. But at that level, college coaches need to have players that can come in and make an impact and win them games.

There is too much pressure on a college coach to win and keep his job to justify taking someone that is not the right size or have the right skill set or athleticism, and thus, I was eventually recruited over.

Baylor brought in a player named Lawrance Roberts that ended up playing in the NBA for a while, and my time was cut drastically. And rightfully so. I didn't appreciate it at the time, but at that point in my career, I just wasn't good enough for the Big XII. I ended up transferring after my sophomore year and headed to Davidson College, which was a place that allowed me to become a better player. There are numerous factors involved, but Davidson was just a better fit for me, but I didn't see it when I was 17 as I was, again, blinded by the bright lights.

My saga is something that, working with youth basketball players, we see a lot. Everyone wants to play for Duke, North Carolina and Kentucky, but very few kids and parents understand or appreciate the amount of pressure within big time college basketball.

The hard truth is that no matter what position you play, how tall you are, or how athletic you are, if you are good enough, college coaches will find you.

In the youth basketball arena, there needs to be a shift from a focus on playing at the highest college level available to a focus on finding a program that will allow players to maximize their potential.

### **Take these examples:**

In terms of high school basketball recruiting, De'Mon Brooks was a 6'6" power forward that was only being recruited by low major basketball programs.

It was only by a last second coaching change at Howard University that he was let out of his commitment and became a Davidson Wildcat.

He went on to be an ALL-Conference player and is now a fantastic pro player overseas. Unless something drastic happens, De'Mon will have a long career playing basketball and making a living doing it.

Jeff Gibbs was a 6'3" high school post player in from Columbus, OH. Jeff's knack for rebounding and finishing above the rim made him a force at the high school level. Undoubtedly, high major college coaches considered him too small to be a Division-1 big man. After 4 years at DIII Otterbein University, Jeff became (and still is) the school's all-time leading rebounder and a DIII All-American.

Jeff went on to play 12+ successful season as a professional overseas!

Of course it is impossible to know, but would DeMon or Jeff be experiencing all of their success had they opted to change positions in high school?

What if Jeff had spent months trying to convert himself into a point guard instead of focusing on his rebounding? What if, in the hopes of playing in the ACC, De'Mon had tried to become a prolific three point shooter instead of perfecting his already excellent back to the basket game?

The moral of the story: play to your strengths, and focus on mastering them. A good 6'5" high school 4-man, does not equal a DI level 3-man. There are tons of talented players that have spent their lives becoming a 3-man ... and that is their strength. We hear parents all the time saying that they want their 6'6" son to play on the perimeter and handle the ball after they are already accomplished high school power forwards. Why?? So a college in a better league will recruit them? Very rarely is that the way basketball works.

Don't get me wrong, players should be complete, fundamentally sound players. Post players should know how to handle the ball, and guards should know how to play with their back to the basket, but trying to force a player into a position that takes away their already established skill set can lead to frustration and even regression.

It is a trap that is easy to fall into. Parents and players should instead concentrate on finding a coach or finding a basketball program that will help them improve no matter what conference or division they are in.

Players should set their goals high, for sure, but if goals blind players to the strong points of their game or lead to players to bounce from school to school in hopes of finding a coach that will let them play point guard than these goals can become a hindrance.

Bigger is not always better. The Big XII wasn't better for me than the Southern Conference. DI was not better for Jeff Gibbs than DIII. The ACC wasn't better for Stephen Curry than Davidson.

The list could go on and on. Parents who are forcing their player to change positions and players who are solely concentrated on getting the biggest offer they can are misplacing their focus. Play the position you are strongest at, work to perfect that craft, and if a player is good enough, college coaches will find them.

So in college basketball recruiting: bigger vs. better? My answer is:

Enjoy the journey, appreciate those that appreciate you, and focus on improving. The rest will take care of itself!

## 3 TIPS FOR PLAYERS AND PARENTS

By: Logan Kosmalski

So, your travel basketball season has come to an end. You've played in showcase event after showcase event, you have been to tons of elite and showcase camps. You've done everything you can think of to get noticed and get recruited, but are not getting the looks you want.

Don't panic, stay focused and get a good understanding of my 3 college basketball recruiting tips that will help you through the recruiting process. The basketball recruiting process can be somewhat complicated, especially for parents that want their child to make the right decision. The recruiting process is even more overwhelming for the player who feels the heavy pressure of having to decide on the next 4 years of their lives. This can be a very stressful time, I definitely know from personal experience.

Ask yourself questions that matter. Where do you start? Who do you talk to? Who do you trust? What direction do you go?

There is no magic formula for the recruiting process...at least that I'm aware of... but hopefully the our basketball recruiting tips will help some of you ease the pressure of the recruiting process. It can be an overwhelming process, but it's important to remember that having someone offer you a spot on their college basketball team is something that many families would die for.

## **1. Don't Get Hung Up on Perceptions**

Many kids grow up dreaming of playing for Duke or Kentucky. They are convinced that they want to play in the PAC-12 or Big Ten. But when it comes down to it, your perception of a school, coach or conference is not always reality. Since my college days, I've met people that played for my dream school. The experiences they described to me were anything but dreamy!

The truth is, you may think you love a school, coach or conference, but you have no idea what that program or conference is like until you're in it. What you see on TV and read in papers is not always reality.

Do not decide where you're going before you experience it for yourself. Which brings me to point #2.

## **2. Take Visits and Do So With an Open Mind**

Only go on an official or unofficial visit (see NCAA website for definitions) if you are seriously considering that school. Once you are on a visit, learn everything you can about the basketball program, the coach, and players. This is very important: learn EVERYTHING you can about the school. It's important to weigh your options, but you have to open yourself up to those options first! You may find that what you thought about a school is anything but true, so take your visits and do so with an open-mind.

## **3. For Many, It's About the People**

Some kids and parents struggle with the recruiting process because they do not have an appreciation for what it means to play collegiate athletics. The most important thing I can tell you: go where you like the people the most! The majority of your college athletics experience will take place off the playing field. You will have team meals, road trips, weekend parties, weightlifting sessions, locker room talks and other social events.

While on your visit, ask yourself, do I see myself living my life with these people? Are the guys or girls on the team now the kinds of people that I like to be around? Your teammates and classmates are going to be your best friends over the next few years. You will spend countless hours with them. Do not get hung up on your desire to play for a certain school or in a certain conference and sacrifice your comfort and happiness away from the playing field. This is tough to do, especially if you have a lot of talent. However, if the school and people are not the right fit, you need to move on.

I hope these basketball recruiting tips help you in your recruiting process. It's important to talk to people with an open-mind. Take your visits and see where you fit in. Your college days and your playing days will be over before you know it, but your college relationships should last a lifetime. Good luck!

## ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS: PREP SCHOOL & JUNIOR COLLEGE

So your senior season is over and you have either no offers to play college basketball or you have some offers but aren't interested in them ... now what? Well, typically players have two options:

- A) Go to prep school, or
- B) Go to junior college

As with most things though, there are positives and negatives to both options.

Let's start with prep school because that's what I did, and to this day, I still consider it one of the best decisions of my life. Long story short, I had literally just turned 18 when I graduated high school, so was relatively young in comparison to many other kids. I was 6'4" tall with good basketball skills and IQ and a work ethic to match. I had some DIII schools that offered me a spot on there team, but to be honest, I didn't give them the time of day because I was hell bent on playing Division I basketball. *Side note: If I could go back in time, I'd make myself do some research on and find out the truth about DIII basketball!*

Anyway, I found out about the option to go to prep school and do a post-graduate year, and my family and I decided this would be the best option as it gave me one more year to physically mature since at that point I was only 175 lbs soaking wet. It would also give me a structured year away from home at really good academic school. We had agreed that if a DI scholarship didn't turn up after the year was over I would either take one of the DIII offers or would explore walking on at a DI school.

I ended up going to Worcester Academy where I played with 8 other Division I players, including Jarrett Jack and Craig Smith, who went on to play in the NBA. During that time, I gained 20 lbs to get to 190 lbs and competed everyday against super talented, high level players, which helped me raise my game. I also matured off the court as I slept in dorms, had study hall, and generally was away from home for a long period of time for the first time in my life.

Not long after I announced my intention to go to Worcester Academy for a post-grad year, I received my first DI scholarship offer from Bob McKillop at Davidson College. I went on a visit during that fall, committed there a few days later, and the rest is history as they say.

Now back to the positives of prep school:

**#1** Prep school is essentially an extra year of high school, so it does not count against college eligibility. Players can either repeat their senior year or do a post-grad year. It typically just depends on what the school prefers.

**#2** Prep school is like a step above high school as you are out of the house and sleeping in dorms, but a step below college as there is typically still curfews and study halls and not as difficult academically as college.

**#3** Many of the prep school teams and leagues are stacked with great players, so playing against high level competition in workouts, practices and games forces most players to improve. On the same note, tons of college coaches come through the schools to recruit due to the amount of high level players.

Some of the negatives include:

**#1** Many prep schools are expensive. In fact, they often cost the same as a year of college. Most of the high academic prep schools in New England cost \$40,000/year, and there are others like IMG Academy in Florida that cost well over \$50,000/year. Most prep schools do offer need based financial aid, but only very few offer talent-based scholarships.

**#2** Not all prep schools are created equal. Some prep schools can be nicer than colleges and some can be basketball factories so to speak where the academics and other dealings are highly questionable at best.

Moving on to junior college ... Before I made my decision to go to prep school, my dad and I did go check out a junior college game, but we decided it wasn't the right move for me. However, I know quite a few players that started out at junior college and went to have very successful basketball careers.

Junior college is a great option in some cases, including:

**#1** If a player doesn't qualify academically to play basketball at the DI or DII levels right away, junior college is a way that the players can, after 2 years, qualify and then play out their remaining 2 years at a DI or DII school.

**#2** Most junior colleges offer athletic scholarship, either full or partial, and if not, most junior colleges are much less expensive than prep school and four-year colleges.

**#3** At prep school, players will play against players their own age or younger. While they're good players for sure, the players at the junior college are older, stronger, young-men. The speed and strength of the game at the junior college level are often more similar to college, especially in the best leagues, than at the prep school level.

The downsides of playing at a junior college are:

**#1** The years at junior college count against your eligibility at a four-year institution, so if a player spends 2 years at a junior college, they only have 2 years left to play at the four-year school they go to next. They'll enter the school as a junior rather than a freshman as they would if they had done 1 year at a prep school.

**#2** Junior colleges typically have less money for their program and school than prep schools, so it's usually not an "easy-ride". The facilities, travel, gyms, crowds, etc can be pretty bad, which is never easy to deal with. Junior college is often a real "grind" - just something to grunt through so to speak in order to get to that next level.

As you can see, there are definite differences between the prep school and junior college alternatives to going to a four-year institution right out of high school. There are many things to consider when deciding between the two. Players and parents definitely need to do their research before making this tough decision!



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

## BRENDAN WINTERS

Brendan Winters is a former professional basketball player whose love for the sport began in childhood watching his father coach basketball at the collegiate and professional levels. That certainly doesn't mean that his entrance into professional basketball came easy, however. The experience that Brendan gained as he worked his way up the ranks makes him a uniquely valuable resource to hopeful players at all levels.

In 2001, Brendan graduated from J.K. Mullen High School in Denver, Colorado without a single Division I scholarship offer. This happened even despite winning the 5A State Championship his senior year and being named 1st team All-Tournament.

He later made the choice to attend Worcester Academy Prep School in Massachusetts as a post-graduate student, and his patience and persistence finally paid off. In 2002, Brendan accepted a scholarship to play for the Davidson College Wildcats. There, he would go on to lead the Southern Conference in 3-point percentage and be named to the All-Freshman and All-Conference teams during that first year.

In his sophomore season, Brendan averaged over 17 points per game and was named 1st team All-Conference. Junior year, Brendan was named Southern Conference Player of the Year and All-American, as he and Logan lead the Wildcats to a perfect 16-0 conference record and quarterfinals defeat in the postseason NIT.

The pinnacle of his college career came in his senior year, however, when he led Davidson to victory in the Southern Conference tournament and was named Tournament MVP with 33 points in the championship game. Again, Brendan was named an All-American, also winning Davidson's "Tommy Peters Award", which is given annually to a male Davidson athlete who exemplifies excellence on the playing field and dedicated campus leadership. He was also named one of five national finalists for the "Chip Hilton Award", an accolade that is given annually to a graduating senior NCAA basketball player who demonstrates excellence of character both on and off the court.

In 2006, Brendan graduated with a degree in English, and decided to pursue his lifelong dream of playing in the NBA. He was invited to attend the Portsmouth Invitational, as well as pre-draft workouts with the Indiana Pacers, Detroit Pistons, and Charlotte Bobcats. However, Brendan was faced again with adversity, as he went undrafted. Again, he refused to let this deter him, and he continued his quest to join the NBA by playing for the Golden State Warriors in the 2006 Las Vegas Summer League.

Winters was later asked to play for the NBA Developmental League, but instead, he chose to continue his career overseas. For his rookie year, Brendan signed to play alongside Logan with L'Hermine de Nantes in France. For his second pro season, Brendan moved to the Bayer Giants Leverkusen in the German Bundesliga. There, his team finished in 3rd place while he led the league in 3's and was named 1st team All-League.

Brendan stayed in Germany for the 2008-2010 seasons, later choosing to resign with the Giants. In these years leading up to his retirement, he was chosen as a Bundesliga All-Star, played in the Hungarian A Division for Atomeromu in Paks, Hungary, and moved to the top division in Greece to finish the season playing for Aris Thessaloniki. After five impactful years in Europe, Brendan returned home with the determination to help high school and college athletes achieve their dreams of playing professional basketball, just like he had.

Today, Brendan and Logan work in and on Pro Skills Basketball year-round, as they have since 2011. Winters currently serves as the Director of PSB Charlotte, including PSB Select teams. His personal time is spent with his wife, their daughter, and Brendan's five sports-minded siblings.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### LOGAN KOSMALSKI

Logan Kosmalski's love for the game also started early in life, as his father played in the U.S., as well as internationally. He graduated from Trinity High School in Euless, Texas, having been a three-year starter, and a three-time All-District selection. He was also chosen as District Player of the Year and All-State in his senior season.

In college, Logan played at Baylor University, where he started as a freshman. After starting the season 11-0, Logan's Baylor team went on to the semi-finals of the Big XII Tournament and then the NIT. After two years at Baylor, Logan transferred to Davidson College and was required to sit out for a season due to NCAA rules. In 2003, however, Logan took the court for the Wildcats, playing against such high profile teams as Georgetown, Duke, North Carolina, and Seton Hall.

While at Davidson, Logan was a two-year captain, as well as a two-time recipient of the "Wildcat Award," which is given annually to Davidson's top rebounder. In his senior year, Logan captained the team to a perfect 16-0 conference record and an eventual quarterfinals loss to Maryland in the postseason NIT. For his play, he earned All-Conference honors as well as being chosen for the All-State University Team for North Carolina.

Logan graduated in 2005 with a degree in Psychology and went on to play professionally across Europe. He began his career in the French professional league with L'Herminie de Nantes, alongside his longtime comrade, Brendan Winters. For 2 seasons in Nantes, Logan placed in the top 5 of the league for rebounds per game. After France, Logan moved to a 1st division team in Walbrzych, Poland.

Unfortunately, a serious knee injury cut his season short. During Logan's rehabilitation time, he worked as a radio announcer for the 2007-2008 Davidson basketball team. This gave him the opportunity to watch from the sidelines as Coach Bob McKillop and his Wildcats advanced all the way to the Elite Eight. After months of rehab, Logan was ready to once again continue his professional career. He joined the Dusseldorf Giants of the top division in Germany for the 2008-10 seasons and was once again teammates with Winters. For the 2010-11 season, Logan played in the Swedish Basketliga with the Solna Vikings in Stockholm.

After 5 1/2 years playing professionally overseas, Logan retired to pursue Pro Skills Basketball full time. Since 2011, Logan has been a director and head coach of Pro Skills Basketball. His personal time is spent with his wife in the quiet town of Huntersville, North Carolina.