

OUTLINE OF COACH PARKER'S COLLEGE DECISION PRESENTATION

There are a few basic questions you will need to answer about any college you might consider. There are also a number of things to consider as you evaluate your "fit" in a college soccer program. Part II identifies specific areas that have been shown to be important to a student-athlete's enjoyment of their college soccer experience.

Ultimately, it is YOU that have to decide what is most important to YOU about choosing a college and, of course, just how important playing college soccer is to you. In other words, are you willing to do what it takes to play competitive soccer in college?

PART I: QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF ABOUT YOUR FUTURE COLLEGE:

1. *Will I like going to this school? (or does this school meet my needs?)*

Visiting the campus is the best way to know but look over the school website, viewbook, media guide, and any information you can get from the school or research about schools. You have to answer some basic questions about your preferences regarding things like:

Size of the school, Location, Distance from Home, the Cost, Academic Programs, whether it is a public or private school, a religious school, etc.

2. *Can I get admitted at this school?*

Find out what the baseline SAT/GPA numbers are for admission at the school. Also, find out what the SAT/GPA baseline is for academic scholarships at the school. If you can't get specific answers, ask for the most recent freshman class statistics. Ask the coach directly what influence they may have in the admissions process on their campus. Almost all college coaches will know immediately, based on your numbers, what chance you have of gaining admission and getting an academic scholarship.

3. *Can I play soccer at this school?*

*See Part II

You can decide for yourself in many cases by just watching a game. When evaluating your fit into a soccer program, however, don't be surprised how bad or good a college team may be. In other words, there are both very good and very average teams in every region, in every Division, and even within the same conference.

- Go see a game and ask - Can I win that job? Do I like the team and caliber of play?
- Do a simple roster analysis - class by position, rate of attrition, are there players like me?
- Ask your club and high school coaches for help and advice if you're confident in them.

MOST IMPORTANT: Do not expect coaches to find you! Be a good consumer.

Develop a list of potential schools, write a personal email to the coach, and invite the coach to come see you play. FOLLOW UP OFTEN with schedule updates and ask them for their opinion after major events. Do not expect your parents or a recruiting service to sell you or communicate with coaches for you. Coaches want to know that you are familiar with their school and are personally interested in playing there.

PART II: EVALUATING YOUR FIT IN A COLLEGE SOCCER PROGRAM:

A lot of things could become important to you as you consider choosing a college. The answers to these questions are a good start in terms thinking about how happy you will be in college soccer:

1. Can I play right away?

Have you enjoyed being a starter or significant player most of your soccer life? Do you want to risk going to a college and not playing much, are you OK just being “on the team”? Look for a program where you have a chance to compete for minutes as a freshman and possibly start as a sophomore. Remember, if you’re not in the lineup by your sophomore year, there will then be two classes of players coming in behind you as a junior. Ask the coach directly, “how do you see me fitting into the team and starting lineup? when?”

2. Is the team any good? (Is the level of play just right for me?)

Watch the team play and decide for yourself if the level of play will be challenging and rewarding for you. There are good quality teams that play attractive soccer in all 3 NCAA Divisions, in every region of the country, and at all kinds of schools.

3. Do I want to win lots of games?

Is the team competitive in their conference, competing for titles regularly? Appearing in the conference and NCAA Tournament? Would you rather be on a 5-15 team in Division 1 that is “rebuilding”- maybe with a new coach, or on a 15-5 team in DIII and competing for championships? In other words, how important is it to you that your team winning games and is successful?

4. Do I like the team and coach?

What’s the reputation of the coach and their program? Has the head coach seen you play much and gotten back to you promptly with an honest evaluation of your talent level and fit in their program? Do you feel like one of many players the coach seems to be recruiting? When you visit, try to ask both starters and reserves, young players and upper-class players, if they have a good relationship with the coach. Answers to these questions tell you a lot about how you will be treated when you get there.

The only way to know if you like the players is to visit and try to meet with them. You can learn a bit online but you want to talk to a variety of players if you get the opportunity. Make sure you ask to meet with the team on your visit – either at lunch or in their dorms, not just to watch a practice.

If these things are mostly true of the schools you’re looking at, you’re probably on the right track REGARDLESS of the money involved or the division or conference the team is in.

**Do your research and ask the tough questions! The more you know the better.
*Good luck selecting a college and soccer program.***