

A YEAR-BY-YEAR CALENDAR FOR COLLEGE BOUND ATHLETES

FRESHMAN YEAR:

- 1) Download the NCAA's *Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete*.**
- 2) Plan your academic course load so that you're taking required NCAA core courses. This will include *at least* 3 years of math; 4 years of English; Science/Lab Science; History/Government; Language; and so on
- 3) Play the most competitive travel ball you can.
- 4) Whenever you have the opportunity, visit college campuses to see what the collegiate experience is all about. (Follow NCAA guidelines for on campus contacts with coaches.)
- 5) Purchase a copy of *Preparing to Play Softball at the Collegiate Level*.
- 6) Optional: Attend college camps or clinics.
- 7) Optional: Send out a simple introductory post card with your grad year, contact information, video link if available, travel team and upcoming travel ball schedule to a variety of programs. (You may want to focus on Div. I programs if you hope to "test the waters" at the D-I level.)

SOPHOMORE YEAR:

- 1) Continue to take the required NCAA core courses. Track your core course GPA to ensure you are getting the very best grades you can! (Fix any D's or F's in core classes.)
- 2) Review the NCAA's *Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete* to be sure you understand what recruiting guidelines apply to you. Also review the NAIA's *Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete*
- 3) Continue to play competitive travel ball.
- 4) Begin to research schools and teams to find out what sort of collegiate experience will be right for you.
- 5) Re-read your copy of *Preparing to Play Softball at the Collegiate Level*.
- 6) Begin taking unofficial visits to colleges. (Follow all NCAA guidelines for on campus contacts with coaches.)
- 7) Optional: Register with the NCAA Eligibility Center.
- 8) Optional: Attend college camps or clinics.
- 9) If you want to know if you might be a prospect for some Div. I teams, make a skills video* and upload it to YouTube. Put together introductory snail mail packets to send to college coaches (see Chapter 5 of *Preparing to Play Softball at the Collegiate Level*.) Plan on writing at least 40 to 60 colleges. **Alternatively:** Consider sending out a simple introductory post card with your grad year, contact information, video link, travel team and upcoming travel ball schedule to a variety of programs. (You may want to focus on Div. I programs if you hope to "test the waters" at the D-I level.)

*Note: While game clips and footage *can* be useful to college coaches in some circumstances, a short, well-made skills video that shows mechanics, athleticism, power, etc., is the best way to introduce yourself to college coaches! (See Chapter 6 of *Preparing to Play Softball at the Collegiate Level*.)

JUNIOR YEAR:

- 1) Continue to take the required NCAA core courses, and track your core course GPA to ensure you are getting the very best grades you can! (Fix any D's or F's in core classes.)
- 2) Review the NCAA's *Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete* to be sure you understand what recruiting guidelines apply to you.
- 3) Continue to play competitive travel ball.
- 4) If not already done, register with the NCAA and the NAIA Eligibility Centers. Have your 6th semester transcript sent from your High School to the NCAA in June.
- 5) Schedule and take the SAT and ACT at least once if required by the schools you're looking at.*
- 6) Re-read your copy of *Preparing to Play Softball at the Collegiate Level*.
- 7) Make a skills video or update your existing video and upload it to YouTube. (See previous note on skills videos versus game footage.)
- 8) Put together introductory packets (or updates) to send to college coaches. Target a variety of teams, not just Div. I programs. Plan on writing 40 to 60 colleges.
- 9) Begin/continue taking unofficial visits to colleges. Start taking official visits when asked.

SENIOR YEAR:

- 1) Continue to take the required NCAA core courses, and track your core course GPA to ensure you are going to be NCAA eligible when you graduate!
- 2) Review the NCAA's *Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete* to be sure you know what to do to complete your eligibility certification process. Check with the NCAA and the NAIA Eligibility Centers to make sure your certification is up to date.
- 3) Take the SAT and ACT again (or at least once) if required by the schools you're looking at.
- 4) Continue to play competitive travel ball.
- 5) Follow up (by telephone) with coaches at schools you've contacted or who have contacted you.
- 6) Begin/continue taking visits to colleges, particularly the schools that are recruiting you.
- 7) Begin applying to colleges.
- 8) Make sure your parents apply for financial aid in October by filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

** Recruiting timelines vary tremendously from Division I to Division III and NAIA schools. Since 75% of all players will compete at the D-II, D-III or NAIA level, keep in mind that while coaches at Top 25 D-I schools may be scouting/evaluating freshmen and sophomores, (as well as juniors), the majority of college coaches are more likely to be focusing on juniors and seniors. For most athletes, this process is a marathon, not a sprint, and you may have to continue to contacting coaches into the fall or even the winter of your senior year. By staying on track from the beginning to end of your high school career, you will hopefully find the school that can offer you the collegiate experience you've been dreaming of!

*NOTE: While the NCAA has eliminated its SAT/ACT requirements and the NAIA no longer mandates an SAT/ACT for athletes graduating with a 2.3 GPA or better, many colleges still require these tests or use them as a basis for academic aid. It's a good idea to establish a baseline score by the winter of your junior year and/or have at least one score by your senior year.