

INDIAN FOOTBALL

FROM ATHLETE TO RECRUIT – A FOUR YEAR PLAN

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The purpose of this plan is to give potential recruits (and their parents/guardians) an overview of what they need to be aware of each year of a student-athlete's high school experience – the central focus of which should always be the academic and personal growth of the student-athlete and not the attainment of a scholarship. This plan is by no means all-inclusive – it is an overview created through experience guiding (or assisting in) the recruitment of student-athletes committing to a range of schools and football programs from perennial national championship contenders to Ivy League schools to junior colleges and every level of college football in between. The recruiting process unofficially begins for the student-athlete during the strength and conditioning camp the summer prior to his freshman year in high school and can extend well beyond the final game of his senior year. During that 4+ year long period of time, being informed about this process is the best way to help yourself AND protect yourself against those who would seek to profit financially from your goals.

FRESHMAN YEAR

AREAS OF FOCUS: ACADEMICS, IMPROVING STRENGTH & SPEED, ADJUSTING TO HIGH SCHOOL LIFE, CREATING YOUR BRAND VIA CONTACT AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Very few freshmen play significant varsity minutes during their freshman year – however, most of them will struggle at some point with the transition to high school (whether on the field where the game speeds up and becomes more complex OR in the classroom where students will face greater academic challenges than in previous years). Prospective Recruits are only as good as their film, GPA, and Test Score and a recruit's freshman year is CRUCIAL to establishing a strong GPA.

HIT LIST:

- FOCUS ON ACADEMICS – Nothing less than As or Bs are acceptable
- FOCUS ON OFFSEASON TRAINING – Working out in the athletic period IS NOT ENOUGH. You need to be in the weight room before or after school. You need to be out competing in the spring in powerlifting or track (or another sport – colleges prefer multi-sport athletes who have PROVEN they can manage multiple priorities and still make time to lift)
- RESEARCH – Create a broad list of 50-75 schools you may be interested in on a variety of levels (FBS, FCS, Division 2, Division 3, NAIA) and visit their football websites – if they have a recruiting questionnaire online (and most do) take the time to fill it out
- SOCIAL MEDIA – before you try to get on anyone's radar, you need to CLEAN UP your Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, etc. It should be free of anything that calls your character into question – in short, it should be pictures and tweets and information you would share with your preacher

or grandma. Sometimes this means distancing yourself from “friends” who make bad choices and broadcast it online ... that’s part of the process.

- **FILM** – if you have good Varsity film, meet with the coach in charge of recruiting and talk about making a highlight film (DO NOT MAKE A SUBVARSITY HIGHLIGHT)
- **CAMPS/COMBINES** – Attend 1 day camps and combines in your area
- **CONTACT** – As you find school’s you are interested in, take a moment to email the position coach there and express your interest. Have a simple and well edited note prepared – make sure it is free of grammatical and spelling errors
- **TEST PREP** – Look for free SAT or ACT phone apps to use a little each day and for free practice tests online to start taking
- **VISITS** – Any visits will be unofficial and on your dime – however, sometimes if you contact coaches ahead of time, they can arrange a tour or something along those lines.
- **ETTIQUETTE** – if you receive ANYTHING from a school, be sure respond to it and send a quick “Thank you” email to the coach there

SOPHOMORE YEAR

AREAS OF FOCUS: ACADEMICS, STRENGTH & SPEED, BEGINNING TEST PREP, BUILD RELATIONSHIPS, FILM

Most players with college football potential will begin to see playing time on the varsity level as sophomores (and will likely see playing time increase over the course of the season). This is usually the first real change to build your recruiting resume via film (which is maybe the MOST important aspect of it). As the transition to high school eases somewhat outside of football, the on-field speed and pressures will likely increase – preparation is key. Be focused in meetings and drills to ensure your knowledge is as great as it can be. Put the work in to get stronger and faster to prepare you to compete at higher levels. This is also the time to look for as much SAT or ACT prep as you can. Ask your academic counselors what your district has to offer and look at other opportunities as well. Some of them cost a little bit ... but it’s a legitimate part of the recruiting preparation process. Begin visiting with the coach in charge of recruiting about where you might fit and find opportunities on the college level – warning, MOST high school football players will not be targeted by FCS schools – those who are, usually begin receiving attention from them as sophomores in the way of mail and print media – some may even be offered during the summer following their sophomore year. D1 and D2 coaches cannot personally contact you yet. D3 and NAIA coaches can. You can contact coaches on any level.

HIT LIST:

- **ACADEMICS** – Another CRUCIAL year for GPA building
- **TEST PREP** – this is a great time to find SAT/ACT prep classes or programs to go through. You should also take the PSAT when it is offered at your school.
- **TESTING** – if your prep goes well or if you score well on the PSAT, it is advisable to go ahead and take the SAT or ACT as a sophomore as well. Colleges will not get serious until they can see a score from you – remember you can (and will) retake it to improve that initial score
- **STRENGTH/SPEED TRAINING** – Be a gym rat. If the weight room is open, be in there. You should also pay close attention to your nutrition ... be sure you are eating right and not taking or

drinking things that will harm you and your training (which is tough because you and your friends will start to get drivers' licenses and have some freedom and go to parties – but you have to make a choice about what is more important to you and make decisions that reflect that choice)

- **FILM** – if you earned varsity playing time, you need to work with your recruiting coach to begin building your sophomore year highlight film
- **SOCIAL MEDIA** – stay on top of keeping this squeaky clean – this is the image recruiters will see of you and they don't want the kid who retweets something about getting high or wasted at a party ... one social media misstep can destroy your chances at a scholarship
- **RESEARCH & RELATIONSHIPS** – Start to pare down your list to 40-50 target schools and invest your time to emailing, writing letters to, or calling the coach there. Be cordial, professional, and know what you are going to say. Show them your interest.
- **ETIQUETTE** – if you receive ANYTHING from a school, be sure to respond to it and send a quick "Thank you" email to the coach there – answer any and all emails/letters – return any phone calls or texts – follow coaches on Twitter and allow them to follow you back
- **CAMPS** – as you narrow the list of schools you are interested in (and may start to receive some interest from schools in return), you will want to attend camps for these schools to let their coaches see you in person and begin interacting with you
- **VISITS** – Continue taking unofficial visits to schools of interest as opportunities allow

JUNIOR YEAR

AREAS OF FOCUS: ON FIELD PERFORMANCE/FILM, ACADEMICS, TEST SCORES

During your junior year (through the summer prior to your senior year) you will either draw the attention of a Division 1 program or need to turn your attention towards Division 2, Division 3, and NAIA programs. Not that you won't have the opportunity to impress D1 schools as a senior (you will) but they will likely be out of scholarships at that point unless someone de-commits or does not qualify academically. You must, during your junior year, eliminate any roadblocks to the recruiting process. If your GPA is below 3.0 or you are not in the top quarter of your class at this point, you will need to increase your focus and effort in your academics before it is too late to substantially affect your GPA and Class Rank (and you are almost at that point by your junior year). You also need to continue preparing for the SAT/ACT and retaking it until you have a score that will meet the entrance requirements of schools where there is a mutual interest. Many FCS schools (D1-AA) and all D2 and D3 schools have institutional requirements that may exceed the NCAA Division 1 sliding scale. Ask your recruiting coach about these institutional requirements OR contact the university or coaches directly.

HIT LIST:

- **ACADEMICS** – While you cannot discount how your senior year can affect your GPA (positively or negatively), your junior year is, for the most part, the GPA and Class Rank that will most affect your recruiting (positively or negatively)

- TESTING – You will take the SAT/ACT at least once as a junior and need to meet or surpass admission requirements of schools that have shown a mutual interest (that could mean the NCAA Sliding Scale for D1 recruits or institutional requirements for D2, D3, NAIA, and even some D1 schools).
- NCAA ELIGIBILITY CENTER – formerly the NCAA Clearinghouse – if you are a prospective recruit for a D1 or D2 university, you must register with the NCAA Eligibility Center (<https://web3.ncaa.org/ecwr3/>)
- FILM – This is the most important film you will create highlights of to date. Be sure your film is put together properly with the best plays at the beginning. Don't add music and only add spot shadows, effects if absolutely NECESSARY (and in most cases, if it's a highlight, it won't be). Meet with your recruiting coach to work on your junior highlight.
- JUNIOR DAYS – You may be invited to attend a junior day at an interested school (or some still host "open" junior days for interested potential recruits). If you are invited or have the opportunity to attend an OPEN Junior Day, make the most of it.
- STRENGTH/SPEED – Continue to live in the weight room and compete in the spring. Remain invested in your nutritional goals to support your training program.
- RESEARCH/PLANNING – based on your interests and schools that have shown a mutual interest, you need to have a top 10 and a backup 10. Be sure that your highlight video (or link to your HUDL page) is getting to the position coach at these schools and to the recruiting coordinator/director of player personnel. In most cases, your recruiting coach has already sent that information ... but these guys get THOUSANDS of HUDL links. It never hurts to send it again; especially to coaches you have already corresponded with or met at camps and/or combines. This is where your contacts and networking at camps should pay dividends.
- ETTIQUETTE – Continue answering and responding to any and all contacts from interested schools. Be polite. Seem interested. You never know when/if a coach you have built a rapport with at one school (you may not be interested in) could land a job at a school you ARE interested in

SENIOR YEAR

AREAS OF FOCUS: ON-FIELD PERFORMANCE, ACADEMICS, FINDING THE RIGHT FIT, PREPARING TO PLAY BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL

If you have not committed prior to your senior year, and most prospective recruits have not, you are going to have to put some of the uncertainty about your future aside and focus on the moment – which can be difficult to do. However, in order to find the right opportunity, you will have to elevate your performance on the field – and will need to maintain (or improve upon) your academics as well. As different schools show interest, you may also need to pursue a higher test score if necessary to meet admission requirements. If, at this point, your recruiting is focusing on D2, D3, and NAIA schools, you will also need to realize that much of their recruiting is done AFTER the official signing day in February. Many of these schools, in fact, will still be "signing" commits until May or even June. If you can play and want to play (and are willing to go wherever the opportunity takes you) there is probably an opportunity

out there. That said, if D1 schools aren't still knocking at your door, then you need to give more consideration to schools that will suit your academic goals and focus on the most important part of the recruiting process – not how much they offer, but HOW MUCH YOUR DEGREE WILL COST. Scholarships at the D2 level will be partial scholarships and many people get caught up in “how much” is being offered as a “status” thing instead of keeping the focus on the bottom line.

Finally, when your senior season ends, the toughest offseason of your football career begins. You will not be in the athletic period anymore with coaches to push you and teammates to encourage you. You will lose basically an hour a day of training that has been a part of your offseason routine for years. You will have to have a plan to make that up yourself. Once you have committed somewhere, their strength and conditioning coaches will likely send you a workout to follow – until then, visit with the S&C coach at school to make a plan for what you need to be doing each day (and it might be as simple as the workout that is already posted in the weight room).

HIT LIST:

- GET COMMITTED – Find a place to continue playing and pursuing your degree (regardless of NCAA classification or affiliation) – find a school that meets your goals academically and provides the best financial package
- FINANCIAL AID – Regardless of your recruiting status, unless you are a D1 recruit with a full scholarship, you will need to complete your FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid – <https://fafsa.ed.gov>) as early as possible (January 1st).
- CONTACT – After September 1st, coaches of all levels can call you on a weekly basis – if you miss their call, be SURE to call them back. If they call ... CALL BACK ... don't text.
- OFFICIAL VISITS – During and after your senior year, you may be asked to come on OFFICIAL VISITS (maximum of 5 for D1 and D2 schools) – the school will pay for your room and board while you are there and sometimes for transportation there
- STAY IN SHAPE AND LOOK THE PART – Sometimes after the February signing date, a D1 school may be scrambling to fill a spot ... and into the springtime as D2, D3, and NAIA schools gain commits ... you will need to pass the “eye test” when a recruited comes by to visit. This is where it is crucial to put the work in after school in the weight room even though you are likely no longer in athletics at this point
- CAMPS/COMBINES/SHOWCASES – During the summer before your senior year, go to as many 1 day camps as you can with programs you are interested in (and have shown interest in you). Following the season, if you are uncommitted, look for combines and showcases for unsigned athletes to attend. Your recruiting coach will help you with these – make sure to keep in close contact with him after the season. Pay attention to what is posted on the bulletin boards in the field house as well.
- NCAA ELIGIBILITY CENTER – if you did not register with the NCAA Eligibility Center as a junior, or just start to receive attention from D1 or D2 schools as a senior, you will need to register before they can talk with you about opportunities there (<https://web3.ncaa.org/ecwr3/>)

- WALK ONS/PREFERRED WALK ONS – Some athletes make the decision to walk on to a D1 school even if they have not been offered – understand that even if you make it through the tryout (or are a PREFERRED WALK ON and don't have to try out) – you will be footing the bill for your education until the program awards you a scholarship (which doesn't always happen).