



SOFTBALL ACADEMY

with Mitch Alexander

6 Year College Recruiting Plan

Elaine started her senior year a few weeks ago. She's a good softball player but does not have a college commitment. What's worse, she doesn't know what she wants to study or what schools she's interested in. She knows she wants to play softball in college and she wants to go to a school in the northeast. Elaine thought that her club coach was going to find her a college to go to. The realization that this wasn't going to happen only occurred towards the end of last summer when Elaine completed her junior year.

Suddenly, Elaine realized that in a few months her softball career might be over! What would her life be without softball? She identifies with being a softball player. Softball is part of who she is. To not have softball in her life is a scary thought for Elaine. She doesn't make new friends that easily and softball has always provided her with a built-in group of friends. Softball has been a part of her since she was 6 years old! It's now October of her senior year and there are no prospects for college commitments. This situation has led to lots of stress for Elaine and her family. She hasn't even applied to the local community college as she always assumed that she would have a place to play softball and go to school. It's now



crunch time for Elaine.

What mistakes did Elaine make and how can you avoid the same ones? The main issue and the one that is most obvious is that Elaine waited too long - way too long. Softball players who are planning on attending college need to start thinking about the recruiting process as early as possible. How early is reasonable? I believe that the process should start in seventh grade! Can you start the process earlier? Sure, but you probably won't gain much. Can you start it later? Yes, but the timeline can only be compressed so far. How much later, depends on the player's goals. For example, Players interested in Division I schools should start the process early. Players interested in Division II schools may have a little more time. Players interested in Division III schools can start later. Pitchers and catchers should start early as college coaches often recruit for these positions first. Below is a breakdown of the activities and milestones that should be achieved in each of the six years of the NCAA recruiting process. The milestone dates are approximate and can be changed to suit your timeline and schedule.

Softball Recruiting Plan (6 year)

Seventh Grade	
Activities	Milestones
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start using the Internet to learn about the recruiting process. Read everything you can find. Start using the Internet to learn about colleges and universities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Be able to explain the recruiting process to your parents by February 1st. <input type="checkbox"/> Be able to provide a list of schools you found interesting and explain what was interesting to your parents by August 1st.



Eighth Grade

Activities	Milestones
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the Internet to research careers and which careers are expected to show growth for the timeframe you will be looking for your first job. In eighth grade this is approximately 9 to 10 years. • Use the Internet to develop a list of colleges and universities that have programs compatible with your chosen career. The list should be very broad and include schools from more than one NCAA division. Your list should include approximately 50 schools. You can find lists of schools with softball programs on the NCAA softball website. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Be able to discuss career options with your parents by February 1st <input type="checkbox"/> Be able to review school options that are compatible with your chosen career with your parents by August 1st. The review should include: program of intended study, school location, cost per year, ratio of students to teachers, information about their softball program, campus layout, etc.

Ninth Grade

Activities	Milestones
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research college clinics and camps • Continue to monitor and review career options. Are there any changes in career outlooks for 8 to 9 years from now? • Think about and decide if there are any school requirements that are important to you. For example, I want to attend a school in the northeast or southwest. This eliminates a whole bunch of schools. • Revise your list of schools. Add or remove as necessary based on the school requirements you identified in the previous activity. • Research and understand the differences between Division I, II, and III. Understand the academic, athletic, and time requirements for each. • Tryout for and join the best travel team you can. The team should participate in at least a couple of college showcases. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Sign up for 1 or more college clinics for the fall/winter season. The clinics should be held at schools you are interested in. <input type="checkbox"/> Complete your career outlook review by October 1st. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider school requirements and be able to discuss these requirements with your parents by January 1st. <input type="checkbox"/> Revise your school list by March 1st <input type="checkbox"/> Be able to review the aspects of each division of NCAA member schools and discuss with your parents by May 1st <input type="checkbox"/> Sign up for 1 or more college clinics for the spring/summer season. The clinics should be held at schools you are interested in. <input type="checkbox"/> Join the best travel team you can for the coming fall season by September 1st.



Tenth Grade	
Activities	Milestones
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create your first skills video and post on the Internet (YouTube or other hosting service). Some of the best skills videos are created by players and parents. If you do not have the desire, equipment, or skill to do this, hire someone who can. ● Join an online recruiting database such as CaptainU. Create your profile. Upload pictures of you playing. Upload links to game footage of you playing – make sure the footage is edited down to just you playing. ● Register to take an SAT or practice SAT as appropriate. ● Research college clinics and camps ● Continue to monitor and review career options. Are there any changes in career outlooks for 7 to 8 years from now? ● Consider your previous decisions. Do they still hold? Which criteria are still important? Are you still interested in a particular division, or are you now considering a different division? Is the geographic region you were interested in, still what you want? revised criteria decision making to narrow your list. Make sure that you are selecting schools that are a good fit. Can you get in academically? Do you fit athletically? ● Create a player profile – single sheet summary. Look on the Internet for many examples. ● Send out your first introductory letter to college coaches. You are allowed to initiate contact with coaches, but they cannot initiate contact with you. If you are interested in an early commitment the best way (and for some the only way) is to initiate contact. Coaches can send you questionnaires but not recruiting material yet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Create your skills video and post online by October 1st. <input type="checkbox"/> Join an online recruiting database by October 1st. <input type="checkbox"/> Register to take the SAT or PSAT by October 1st. <input type="checkbox"/> Sign up for 2 or more college clinics for the fall/winter season. The clinics should be held at schools you are interested in. <input type="checkbox"/> Complete your career outlook review by October 1st. <input type="checkbox"/> Complete your decision review by November 1st. <input type="checkbox"/> Narrow your list of schools by December 1st. <input type="checkbox"/> Send out your letters to college coaches, including a link to your skills video, your player profile, and your spring/summer travel schedule by April 1st. <input type="checkbox"/> Send out your update letters to college coaches by June 1st (earlier if your spring schedule starts earlier). <input type="checkbox"/> Send out letters to college coaches whose clinics you are attending by July 1st. <input type="checkbox"/> High level Division I schools will start giving verbal commitments during the summer. Division II coaches can start calling after June 15th. Division III coaches can contact you anytime.



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send out an update letter to college coaches reminding them of your spring/summer travel schedule and any changes or awards you have received in school or school ball. • Send out letters to college coaches whose clinics you are attending this spring/summer. • Register with the NCAA Eligibility Center by going to www.eligibilitycenter.org 	
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Eleventh Grade

Activities	Milestones
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare yourself to speak with college coaches. They can now email you and speak on the phone if you call them. They cannot initiate or return calls, but if you reach them they can speak with you. Use the Internet to research questions to ask a college coach. Speak with players who have gone through the process already. • Revise your skills video. You have matured physically as well as improved as a player. Make sure you have an updated video for coaches to see. • Register to take the SAT. The SAT test changes to a new format January, 2016. Register to take SAT Subject Tests as soon as you complete a class. Remember to designate that test scores get sent to the NCAA eligibility center by entering a 9999 in the score recipient field when taking tests. • Research college clinics and camps • Continue to send out update letters to college coaches. They can now send you recruiting material. • Continue to monitor and review career options. Are there any changes in career • Consider your previous decisions. Do they still hold? Which criteria are still important? • Narrow your list of schools down to 10 or so. Use your revised career outlook and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare yourself to speak with college coaches by September 1st. <input type="checkbox"/> Revise your skills video and post online by October 1st. <input type="checkbox"/> Register to take the SAT by October 1st. <input type="checkbox"/> Sign up for 3 or more college clinics for the fall/winter season. The clinics should be held at schools you are interested in. <input type="checkbox"/> Send out update letters to college coaches by October 1st <input type="checkbox"/> Complete your decision review by November 1st. <input type="checkbox"/> Further narrow your list of schools by December 1st. <input type="checkbox"/> Send out update letters to college coaches every month once your list is further narrowed. Include academic and athletic changes a <input type="checkbox"/> Take unofficial visits before school ends. <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare to answer college coach phone calls by July 1st. <input type="checkbox"/> Division I coaches can call you once a week starting July 1st, and twice a week starting August 1st.



<p>revised criteria decision making to narrow your list.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send out update letters to your narrowed down list of colleges. • Take unofficial visits to as many of the schools on your narrowed down list as possible in late winter/early spring. • Prepare yourself to accept calls from college coaches who can now speak with you after July 1st. 	
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Twelfth Grade	
Activities	Milestones
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are still uncommitted by the start of fall ball, locate showcase events for unsigned players. Also consider hiring a recruiting company for help. • Register to take SAT/ACT tests • If you are uncommitted, continue to research college clinics and camps • Continue to monitor and review career options. Are there any changes in career outlooks for 5 to 6 years from now? • Narrow your list of schools to focus on to 5. You can now take official visits. These visits are paid for by the school (Division I and II only). • If you are still uncommitted by the summer, things are not looking great for college softball. There is one last hope – inquire about walk on players. Contact the coaches at the top 15 schools on your list and ask about the possibility of being a walk on player. Another possibility is to look at junior colleges. • If you are committed, continue sending out update letters to your coach every quarter or more frequently if they ask. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> If still uncommitted, locate and enroll in unsigned player showcases by September 1st. <input type="checkbox"/> Register to take SAT/ACT tests by October 1st. <input type="checkbox"/> If you are currently uncommitted, sign up for 4 or more college clinics for the fall/winter season. The clinics should be held at schools you are interested in but have previously not attended. <input type="checkbox"/> Complete your career update review by October 1st. <input type="checkbox"/> Contact coaches and schedule official visits by October 1st. <input type="checkbox"/> If committed, send update letters to your coach at least every quarter. <input type="checkbox"/> Division II and Division III schools typically make offers in the spring. <input type="checkbox"/> Early signings (known as National Letter of Intent (NLI) Signing Day) for Division I and Division II are held in November and late signings are held in April. <input type="checkbox"/> August 1st is the last possible signing date for most schools.

As you can see, there are a lot of activities in the recruiting process. The earlier you start on them the less stress you will have later on.



The activities and milestones listed are not the only way to get recruited, but they capture the major recruiting activities most players go through. You can optionally hire a recruiting service to advise you on the process, make connections, and handle much of the leg work. If you can afford this route and prefer to have someone do most of the work, then this is a great option.

Had Elaine started on this process in seventh grade, she would probably not be scrambling now close to the eleventh hour to find a softball program and school. If you are a softball player in tenth grade and you haven't started this process, you need to kick into high gear and accomplish all of the tasks listed in seventh through ninth grades in a very short time and then accomplish all of the tasks required in tenth grade. Much of the recruiting preparatory work occurs in tenth grade so you can start interacting with coaches in eleventh grade. If you are currently in eleventh grade and have not started this process, you can still get it done but you will need lots of help doing so. Either enlist the help of your parents or hire a professional. If you are in twelfth grade and you are just starting this process, don't waste any more time. List the tasks you haven't accomplished already and put together a realistic timeline to get them done. If you can't get them done within a few weeks, hire a professional.

Mitch Alexander is the CIO for a major electronics company and coaches both Little League and Travel softball teams and is currently completing his PhD. He is a certified SUNY, ASA, and Double Goal Coach. His wife, Marie was one of the first female student athletes in the country to play Little League softball after Title IX was passed and played in the first Little League Softball World Series. Over the years, both have managed teams together and helped spark a love for softball in their student athletes. In his spare time, Mitch designs websites for fastpitch teams and businesses and can be reached at fastpitch2001@optonline.net.

