

Parents! Listen up! A Dad shares Important Recruiting Insights

January 31st, 2012 - by Charlie Adams

One of the things I do here is share the experiences of families that are going through recruiting, so that you can learn things from what they are doing, and apply it to your situation. Though each sport is different, there are many common factors in recruiting.

A young lady named Dominique Dotson recently committed to play college lacrosse for Division One Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia. I talked with her father, Duane, and asked him to share the recruiting story and what lessons they had learned through the process.

The Recruiting Experience of Dominique Dotson

*“Charlie, **Dominique wasn’t sure she wanted to play college sports until her sophomore year. The University of Notre Dame had a clinic here on Long Island. We went and she won an award. That peaked her interest and she wanted to play college. At that point, I knew I had to develop a plan.** She got invited to a clinic on campus and did very well. The head coach at the time thought very highly of her so it appeared that would be where she would play. Well, my daughter took the foot off the recruiting gas thinking she didn’t have to do much. Then they had a head coaching change and I told her you need to look at other schools.*

On September 1st of her junior year (that’s when D1 coaches can start emailing or writing personal letters) she started getting emails. The new head coach at Notre Dame wasn’t as interested as the past one (the new coach mentioned walk on, but that was it) so we were back to Square One. Dominique developed a list of 50 schools that she was interested in and started corresponding with many of them. In my research I learned that exposure was important so we went to a big showcase in Florida, the President’s Cup, during November because in my research I had learned that there would be a lot of college coaches there and she would get looked at. Sure enough, Liberty University saw her and got the message across that they were interested in her and wanted to know when she could visit. We visited not long afterwards, and on the second day they offered. She liked their academics and the fact she wouldn’t have to change positions as other college coaches were wanting her to do. It’s a new program at Liberty so she believed she would have a chance to play right away and be a part of something that was building from the ground up. She wasn’t promised that she would play right away but they made it clear that their interest in her showed that they thought she would have a shot.

One thing that is important for parents to know is that college coaches will ask you what other schools you are considering. My daughter told them, and that list included another team in their conference. The coach said she did not want to have to face her, so that was part of her decision to offer. She gave Dominique six weeks to decide, but after getting home and discussing it thoroughly my daughter called the coach the next day and accepted.

Lacrosse is basically all partial scholarships (like sports such as soccer, softball and baseball) so she is getting 40% athletic scholarship. Based on my research, that is rather generous for a

freshman as it is usually 25% or 33%. Her academics are strong so that will cover a lot of the rest. It looks like about 90% will be covered.

My advice to parents is that recruiting is not over until the college coach states an offer and tells you how much it is. Camps and brochures and letters mean nothing until that concrete offer comes to you. Don't take all of it personally and don't get caught up on one school because that school may not be there at the end (with them it was Notre Dame at the start and Liberty University at the end). Keep your options open.

You have to anticipate coaching changes, especially in a sport like lacrosse where they are moving around a lot. Don't fall in love with the coach but with the college. This was all a real emotional rollercoaster trying to read into what the coaches were meaning and with a teen whose thought patterns were changing daily. As parents we have to be the level headed one and expect our kids to change their minds. You have to keep reminding yourself it is your child being recruited and not you. On visits, parents, speak when spoken to. The college coach wants to ask your child questions. You will feel you know the answer better than he or she can answer it, so you will want to blurt it out, but don't. College coaches aren't going to draw back interest because a teen might get tongue tied on an answer. They are used to dealing with kids that age. You have to let your kids speak for themselves.

*I would suggest you do NCSA if you do not have a lot of time to work the recruiting process. In my case, I did have the time, but not every parent does.” - **Duane Dotson, Dad***

Thank you, Duane. **ESPN High School** did a Q and A with Dominique to get her perspective on the recruiting process:

ESPNHS: What made Liberty such an attractive choice?

DD: “The academic aspect is perfect; especially the possibility to study for one semester in Washington D.C. at Congress.”

ESPNHS: What surprised you about the recruiting process?

DD: “That it had began and ended so early and quickly.”

ESPNHS: What was the most important question you asked college coaches during the process?

DD: “How will being a lacrosse player affect my academics?”

ESPNHS: What one piece of advice would you give to other players who are just starting on the recruiting process?

DD: “Be proactive, respond to all schools that contact you and be patient. Everyone's recruiting experience will differ.”

ESPNHS: Is there anything about the recruiting process that you think could change that would have made it easier or less stressful for you?

DD: “Playing club lacrosse as a ninth grader.”

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