

Recruiting in Division III and the NAIA

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What does it really mean when high school athletes say they want “DI or nothing”?

By now, Division I and II schools have signed the athletes they’re going to sign. If you’re not one of the 1% of high school athletes who earn full rides to DI schools – do you want “nothing”?

Or do you want to find a school where you can compete in the sport you love, earn money towards your education, and change your life? If you do – now is the time to learn about Division III and NAIA schools.



Division III

With 444 members, including some of the nation’s top academic institutions, it is the largest of the three divisions of the NCAA. While technically speaking Division III schools cannot offer “athletic scholarships,” they can and do help their athletes fund their education with need-based, academic, and third party scholarships.

3 Things to Know About Division III Recruiting

- 1. Programs have small recruiting budgets – the average is \$500. It’s tough for them to travel and see recruits who don’t live nearby. On the other hand – if you reach out to a Division III school, you have less competition. In other words, *the advantages of being proactive are huge in Division III.***
- 2. Coaches have much more freedom to contact recruits. Division I and II coaches have year-by-year restrictions, schedules, and regulations about how, when and why they can contact recruits. *In Division III, there are some restrictions on in-person visits, but coaches can call, email, or text any athlete, at any time, for any reason. Because of limited budgets, they usually won’t contact you until senior year, but again, if you are proactive and reach out to them, they will follow up with you.***
- 3. There is no National Letter of Intent. Any athlete who wants to attend a Division III schools must apply and be accepted before they commit, and *isn’t fully committed until***

they receive and accept their financial aid package (you can read more about applying for admission and financial aid by [clicking here](#)).

If you aren't where you'd like to be academically, or athletically, but you are dedicated and want an opportunity to play at the next level and get a college education, Division III may be for you.

NAIA

There are also many opportunities available in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (or NAIA), a completely separate body from the NCAA. With almost 300 member schools, it is the second-largest athletic conference after Division III. NAIA schools are generally small (most have less than 5,000 students), and their recruiting rules are much less strict.

3 Things to Know About NAIA Recruiting

1. Like Division III, most programs have small recruiting budgets. Unlike Division III, **NAIA schools can offer athletic scholarships. This means that, despite their small size, NAIA schools have very competitive sports – about on the level of NCAA Division II.**
2. ***There are no restrictions at all on coach communications. Coaches can call, email, or text potential recruits. They can write on their Facebook walls or tweet at them. They can visit their houses or go to their games. There are no time or age restrictions. Even more so than Division III, being proactive can lead to huge benefits when it comes to recruiting.***
3. Although they don't use the National Letter of Intent that Division I and II schools do, **NAIA schools can draft their own binding letters of intent.** This can give confidence to the school and the athlete about where they will be playing.

If you want competitive athletics and a guaranteed roster spot or an athletic scholarship, if you're interested in an institution with a small student body and small class sizes, the NAIA may be for you.

Division III and the NAIA have their own sets of academic standards, which are in turn different from the standards for Division I and II.