

Why G.P.A. Matters when it comes to Scholarships!

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Bethel College (IN) men's basketball coach Mike Lightfoot recently shared extremely important information for families to know about recruiting, and specifically about opportunities at the N.A.I.A. level (National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics). NCSA speakers tell audiences, **"The better your grades, the more opportunities for scholarships!"** Lightfoot, who is in the NAIA Hall of Fame, verifies that here.

With over 630 victories at Bethel, Lightfoot made college basketball history by reaching 500 wins faster than any coach in history, including Coach K and John Wooden.

At the NAIA level, they have athletic scholarship money and other ways for young people to have their college education funded.

ON WHY ACADEMICS ARE SO IMPORTANT TO GET SCHOLARSHIPS!

"When we say we have six athletic scholarships to offer at our level of N.A.I.A, think similar to the salary cap in pro sports. If a student athlete is a 3.5 GPA or higher in High School and maintains that at the College level, that athletic scholarship money he or she receives does not count towards those six athletic scholarships. If we can find a young man or woman with a 3.5 or higher and they maintain it in College, that becomes uncountable aid and we look at that person as a free scholarship for us and use that athletic money for someone that doesn't qualify with a 3.5.

All of the schools I recruit against at the NAIA level, **if they had their choice between a 3.2 kid and a 3.5 GPA kid, even if the 3.2 kid is a little better, they will sign the 3.5 kid because it doesn't count against the athletic scholarship limit. It is great incentive for young people to do well academically. A lot of parents and guidance counselors don't know this, but it is what it is."**

ON WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO START THE RECRUITING PROCESS EARLY

"We start tracking players in their freshmen and sophomore year, then get more serious junior year. We have three main ways that we learn about prospects. We use recruiting services. We go to AAU tournaments and purchase lists of players there, and we work with High School coaches. We will initially mail out Questionnaires to students at their home. We used to send it to the Coach at School but many times the Coach would screen them. They might think that their player was too good for the NAIA level and that's sad because they may not know what the athlete wants and they may not be able to judge if the young person is good enough or not. Once the athlete returns the information, they go into our computer system and we start tracking them and sending more things to them. By the time they are juniors we will have eighteen to twenty we are focused on and out of those we will sign three or four."

ON WHY PARENTS HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THE RECRUITING PROCESS

“We get phone calls in April or May from parents of seniors that say they assumed when their child was done with senior year of playing that they would get phone calls from College coaches and sign on the dotted line. They take it for granted that everyone is a D1 player and when they realize they are not it is sad because by that time we have made our decisions on recruits. They become distraught because there is no place for their child to go and play. **They have to start becoming involved by sophomore and certainly by junior year.**”

ON THE TALENT LEVEL AT N.A.I.A.

“A player has to be very talented at the highest levels of NAIA Division 1 or 2. They have to be a low D1 or Mid Major to really play, in our Conference especially (the highly competitive Mid Central Conference). Coach Rollie Massimino who is down at Northwood University in Florida, a NAIA Division 2 like us, they lost to Maryland by five. I would say five of the players on our team at Bethel College were recruited by D1 schools. People think there is NCAA Division One that that all of the other levels are about the same and that is not true. Many of our kids are either late bloomers are very talented kids that simply wanted to play at a smaller setting or school. In all my years of coaching people have not understood the talent and skill it takes to play in the NAIA.”

Read more: [Why G.P.A. Matters when it comes to Scholarships! | College Recruiting Blog - Athletic Scholarships Blog | NCSA](http://www.ncsasports.org/blog/2011/12/02/why-g-p-a-matters-when-it-comes-to-scholarships/#ixzz11Kb7aIwi) <http://www.ncsasports.org/blog/2011/12/02/why-g-p-a-matters-when-it-comes-to-scholarships/#ixzz11Kb7aIwi>