



## **Yes, college coaches do evaluate parents**

If the term “helicopter parent” tells us anything, it’s that parents are involved in the college decision-making process now more than ever—and coaches are taking notice.

“Coaches want to evaluate both the student-athlete and their parents,” says JC Field, a former Division I baseball coach. “We want to know their strengths because a lot of the time we can assume their student-athlete has similar strengths.”

But here’s the dilemma: Parents don’t always know when they’re being evaluated by college coaches and often don’t realize how they can positively impact their child’s recruiting.

While recruiting, Field, who coached over a 9-year span at Southeast Missouri State, the University of North Dakota, and the University of Missouri, made sure to meet parents and observe their conversation in the stands.

“Are they complaining about playing time? Being overbearing? This is a family decision, so the more you know about them, the more you know about the student-athlete,” says Field.

Whether you’re the parent who shouts from the bleachers or one who observes quietly from afar, coaches do notice you—and they want to get to know you. Here are some avoidable mishaps you might endure while watching games, tournaments, or showcases where coaches are present.

### **Introducing yourself at the wrong time**

If you have to ask, “Is now a bad time?” It’s a bad time. Events like showcases and tournaments can bring together coaches from across the country and plop them all in the same place. It’s an exciting moment for families and you may find yourself treating the scene like a zoo, checking out all the colleges in attendance.

While it’s possible for coaches to stumble upon some undiscovered talent, most have a specific list of athletes they want to see. And if you’re child isn’t on it, introducing yourself to the coach

in that moment may not provide much benefit. If you do approach them, keep it short and sweet, and read their cues. If they want to keep talking to you, they will.

**Here's what you can do instead:** Before your student-athlete attends an event, have them research the schools that will be there and email the programs they're interested in. They should include an introduction, expression of interest in the university, questions for the coach, key stats, and a link to a highlight video. Another good tactic is following up with a phone call. There's a chance the college coach may have missed their email, and calling is one of the better ways to get on their radar. The end goal is to have your athlete be evaluated by the college coach online and make initial contact, so that when they come to an event your child is participating in, your introduction will be expected.

**Bottom line:** Coaches absolutely want to talk to the parents of the student-athletes they're recruiting, so initiating contact and garnering interest from a coach prior to attending an event will lead to more meaningful in-person conversations.

### **Not knowing the rules**

There are certain times during the recruiting process when coaches can watch athletes compete live, but aren't allowed to talk them or their parents in-person. This is called an evaluation period and differs depending on the sport. But if you didn't know that ahead of time, things could get a little awkward.

For example, if you were to approach a coach during this time—even to say “hello”—they will keep the conversation short to avoid any illegal contact. You may think they're being rude, but rest assured their silence means they are simply following NCAA protocol (and not an insult.)

**Here's what you can do instead:** Beef up on the NCAA contact rules. The NCAA publishes recruiting calendars every year to help athletes and coaches understand when the different periods occur. There are five you should look out for: contact periods, dead periods, quiet periods, evaluation periods and the signing period. Knowing when coaches can reach out to your child can help maximize their opportunities.

### **Read more about the Recruiting Calendars:**

Know the Recruiting Rules: [What is the NCAA Contact Period?](#)

Know the Recruiting Rules: [What is the NCAA Quiet Period?](#)

Know the Recruiting Rules: [What is the NCAA Evaluation Period?](#)

Know the Recruiting Rules: [What is the NCAA Dead Period?](#)

## Asking questions at the right time

Some moments shouldn't be interrupted, especially when coaches are evaluating multiple athletes. Field recalls a couple of instances where parents leaned over his radar gun asking about the key stat of the player he was watching. Don't you hate it when a co-worker is peering over your computer? It's pretty much the same thing.

So keep in mind that while coaches are looking forward to speaking with you, they're also on the job. If their eyes are peeled on the athletes or they look incredibly focused, seize a different opportunity to ask questions.

**Here's what you can do instead:** An ideal time to talk to a coach is shortly after the game. Student-athletes are in the locker room getting dressed and you can start a quick chat with the coach while they're waiting for the players to come out.

You don't want to come off too aggressive and jump right into your student-athlete's recruiting, though. Start with general questions about their program and coaching style—what kind of athletic and academic support would your child receive? What's the offseason training like? If the coach is interested in recruiting your student, they'll most likely inquire about how your process is going. And, when your child joins the conversation, remember to let them speak. Don't take over and answer questions for them. Coaches want to get to know the athletes and they can't do that when parents dominate the conversation.

## Setting an example

Whether you're in line at the concession stand or sitting in the bleachers, act as if a coach were always around you—because they most likely are. In these moments, your behavior becomes a reflection of your family. Are you cheering? Complaining about the coach to another parent? Being too individualistic and only yelling at your child? Acting like an agent representing your athlete?

Plus, like any other career, coaches have a network. For example, take a look at **Positive Coach Alliance**, where coaches come together to provide insight on various topics, like parents seeking more playing time. Always staying on your best behavior will ensure coaches think highly of you.

Here's what you can do instead: It's simple, really: be supportive.

"We wanted parents who are involved because they are the biggest fans and on the road with us. Their role is to be there and help them through this process," Field says.

Learn the core values of the team and actively show coaches your family represents them.