

Volleyball Recruiting 2022

Learning and Advice

Nikki Quinn

Part 1: Recruiting before June 15

The goal: Make sure coaches know who you are and that you are very interested in their program.

- Create a large list of schools - cast a wide net
- Email often - at least 2x per month
- Send video after every tournament

What I learned - advice

- Contact as many schools as possible early in the process. Don't limit or narrow schools early. You never know who is interested. Duke never contacted me before June 15th (they said their policy is not to email before June 15).
- Be enthusiastic! Make sure every school feels as though they are at the top of your list. You really don't know who will be at the top of your list until after you speak with the coaches in June, so treat every one like it could be your top choice. My list changed a lot after speaking with coaches.
- If you don't reach out to a school, they are much less likely to reach out to you on June 15th. They don't have time to pursue players that aren't interested in them.
- Use email and videos to explain who you are as a person, not just as a player. Show what makes you different or stand out. Duke and USC told me they get 50-100 emails a day.
- Talk to current players to learn about the programs. If possible, reach out to Wave or high school alumni. Otherwise, use social media and contact players directly. Most players I contacted we're happy to speak with me. They enjoy talking about their program!
- Be organized

- Log all contacts so you can remember who contacted you, what they said, and if they seem really interested in you.
 - Create a good email system that prevents errors.
- Use division 3 schools to practice your interview skills now, and to keep your options open. There are lots of great D3 academic schools with good athletic programs.

Email learning / advice

- Have a good system for sending lots of emails:
 - Use a partner (like a parent) to review and check for errors before sending each email. Double check coaches' names, email addresses, and school names.
 - Have a document with all coaches names and emails - verify the contact info at least once a month (coaches change school a lot).
- Avoid using mascot names in your emails - too easy to mix up... for example Broncos vs Mustangs.
- For each email, write a generic component that works for all schools; then write a personalized sentence or two for each of your top schools.
- Limit "fill in the blanks" in your generic text - easy to make errors.
- Don't obsess over email responses: Duke and Harvard never wrote me back before June 15th... but they were the most interested schools when I talked to them. They had been following me the whole time.
- Ask if they are recruiting your position in your year: "If you're not able to respond to me directly, I would love more information on your program. If you need a 2024 (*your position here*) and you think I might be a possible fit for your team, please feel free to contact Kevin Hodge at..."

Highlight video format

- From Duke:
 - The first 20 seconds of your highlight video will determine whether they watch the rest of your video and read your email. They almost always watch the video before reading the email. The video highlights need to catch their attention.

- Your highlight videos largely determine whether the coach comes to watch you in person. If they haven't seen your highlight video, they rarely will stop at your court to watch you.
- Put your best highlights up front.
 - You have less than 30 seconds to capture the coach's attention.
 - Duke and USC told me they get 50-100 emails each day - most include videos.
- In the first 30 seconds make sure to show athleticism: jumping ability, arm strength, quickness:
 - Hitters: show jumping and arm strength. Always put terminal kills first.
 - Liberos: show most spectacular digs first; they will only watch your passing if they like your defense first. Passing is much less exciting and more standard for everyone.
 - Setters: show sets that end with a big kill from your hitters... show how you make your hitters look good.
- Highlight your GPA if it is good.
- Don't be afraid to show who you are as a person as well. My most watched video was about my hobbies and interests during the pandemic (not a volleyball video).
- You can see examples on my YouTube channel

Use Kevin (recruiting coordinator)

Directly from Duke...

- Duke said the recruiting coordinator and club director are the most important and useful people during this process.
- Even before June 15, schools are allowed to talk with Kevin directly about players. When Kevin talks with them he can find whether they are interested in you as a recruit and want to set up a phone call when they are allowed. They are not allowed to specify whether they can offer you money or specify where you rank on their list.
- If they are not interested you can take them off your list.
- Based on this, you should use Kevin as a resource as much as possible. Work with him to reach out to the top schools on your list and see if he can find out if there is mutual interest. Duke strongly recommended you do this.

Part 2: After June 15th - The interviews

Goals / Objectives:

- Evaluate schools, coaches, and programs - which are a good fit for you?
- Convince programs that they should make you an offer.

How?

- Be great in every interview - do your homework!
 - Research the program and school - make them know you are really interested.
 - Be ready to talk about what makes you a unique person, a great teammate, and a great fit for their program.
 - Practice your answers so you don't have to think when asked.
 - Be personable, sociable, and likable on every call!
 - Treat every interview as an opportunity to stand out relative to all other players.
- Evaluate programs thoroughly - talk to existing players and recent graduates to get the real details about the program.
- Develop a system to manage your email, texts, and calendar - this is harder than it seems

What I learned: post June 15

Interview advice:

- Interviews are a way for the coaches to get to know you as a person. They are assessing how you will fit in their program. You won't just discuss your volleyball skills (you may not talk about volleyball at all on some calls). Be ready to talk about yourself. Be personable, sociable, and likable! The coach is evaluating if you are someone they want to spend every day for four years with.
- Have a good story that explains who you are and what makes you unique. Be ready to answer the question, "Tell me a bit about yourself." Make it brief, fun, and memorable. This answer will be your first impression for most coaches.
- Tell them what you like about the school and what you've learned in your research. If there is an area of study you like, explain why that school is a good fit for your academic interests.

- Talk to existing players and recent alumni to get the real details about the program. Do this before you talk to the coach if you can. That will impress them.
- Prepare a list of questions for the coach that will really help you understand the culture of their program, the coaching style, athlete support, and the time commitment. Is it really a good fit for you?
- Be ready for interviews where the coach starts the interview with “So what questions do you have for me?” Always have a list of questions prepared to ask the coach.
- Decide if you are more comfortable on Zoom or phone and politely ask if you can use that option before each interview.
 - I personally like Zoom because I could read the expression on their faces. It felt more personal. But others may feel different.
- End each call with next steps:
 - When should we talk next?
 - What is your timeline for making a decision?
- Create a good routine and process and stick with it: find the most comfortable place in your house to conduct interviews. Have your notes and questions ready.
- Be honest about your interests and hobbies. Don't just tell them things to impress them. Many will have the same interests and ask follow up questions because they are excited you share an interest. For example, if you say you like to read, be ready to talk about your favorite books and those that you've read recently. Or if you like to bake, be ready to talk about your favorite recipes and techniques in the kitchen.
- I recommend talking at least once to any school that is interested. You might find that you really like the coach. And you never know where coaches will be in a couple months. Coaches move around a lot and they may end up at a school in which you are interested.
- Always be grateful for the opportunity to speak with any coach or program, even if it is not at the top of your list. Make sure they know how grateful you are.
- Most important... a warning: never mistake interest from a coach for an offer.
 - Even if they say “you're our top choice” or “we really, really like you”, it does not mean they will make an offer.
 - Do not expect all coaches to be completely transparent with you.
 - Until a school makes you an official offer, do not limit your other options.

Common Interview questions

- Tell me a bit about yourself
- Why are you interested in our school or program?
- What do you like to do when you're not playing volleyball?
- How will you make your decision? What is your timeline?
- What other schools are you interested in? Who are you talking to?
- Why do you think you are a good fit for the program?
- More here...

Choosing a school

- Your top choices may change after you speak with coaches the first time. Don't narrow too early.
- The timeline can really vary.
 - Some schools will make offers on June 15 (or soon after).
 - Some will want to talk to everyone first and take their time.
 - Some will wait until camps so they can work with you in person.
 - Many players will not commit for months after June 15th. The process can take much longer than expected. Don't despair if you do not commit right away.

Camps

- Camps are a good way for you to evaluate a program and coaches.
- But, they aren't absolutely necessary to get an offer from a school. If you can't attend a camp for any reason, don't stress. I was not able to attend either a Duke or Harvard camp.
- Why attend a camp?
 - Exposure - At your very top schools, you can get in front of the coaches and help them get to know you better.
 - Evaluate the school – you want to evaluate their program, coaching, campus, etc.

- Decide on camps after June 15th if you can. If they will fill up and you have to decide early, then you may have to register and eat the price if you change your mind and attend a different camp. Your list of top schools may change after June 15th, so it is hard to know what your top schools will be until that time.