



## Factors in Making the Decision

### 1. ACADEMICS V SOCCER!

It is important to understand that they are making an academic decision. Grades need to be maintained, as they are the most vital component in the college selection process. Improving your grades in junior and senior years is an excellent indicator to a college that you are a serious student and someone that they want at their institution for 4 years. Think about what areas you enjoy and start to formulate some idea on what major you would like to study. Look at what colleges offer these majors and investigate what it would take to get into those schools. Always try to have a range of schools that interest you – some which seem out of reach, some middle ground and some that you feel would be easily attainable.

### 2. KNOWLEDGE IS POWER!

The PLAYER is accountable for the college process and not the PARENT or COACH. The players who have had the most success and the easiest process in their college selection have been the ones who have been self-motivated and aggressive in staying on top of things. There is a huge amount of information available on colleges and what they offer and you should be researching schools online to be as informed as possible on the colleges you are interested in. Find out as much as you can about a school. Get a feel for local schools at the D1, D2 and D3 level by visiting them – seeing a campus will give you a good frame of reference when you come to make some of your final decisions. Go and watch these teams play in the fall and see if you think you can play at their level. Speak to people who are currently at the school you are interested in or alumni from there. There may have been past players from your community, club or high school who went to some of the schools you are interested in with whom you can connect.

### 3. VARIABLE FACTORS!

Your decision on the college you want to attend is a very personal one and will involve you taking several factors into consideration. These factors may be weighted differently depending on your own personality. You are about to make an important life decision and it is vital that you give it due diligence. Think about the things that are important to you and make a checklist. As you go through the process see what colleges have checks in the right box and these will obviously move up your list. Some of the more general factors are:

- a) **Choice of major** – *You do not need to know what you want to major in or even what type of field might interest you, but if you are thinking that you might want to go into nursing, for example, you need to make sure that they have the appropriate pre-professional program for you.*
- b) **Grades and test scores needed to get in** – *There are many different types of colleges and universities out there and there is surely one for you. As you begin to think about schools consider the grades needed to get in and the types of tests (SAT's, ACT's and SAT II subject tests) that you will need in order to be admitted.*
- c) **Size of school** – *There are over 3,000 colleges and universities in the US and they come in all sizes. Go and visit a few of different sizes and see what feels best for you.*
- d) **Location of school** – *Urban or rural or suburban - again there is great choice out there.*
- e) **Location of school within the US** – *Do you want to stay in NE or do you want to look further away?*
- f) **Financial** – *Paying for college is often the largest single expense that a family will undertake. There are very few purely soccer scholarships out there and even the best players in the country rarely get four years of tuition, room and board paid for in an athletic scholarship. There are, however, enormous resources for financial aid and the colleges themselves will assist you with that process. There are also many resources of non-soccer financial aid that are available.*

#### **4. THE SOCCER PROGRAM!**

Soccer is a very important component in your life and there are several factors that you will need to take into consideration when you are looking at schools from a soccer perspective. Try to avoid any preconceived notion of playing at a certain level (some players will say I have to play D1 but understand that there is a huge range of levels at the D1 level and there are some D2 and D3's who would beat some D1's).

Please remember that being a good soccer player alone will not guarantee you admission to a college. It is the admissions office that admits students to the college – not the soccer coach. The soccer coach may have the ability to advocate or “tip” for you in the admissions process but only if the player is strong enough academically.

Another litmus test that our student-athletes should use is something I have heard called the



“broken leg test”. Basically think of the worst-case scenario of picking up a major injury that would prevent you from being able to play soccer, and then decide if the college is still the right one for you.

*a) The coaching staff – remember that head coaches can change so try not to make this the most important factor.*

*b) Strength of team – Look closely at the make-up of the team and see where they need help or where they will be graduating players. This will help you know what the coach will be looking for when it comes to your recruiting class.*

*c) Strength of schedule – look at the conference they will be playing in. See the level of competition you are likely to face and ascertain if that is going to be challenge enough for you.*

*d) Soccer program – find out what the training looks like year round and not just in the fall season. What does the winter and spring season look like? Do they have a GK coach? What level of support do they have from other groups – SAQ, strength and conditioning?*

*e) Playing time – you need to define for yourself what you expect as playing time before you make your final decision. How would you cope with not getting a lot of playing time as a freshman if you decide to go to a top D1? Does being in a top-level training environment mean more to you than playing time at least initially?*

*f) Soccer v Academics – are you prepared for the soccer commitment v academic commitment if you go to a top school? The best soccer programs, whether they are D1, D2 or D3 will demand commitment. Being able to balance your studies and your academics is obviously a vital part of your future success at college. Soccer can be a fantastic release from your workload and will also be your major social outlet.*

