

BLUESTREAK

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reporter



Getting into College: The Athletes' Guide

The college admissions process can be daunting and overwhelming for both college-bound students and their parents. While adding the additional element of college athletics allows for increased opportunities, it also brings an entirely new set of factors into consideration. To help students and parents navigate the competitive college admissions scene and to decrease the stress and anxiety associated with the entire admissions process, BlueStreak sought the advice of an expert in the field.

Shannon Duff, a former Yale admissions essay reader and standout runner at Yale, founded Collegiate Compass, a college counseling service, in 2004. With experience in both the academic and athletic arenas of a top college and four years successfully advising students from across the United States and abroad, Shannon offers insights to BlueStreak parents and athletes.

Although college might seem like a distant thought for incoming high school freshmen,

Shannon advises, "Once you enter high school, it's good to start thinking about the big picture. I encourage students to set both academic and athletic goals for the current semester or year, and then follow up with them on their progress in working toward these goals." In short, it doesn't need to be college-focused early on, but kids and parents should be aware that the choices they make now will affect their future options. Shannon encourages parents to expose their children to various activities and opportunities and support them as they develop their own preferences.

As high school students begin to seriously consider college options and formulate a college list, Shannon advises student athletes to think about their priorities and the type of athletic and academic balance they want. Making a list will help students create options for themselves and make informed decisions about those options along the way.

Division I vs. Division III Schools

Athletic programs vary by school and by

sport across all divisions. Prospective students should ask questions regarding the needs of coaches for specific positions on the team, the time commitment athletics requires at a particular school and how academics are balanced with the athletic competition and training schedule.

"Generally speaking," Shannon says, "at a Division III school, you have a chance to decide more what you want the balance to be." For example, taking a semester abroad is often more easily done by a student athlete at a Division III school where there is more flexibility.

Division I athletic programs, while generally more demanding than those at Division III schools, also differ by school, conference and sport. For instance, the Ivy League conference and the SEC and ACC conference schools are all Division I, yet the athletic and academic balance varies significantly. Shannon explains, "Your athletic commitment is going to be dramatically different at an SEC or ACC school where sports is very much a

BlueStreak's College Athlete Highlights



Kevin Royal
Univ. of Virginia
Football
Stamford



Will McKee
Duke
Lacrosse
Stamford



Alison Edell
Colgate
Hockey
Chelsea Piers



Matt Rappaport
Colby
Hockey
Chelsea Piers



Kyle Duncan
Bowdoin
Football
Stamford



Jenna Hobeika
Dartmouth
Hockey
Chelsea Piers



Kelsey Flowers
Dennison Univ.
Field Hockey
Stamford



Taylor Willis
Bucknell
Volleyball
Stamford

Sample College To-Do List for H.S. Juniors

ACADEMIC

1. Develop a timeline for completing standardized testing.
2. Assess student's academic and extracurricular profile.
3. Make a list of colleges for consideration.
4. Identify teachers whom the student will ask for recommendations.
5. Formulate a strategy for completing college applications, focusing on essays and other supplemental materials.
6. Prepare for admissions interviews.

ATHLETIC

1. Review NCAA rules and regulations in regards to recruiting, including college visits and contact with coaches.
2. Prepare an athletic resumé.
3. Initiate and manage contact with coaches.
4. Plan college visits & establish a framework for evaluating colleges.
5. Evaluate the pros and cons of different athletic programs and, when applicable, scholarship offers, as well as the school-sports balance.
6. Impress recruiters by playing at an elevated level during junior year. Pre-season training programs like those at BlueStreak prepare athletes for the competitive season.

priority, very much a defining part of your experience." While Ivy League sports can be quite demanding, coaches are generally more understanding as students seek to balance academics and athletics. Junior year is a good time to start considering whether DI, DII, or DIII is right for a college applicant, and part of this process involves getting an honest assessment of the student's athletic abilities from coaches. Additionally, students should evaluate their priorities: does an applicant want to compete at the highest level even if that means limited playing time? Or, does he want to get the best education possible while still playing the sport he loves?

Competitive Edge

Gaining a competitive edge in the admissions process is vital in an environment when each applicant strives to make himself stand out via a paper application. In

addition to achieving good grades, one of the best ways a student can distinguish himself is through athletic accomplishments. Boasting a 20-point per game scoring average, a .350 batting average or the school's highest career sack record enables college coaches to quantify a student's athletic successes. Additionally, honors such as being elected team captain or top goalie in the conference differentiate a student from the crowd. While participating in programs like BlueStreak helps athletes achieve competitive goals, it also demonstrates an athlete's dedication and work ethic, both essential qualities to impress upon admissions officers and college coaches.

The Next Steps

Once a high school athlete has identified his academic and athletic priorities, the search for the right college begins. During

MEET THE EXPERTS

Shannon Duff holds a BA and an MBA from Yale University, where she worked in Yale's Undergraduate Admissions Office as a reader. Reviewing and rating all aspects of applications for the Admissions Committee enabled her to gain a refined sense of what makes a student stand out amidst increasingly competitive applicant pools. Shannon has also interviewed Yale applicants for the past six years as a member of Yale's Alumni Committee.



Dan Blednick graduated with distinction from Amherst College, where he was a four-year starting catcher for the baseball team. He holds a Masters Degree in Sports Management from the University of Massachusetts. From '03 to '05, Dan worked as an assistant coach for the Amherst College baseball team, helping to manage all aspects of the athletic recruiting process. Since '05, he has worked as an advisor for student athletes as they navigate the recruiting process.



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college visits, it is important to request meetings with team coaches (be sure to follow NCAA rules), watch games or ask to sit in on a practice.

BlueStreak athletes have already demonstrated impressive perseverance as they work to improve their athletic performance. This level of dedication will serve them well as they work through the college application process. Best of luck to all applicants!