



The College Selection Process, *Interviewing the Coach...*

PREPARING FOR YOUR VISIT WITH THE COACH

Another opportunity that you will face is when you get the opportunity to meet face to face or speak on the phone with a coach of a program that interests you. Telling him that you're interested because you think their mascot is cute or that you're not sure you could play anywhere else is probably not a good starting point. There are a few questions at the end that may help you through the interview process. Remember that you are interviewing them as much as they are interviewing you.

THE VISIT: QUESTIONS YOU NEED TO ANSWER ABOUT YOU BEFORE THE VISIT:

1. Let's start with the age old question, what do you want to be when you grow up? In other words, what do you want to do for the rest of your life? Playing professional soccer is an admirable goal and one that you shouldn't just cast aside. However, what if you don't make it or you get hurt? Have a back-up plan or maybe it should be your main plan. Maybe soccer should be your back-up plan - maybe after careful thought and research you feel that your love for soccer may be fulfilled in other ways – coaching or just guiding your kids towards your lifelong love – putting one in the back of the net. Define your game plan. It “must” be an integral part of your college decision.
2. What kind of coach do you prefer? He/she will be yours for four years – choose wisely.
3. What level are you comfortable playing? Do you care if it is D1, 2, 3, Junior College?
4. What kind of training and/or workouts do you prefer? If they spend 90% of their time conditioning and you hate conditioning, maybe 90% is too much. If you lose your enjoyment of playing, you lose your enjoyment of the game. Not good.
5. Do you care if you're a small fish in a big pond or do you prefer to be a big fish in a small pond? Are you up for the challenges of a big time program?
6. Once you've met with a coach and feel that this may be the right school - you should request to speak with two or three of the existing players. Be prepared to talk to them. Request to speak to them without a coach present. Did you like them, do you like the environment, do they seem to have the same goals and aspirations as you? They will become your soul mates for four years – make sure it's a fit.
7. What kind of school do you prefer?
 - a. Close to home / far away?
 - b. Big, medium, small?



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- c. Do you care if it's co-ed?
 - d. Do you care if there are religious or other affiliations?
 - e. Do you care how good of a team they are?
8. What should I bring to the interview?
- a. Your list of questions.
 - b. A notebook and pen. Take notes. It will impress the coach and you will never remember the key points of the meeting if you don't write them down.
 - c. Anything you want to leave with the coach. I would recommend a bio/resume, maybe a video of a game and definitely contact information. Leaving something with them is very important.

Now that you've thought a bit about the interview, let's think about what to ask. Some of these sample questions below may seem direct and maybe a little intimidating to ask. However, they are all legitimate questions and any good coach will have no problem with them. Coming with a logical and well thought out list of questions shows that you are doing your homework and care about the program and college that you are considering. To you this is more than just a decision to attend, but a commitment to achieve. Remember this is as much about you interviewing the coach/program as them interviewing you. You and your family need to be comfortable with the institution, the program and the coach.

Lastly, remember your research – know as much about the school, the soccer team and the coach as possible. If at all possible, see a game or two. Review all your data before you attend the visit. Preparation will impress the coach and you did all that research, so you might as well use it in a productive manner.

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER FOR THE VISIT:

These are sample questions designed to help you build your interview. Modify them and/or add your own. Personalize it to the school you're visiting. Ask the Coach:

1. When I start as a freshman, who will be my coach – how many coaches on the staff, how do they break out as far as coaching the team and players?
2. Ask about the staff's qualifications – length of time coaching, where, success, etc. Usually there is a bio for all coaches on the website – make sure you visit it first.



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3. How long have you coached at the school? Where else have you coached? Do you plan to stay here or move to a larger program in the future? If yes, why? You don't want to fall in love with a coach that is going to leave next year.
4. How many different coaches have coached this team over the last 10 years (they may have already answered this when speaking to their tenure)?
5. How many days of worth of classes did the team miss last season?
6. What's the travel schedule look like - how far away do you play – regular season, tournaments, etc.? You should know some of this from your research. You may want to position it as: I see that you play as far away as “Virginia” in your pre-season games – do you see that changing? Do you stay overnight before/after games?
7. What assistance (programs, tutors, advisors, etc.) is available to the player to keep up with their work? Academics are important to you - there is no expectation to be behind, but it is important to you that the athletic program supports academic achievement. You need to know if there is help if you need it or your teammates need it.
8. Are there currently any players academically ineligible? What's the team average GPA?
9. Does the academic side of the institution support athletics? Are they committed to the success of their teams? How so?
10. Do the players receive any special assistance with academics, such as early enrollment for classes to ensure that they can get the classes they need and stay on a four year graduation plan?
11. What are the off-season workout schedules/programs/expectations?
12. What are the desire goals of your program – regarding approach to games, playoffs, NCAA tournament, training and development on and off the field?
13. Describe your training program? What facilities are available on campus for the players to leverage (weight training equipment, fields, indoor, outdoor facilities, etc.)?
14. How do you approach practices throughout the season? What does a typical practice consist of regarding format, conditioning, development? Does that change over the course of the season?



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15. How would you describe your team's style of play? Does it vary dramatically by game? How widely has this varied over the last five years? If you have already seen a game it helps a lot.
16. If you've seen them play, work this into the conversation – ask something about the game. They will be impressed that you took the time to see them play.
17. How would you describe the success of your program over the last 5 years? Where do you see the program 5 years from now? Is there a master plan?
18. What sort of personality or physical characteristics do you seek in the players that you recruit?
19. What would you say are the top 3 reasons I should go to your school? Are there any things that you feel your program and school can do for me that other schools can't?
20. What are the biggest challenges that you face in your program and how are you going about improving it? Be concerned if they say that there are none...

The questions above are intended to give you an idea of the types of things that you can ask. You must incorporate your research and any specific personal needs into the questions that you plan to use. Maybe you wanted to live off campus or maybe you have a medical condition that needs consideration. Write them down and take them with you. I guarantee if you don't...you'll forget to ask something. And oh by the way...follow up the interview with a nice short thank you e-mail.