

ISC Recruiting Times

The Art of Asking Great Questions?

Getting Information is Essential When Talking With Coaches. While They Are 'Interviewing' You, You Are Also 'Interviewing' Them.

When talking and/or meeting with a college coach, or even college student-athletes, there are two primary goals for you the recruit: to exchange information (to learn and share) and to make a favorable impression (to be liked). One way to do this at a high level is to focus on the questions you come prepared with when meeting face-to-face or even on a phone/Zoom call.

Rule #1- Avoid Yes or No questions. Yes/No questions limit the exchange of ideas and potentially demonstrates you may only be interested in checking the question off your list rather than learning details about a particular topic. For example, a

Yes/No Questions

1. Do freshman play?
2. Do the players on the team get along?
3. Can I get academic scholarship?
4. Am I good enough to play here?

Questions to Learn Details

1. How many freshman get playing time each year? How does a freshman earn playing time?
2. Describe how you create a positive team culture?
3. What are the criteria to earn academic scholarship?
4. When you watch me play, where do you see me fitting in best on the field?

recruit could ask a college coach "Do you require study hours during the Fall season?" The question is straightforward and most likely, the college coach will

1

AVOID YES/NO
QUESTIONS.

2

THE ORDER OF
QUESTIONS IS
IMPORTANT

3

HAVE A PLAN WHEN
MEETING WITH A
COACH OR PLAYERS

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fill in the details about the topic. But if part of your goal is to demonstrate your engagement in the process (i.e. be likable), then the better question would be “Tell me about the academic support requirements for soccer players during their Fall season?” This question shows you are interested in learning about the details (information exchange) while also demonstrating engagement in their processes (being likable). Keep in mind however, that open-ended questions leave an opportunity for the person answering the question to avoid being direct in their response.

Rule #2- The Order of Questions is Important. Developing rapport with a prospective college coach or future college teammates is vital. To do this, make an effort to get to know the people and learn about the history of a program. Also, it may seem awkward, but helping others get to know you is a good strategy too. This process is also part of the sharing of information and demonstrating likability, and determining likability. But back to the order of questions...imagine if you were an employer conducting a job interview and the first question from the perspective employee is “How much will I make?” or “Can I be a supervisor in a year?”. The reality is that you want to learn if the job (the opportunity) on the team is right for you and if you are right for the team. Questions about things like scholarship should come well after you have already established some rapport and familiarity with the coach and the program. While getting to important topics such as playing time and money can happen at any point, forcing the issue can make you appear as if you’re more interested in those answers than you are about how you fit in with the program. If the coach wants to bring these topics up early on in the process however, then consider the door being opened for you.

In summary, it is an excellent to have a plan of well-developed questions you would like answered *prior* to meeting with a college coach or players on a college team. Well-developed questions will provide you useful information in determining whether or not that program is a good fit for you and if you are a good fit for that program. Keep in mind that when meeting with coaches, they have an oft practiced ‘script’; their particular way of conveying information about their program. During the course of your conversation(s) with a college coach, it is likely that some or many of your questions may get answered.

Take notes when you speak with various coaches. This will help you keep track of who said what and limit you confusing what one coach said with another coach. Also, pay attention to which questions get addressed and be ready to ask follow-up questions if for no other reason to ask the coach to repeat the information in a different way. This supports the notion that you are a good listener and are interested in developing as deep an understanding of their program as possible. Additionally, it keeps you from asking a question that the coach already covered in detail at a previous time. From the coach’s view point, if you ask a question that he/she already covered in some detail, the coach might be left thinking that you weren’t listening before.

Finally, like any soccer activity, the more you practice the better you get. This is why visiting at least three colleges is a great idea as it provides you the ability to compare and contrast different schools and soccer programs and will greatly enhance your ability to ask the types of questions that get to the heart of what is most important to you.