

What coaches look for when recruiting.....Might be different than you think!

These are notes from the College Recruiting Panel Session between DIGS Volleyball and DI, DII, & DIII College Coaches.

Recruiting questions:

Question 1: When you go to tournaments what do you look for on the court and off the court?

- **DI Coach:** I look for athletes - players who can jump, move quickly and efficiently, and that have a strong skill base/foundation. Off the court, I'm looking at how they interact with teammates and behave during warmups and timeouts.
- **DII Coach 1:** I look at athletic ability, technique, effort and communication with coaches.
- **DII Coach 2:** Outside of the obvious volleyball skills, but attitudes, what kinds of teammates they are, how they interact with each other, leaders, etc.
- **DII Coach 3:** On the court I'm looking for good fundamentals, height, jumping ability, interaction with teammates/coach, body language (do they seem like they want to be there), how focused they are in warm-ups, decision making as a setter and hitter. Off the court I'm looking for how they are in the huddle, are you always alone on your phone or are you engaging with your teammates, grades, interaction w/parents etc.
- **DIII Coach 1:** (hoping someone will say warm ups and body language) I always make sure to watch hitting lines. It's a great opportunity for me to see if a player is versatile. I tend to see how they engage in team huddles and with their coaches.
- **DIII Coach 2:** I'm still fairly old school - I like hitters who jump high and swing hard, and believe we can teach them the rest, though obviously if they show discipline, ball control, shots, etc. that is less guess work for us and more confidence in our evaluation. Honestly, in club, a 3 minute warm up its tough to see who isn't into it and who just isn't warm (if I'm not familiar with a team I may not know if the kid I'm there to see was keeping score or off the side stretching). They can score points with a good warm up but a slow or uninspiring warm up may not hurt you if you have given me a reason to like you. Body Language is something I look at during a game along with how much are they talking, do they seem confident.

Question 2: What impact do wins and losses have on your evaluation of a prospect?

- **DI Coach:** I don't particularly care if a team wins, but I want see how a player leads responds if her team is winning or losing.
- **DII Coach 1:** It's tricky as I like to see how they react to both, it says a lot about their personality. On the other hand I like to observe what role they play when winning or losing.
- **DII Coach 2:** They don't weigh too heavily into it. At the end of the day, only one team is the champion at these massive tournaments in each division. Losses may be able to tell you a bit more about an athlete to see how their attitudes are after.
- **DII Coach 3:** It's more about your reaction to being up or being down. Do you get discouraged when you're down or do you keep fighting? When you're up do you get cocky or are you staying focused and trying to stay consistent despite being up a lot.
- **DIII Coach 1:** Not much at all. We've recruited top award winning HS players that play on club teams that are not complete or compete at a lower level. To me it shows how willing they are to work with others and what their drive is. We have two incoming players from different mid-level teams that are great teammates towards their team and because of their personalities while recruiting we know we got the right girls.
- **DIII Coach 2:** I often have no idea who wins and loses unless I want to talk to the coach... some coaches aren't that helpful after a close loss.

Question 3: How much influence can a high school or club coach have on your decision to select a student-athlete? If a coach recommends an athlete does that influence your selection? What information would you like a coach to provide?

- **DI Coach:** It can have a ton of influence if I find the coach to be a credible source. If I find the source honest about the level of their player than I take feedback very strongly.
- **DII Coach 1:** It definitely plays a role; I like to see how coachable an athlete is. If a coach does not refer an athlete it raises red flags on my book which in turn makes the process a bit more tedious as we try to dig deeper to see if this an isolated incident.
- **DII Coach 2:** I'll take recommendations, but really it holds very little in the ultimate recruiting decisions. The most important information is to actually input correct information into registrations to qualifiers so UniversityAthlete is correct and accurate.
- **DII Coach 3:** Some coaches I know will be honest with me and others will talk their players up no matter what. So I have to hear what they say and make my own analysis depending on who the coach is. I'll listen to the recommendation of the coach to see if I see what they are telling me about the player. I want a coach to provide info of the player on and off the court. Does she work hard in practice? Does she get along with her teammates? Is there drama with players or parents?
- **DIII Coach 1:** Highly, I listen to everything club, Hs and recruiting coordinators when it comes to player's ability and personality. There are too many terrific volleyball players out there to take a recruit that doesn't have the trust and green light from a current coach.
- **DIII Coach 2:** Only if I know the coach personally or by reputation. And obviously some high school coaches are trying to be helpful and enthusiastic but you watch their team and know that you can't put much stock in what they are saying. That's probably the quickest way to discount what a coach is telling you.

Question 4: What physical attributes are most important when you are watching a prospect during competition?

- **DI Coach:** Same answer as #1 - I look for athletes; players who can jump, move quickly and efficiently, and that have a strong skill base/foundation. Off the court, I'm looking at how they interact with teammates and behave during warmups and timeouts.
- **DII Coach 1:** How well they move, I am big on athleticism so quick movements and jumping ability play a role as the technical part can be taught or developed further. For defensive players and OH I like to see really solid ball control; for hitters timing and arm swing are important in my book. Setters are how well they read opposing blockers and good hands.
- **DII Coach 2:** Volleyball wise techniques. Physically looking at speed, quickness, verticals and ability to read.
- **DII Coach 3:** Reach, height, arm swing, speed
- **DIII Coach 1:** First step, balance, arm power and swing. Overall athletic ability and vertical.
- **DIII Coach 2:** Size, jumping ability, a larger shoulder (not too skinny) and knees that don't bow in when they bend.

Question 5: What do find as a common limitation(s) for incoming freshman?

- **DI Coach:** Not used to the speed of the game and not used to having to focus and bring it every day. You can't afford to take a break. Also, the time management.
- **DII Coach 1:** Time management. Adjustment to the speed of the game.
- **DII Coach 2:** How quickly they can adapt to the college game, as well as college life off the court.
- **DII Coach 3:** Understanding the level of play
- **DIII Coach 1:** Jumping right into college and your official volleyball season. We make sure our freshmen have strong direction and guidance from upperclassmen and support academically to balance the transition.
- **DIII Coach 2:** They want to play college volleyball but are so wrapped up in their own playing they don't go to watch college volleyball to know what it is. See at least 10 different teams between D1, 2, 3 and maybe even juco before you decide what level you think you want to play at. You should know what you are getting into before you really get into your recruiting process.

Question 6: What impresses you the most throughout the recruiting process for a prospect?

- **DI Coach:** A prospect that is a strong communicator and is a competitor each and every time I watch them play.
- **DII Coach 1:** When they stay on top of things and communicate well and often it shows that there is a mutual interest!
- **DII Coach 2:** Total package athletes. Skills, potential, academics, with the student-athlete being a great off the court leader.
- **DII Coach 3:** Depends on the recruit, but I like it when prospects are really intense and into the game when playing
- **DIII Coach 1:** Learning all the other things non volleyball related. Interests in life, academic goals, things that drive them.
- **DIII Coach 2:** Great question! What is your character? What role will you play on my team? Are you funny? Inspirational? Competitive? Are you going to be the hardest working player on my team? But I can't know who you are unless you know who you are, so often this just comes down to a kid who is confident and comfortable with themselves.

Question 7: What is the common timetable for student-athletes committing to the program? Is there one?

- **DI Coach:** We don't have a particular timetable, but we are strongly evaluating sophomores and want to see how they progress/improve.
- **DII Coach 1:** It varies on when I start recruiting them and where they are in the process.
- **DII Coach 2:** For us in Division II, we still certainly still recruit seniors, but really look to make offers and set up visits through Junior year of High School
- **DII Coach 3:** It can depend on the program. End of summer before their junior year.
- **DIII Coach 1:** We are a program that's class goes early decision 1 which is a November 15th deadline. Our 2017 class of 7 recruits all went early decision 1 and were accepted.
- **DIII Coach 2:** I try to let the athletes work on their own timetable. We've opened new conversations April of Senior year and we've had kids contact us in September and already committed a recruit for their position. We may not push you along but if someone else just as good comes along we aren't going to tell them "no" either.

Question 8: What are some intangibles that you look for in a prospective student-athlete? Do they affect your decision?

- **DI Coach:** Competitor, leader, good communicator. These play huge roles after we make sure that they have the skill first. Those are the difference makers once we see that they can play at our school.
- **DII Coach 1:** How committed they are to their team and what they are doing. Being positive in all aspects attracts my attention.
- **DII Coach 2:** Intangibles are everything. You go to these massive qualifiers, and there are 1000's of talented athletes. It really comes down to the off-the court things, as well as "Fit" of our university for the athlete.
- **DII Coach 3:** Self-confidence. If they aren't confident I have to think if I can trust them in crunch time.
- **DIII Coach 1:** High academics because we not only want to win conference games and post season games we want to be the strongest team at Union Academically. This past winter our team held a 3.8 team GPA which we are very proud of.
- **DIII Coach 2:** When you talk to a coach, know something about the school. Don't tell me we are your top choice and then ask "what state are you in?" or "what division are you?" If you want me to think you are interested in my school and my program, be interested in my school and my program. That said, there is misinformation out there about every school so ask in a way that tells me you did your homework "I see you have a senior setter, does that mean you are recruiting a setter in my class?" or "I see you have an athletic training program and that's what I want to study, what can you tell me about the program?"

When we are talking, don't worry about what we want to hear. Tell us the truth. If you don't fit our team culture, it's important to know that up front. If you pretend to be someone you are not to please a coach, even if they believe you and put you on the team, you are going to be miserable. If you want your college life and intend to just show up, play and go home, there are programs for you. If you want to eat, sleep, breath volleyball with your teammates 24 hours a day, there are programs for that too. You are academically motivated or you just want to socialize? Are winning or playing time important? We need to know who you really are.

When you commit, be committed. If we promise you something and you accept, but we find out you are still looking at other schools we'll pull the offer and give it to someone we can trust. 4 years is a long time and if you can't keep your word for a few weeks there is no way you are going to make it four years.