



Courtesy of Senior at Pacifica Christian highschool and Pepperdine Men's Basketball commit Houston Mallette's Instagram @houstonmallette.

Recruiting student-athletes during a pandemic: a whole new game

For high school student-athletes, their recruitment process in COVID-19 is much more difficult due to fewer opportunities for competition. On the other hand, athletic coaches and recruiting coordinators at Pepperdine said they are facing some challenges when scouting for future players to add to their rosters.

The scouting process heavily relies on [film](#) and word of mouth, said Assistant Coach and Recruiting coordinator Brian Rosario of the Women's basketball team. He said it's helpful that they are in constant communication with club and high school coaches throughout the year.

While California didn't allow collegiate athletes to compete until the Spring, other states were allowed to play earlier, giving athletes from those other states a bigger advantage with their film.

"Other states were able to play," Rosario said. "So it puts other athletes [from other states] in a different category than California athletes, because they had the body of work on film."

Rosario mentions that one challenge from scouting solely off of film is that you tend to only see highlights so it's important to be persistent in following up to ask for the entire film.

"When you're watching film from a game tape, you're not seeing the bench, you're not seeing the interactions they're having with their teammates and coaches," Rosario said. "So it really becomes all skill set, and just what they're doing on the court within the frame. We had to get good at requesting for gaming and actually watching all of the games."

Other sports, like track and field, are a bit easier to recruit off of film because it's more straight forward and based off of records.

"The times don't lie," said Assistant Track and Field and Cross Country Coach Yannick Allain. "If you have recorded marks, that tells me a lot and I can always verify those and that's all online."

A guaranteed extra year of play

In response to the worldwide pandemic, the NCAA granted all Division I fall, spring, and winter sport athletes an [extra year of eligibility](#). While this is good for athletes who opted out of this past season due to fear of exposure to the virus, it poses a challenge for highschool athletes looking to be recruited to guarantee a spot on the team.

"That [rule] changed the dynamic of classes, where a class naturally for us would have been four is now two, because if players start opting in, or if they want to take their extra year, they have a right to and we're not going to say no," Rosario said.

Some high school athletes struggle to pick up offers

Senior at Pacifica Christian high school Houston Mallette is committed to play for the Pepperdine Men's basketball team next year, but not many are blessed to be in his position.

"I have a couple teammates who are struggling," Mallette said. "They are really trying hard to get offers but they just can't. It's really hard for a lot of the guys, since [college] coaches aren't able to travel and on top of that athletes aren't able to take visits to see a place that we like. I also

wouldn't be surprised in the next like year, two years [if] there's a ton of transfers in the transfer portal."

Mallette was originally committed to Penn State before he de-committed in October due to the head coach being resigned. He committed to Pepperdine officially in November on National Signing Day, November 11, 2020.

"When Covid first happened, I wasn't committed to a university so I was supposed to take visits to other schools. I obviously wasn't able to take those visits so I didn't end up getting offers from those schools," Mallette said.

While seeing his peers and teammates struggle with getting offers first hand, Mallette says that film and social media are their best bet right now. High school athletes are posting to their Hudl accounts, sending coaches youtube clips and information such as name, weight, height and GPA.

"I have a friend who is Tik Tok famous and his entire for you page is just stuff about coaches asking about kids to recruit, so its even made Tik Tok," Mallette said. "But I'd say the hardest part about recruiting a kid off film is you don't get to understand the character of the kid. But I really hope kids start getting offers because I know a lot of kids who were supposed to have this great senior year and they didn't."

Shorter version...

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COVID-19 causes everyone to adjust to new ways of living, learning and working. For high school student-athletes, their recruitment process is much more difficult due to fewer opportunities for competition. On the other hand, athletic coaches and recruiting coordinators at Pepperdine are finding it difficult to scout for future players to add to their rosters.

Assistant Coach and Recruiting coordinator Brian Rosario of the Women's basketball team shared that the scouting process heavily relies on [film](#) and word of mouth. He said it's helpful that they are in constant communication with club and high school coaches throughout the year. While California didn't allow collegiate athletes to compete until the Spring, other states were allowed to play earlier, giving athletes from those other states a bigger advantage with their film.

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