

*Parenting Guidelines
for Raising Junior
Golfers*

**The Dos and Don'ts to Increase the
Probability of Success**

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ACHIEVEMENT SOLUTIONS

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Introduction

Youth sport participation is no longer just fun and games. Parents and children are bombarded with messages from the media glamorizing sport, the athletes, their lifestyles and particularly the monetary rewards. They are lured toward the lucrative possibility of college scholarship or professional earnings. Consequently, the popularity of sport participation has grown, organized sport is beginning at a younger age and there has been a substantial rise in the instances of inappropriate parental behaviors.

Children are starting earlier and training harder than ever before. They may begin participating as early as age three and many get involved between the ages of five and six. By the ages of eight or nine most are engaged in full-blown competition. Training is more specialized and intensive. Coaches are encouraging specialized training as well as tournament travel as a means and to help build the child's resume, enhance recognition and increase the chances of attaining a college scholarship.

With this push, however, has come a cost. Youths are feeling the pressure to train and perform beyond their developmental years, which in turn has resulted in a steady increase in the number of injuries and frequency of dropouts.

Research has shown that youth sport participation declines sharply and steadily between the ages of 10 and 18 with many children dropping out by the age of 13, primarily because the activity is no longer fun. As a means of prevention and maintenance, parents need to be educated on the benefits of sport participation, the reality with regards to the odds of college scholarship and professional career

opportunities, the expectations of appropriate behavior, the consequences of any negative behavior and appropriate guidelines for raising a physically, mentally and emotionally healthy youth athlete.

Children participate in sport to have fun, be part of a group, to improve skills, to compete, to gain recognition or approval and or get exercise. Winning is rarely a primary motivator and fun is almost always listed first. The benefit of youth sport participation is that it should help develop the character of individual-qualities such as confidence, pride, humility, poise, persistence, perseverance, resiliency, teamwork and sportsmanship, to name just a few.

Sport is supposed to be fun. Sport should give children the confidence to try new things and overcome obstacles. Sport teaches children that it's ok to make mistakes and that it's ok not to be the best. Too often parents fail to focus on the benefits of sport participation namely physical exercise, social interaction, and the opportunity to learn teamwork, discipline and good sportsmanship and instead get fixated on winning, the unrealistic potential long-term monetary compensations or fulfilling their own unrealized dreams.

At present there are 290 Division I, 199 Division II and 270 Division III NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) men's golf programs across the country. Division I men's golf programs have the maximum equivalent of 4.5 athletic scholarships available for the entire team. Division II men's programs have an upper limit of 3.6 and Division III schools do not even offer athletic scholarships. Furthermore, many men's programs only have 3 total scholarships and the combined average team size across the

divisions is 10.2 players; 10.5, 10.1 and 10 respectively. Moreover, the probability of making it beyond the collegiate level is miniscule unless your son is a superstar.

Alternatively, there are 228 Division I, 109 Division II and 135 Division III women's programs. Division I women's teams have a maximum limit of 6 athletic scholarships while Division II have 5.4. The average combined squad size is 7.6 players, 8.6, 6.8 and 6.7 respectively by division. Given the comparably low number of interscholastic girls' players, the number of NCAA women's teams as well as increased number of scholarships, the college scholarship opportunity for females is considerably greater. Professional opportunities, however, are still slim. To obtain a list of member NCAA programs you can visit its website at www.ncaa.org.

On a more depressing yet realistic note, we have all heard about or witnessed parents assaulting or verbally abusing other parents, coaches and even athletes both on and off the course. Even on the milder side you often see parents yelling instructions to their child as they play because they believe that their actions are helpful. Others chastise their child for losing, playing poorly or because they interpret their child's effort as poor. They want their child to display skill, to be perfect because they irrationally believe that it is a reflection on them. Some parents associate the child's self-worth with athletic performance or their own self-worth with being the parent of an athlete.

Parents who name call, threaten, humiliate, demand, or even physically assault children or coaches rarely experience any negative consequences for their inappropriate behavior. Moreover, the overzealous or abusive nature and excessive pushing which parents often exhibit either inside and/or outside the home environment generally goes unnoticed, uncontrolled and certainly unpunished. Many youth organizations, however, are beginning to take action and are rightfully banning abusive parents from competitions.

All too often parents lose sight of the main benefits of athletics and instead focus on winning and the idealistic vision of their child being a superstar, which in most cases leads to undue pressure, unrealistic expectations and counterproductive results. Therefore, here are some suggestions for facilitating your child's physical and psychological athletic development in a productive manner.

It is imperative that parents take an active role in their child's involvement. However, a parent's job is to help provide opportunities to participate and the financial resources, help the child set priorities, regulate balance between sport and other important activities such as family and school commitments, communicate with the coach about his/her expectations and your child's other obligations, communicate with your child about his/her expectations, their experiences and foster a learning mentality, help monitor and regulate the amount and type of training, watch for signs of staleness or burnout, promote teamwork, collaboration and sportsmanship, and be a good role model by exhibiting emotional control.

The Do's

Remove obstacles within your control. Your job is to give them the power to make it in life, to offer support, to give them the head start that they need.

Therefore, make sure that they have the appropriate resources. Have them fitted by a professional for the proper equipment. When the time is right, select a coach, fitness trainer, and sport psychologist if necessary. Make sure that they get the proper nutrition and sleep adequately. And schedule fun things outside of golf to help avoid staleness or burnout.

Give the child an opportunity to experiment with several different sports and then help them match their attributes and talents to a sport that fits.

Certain sports require a high predisposition for speed, endurance, flexibility, agility, balance or power. Others do not. Similarly, extroverted children may be better suited for team sports such as basketball, baseball, football or soccer whereas introverted individuals may be more comfortable with individual sports like tennis, golf, swimming or track and field. Help them find the right sport based on their desires, attributes and skills.

Let them choose. It's important for the child to choose and that you support his/her decision. Parents should realize that children have different motivations for participating and that it is important for them to be on the same page as well as fuel the motivator. The athlete should be involved for his/her own reasons and not those of the parents. A child may not speak out and half-heartedly participate for fear of disappointing a parent. Parents who encourage introverted children to

participate in team sports to open them up rarely find success in this method. In fact, it often has quite the opposite effect with the children often withdrawing from sport all together. The most important factor is that the child is enjoying him/herself and is in an environment conducive to developing his/her self-esteem.

Talk with them. It is imperative that parents periodically converse with their child about his/her intentions, aspirations, expectations and sport experiences. Never assume that that your intentions or preconceived notions of what is best for him/her are also the child's desires. Parents should let their child set the pace. Those who excel are generally the ones that are passionate about it. The drive comes from within and they will let you know if they desire more.

Help find a healthy balance between the sport involvement, school and other activities. Sit down with your child and prioritize involvement, defining responsibilities and consequences for neglecting to live up to them. Make a schedule based on a realistic time commitment to each. Communicate effectively with teachers and coaches regarding the priorities and other responsibilities that may interfere with each other and stay up to date with progress. Adjust and regulate the commitments if things become imbalanced.

Evaluate the structure of the sport environment and make sure that there is an appropriate age, skill level and learning compatibility balance. Parents should seek out coaches and environments that meet their child's needs. Find out what the coaches' philosophy is about playing versus practicing and competing and what his/her expectations are for team members. Attend enough

practices and matches to observe the coaches philosophy and teaching style to make sure that it is compatible with your child's needs and personality. Take time to watch practices. Is your child having fun? Are they learning? Are his/her skills improving? Make sure that the environment matches your child's level of skill, and level of competitiveness.

The coach is responsible for providing a positive social and emotional environment for the children, to emphasize personal growth by encouraging and rewarding achievement of personal goals and effort, to demonstrate emotional control and respect to everyone, to demonstrate effective communication, to emphasize sportsmanship, provide positive motivation and feedback as well as structure practices in a physically, mentally and emotionally developmental way. Make sure that the coaching style, communication (listening, instructing, motivating) is congruent with the desired intent. Make sure that the coaches' knowledge of the game, skill, or teaching ability are harmonious with those desired. Check the coaches' credentials if your intent is high level coaching.

Parents and coaches should work harmoniously to develop the athlete's skill, character and long-term well being. A parent's responsibility is to communicate with the coach regarding treatment of his/her child, ways to help the child improve and concerns about their behavior. Talk with the coach if and when necessary. For instance, if your child is unhappy with the environment or ask the coaches about drills that your child can do to improve his/her weaknesses. If the situation is right, parents need to step back and let the coaches do their jobs. The amount and type of training and/or competition the

child needs should be coordinated with the coach. He or she is the expert. The parent should play a secondary role in this respect and let the coach do his/her job. If the parent becomes over-involved in making these decision he/she may be undermining the coaches authority and putting undue pressure on the child. It's generally parents who are over-involved that are often the ones that display inappropriate behaviors such as berating coaches, players or other parents.

Create a sense of team. It is also a parent's responsibility to help instill the teamwork concept. To help facilitate this, parents should praise their child when he/she displays acts of teamwork. After team matches ask him/her what he/she did to contribute to the team. When watching sports with your child point out acts of teamwork. Create a teamwork atmosphere at home with the daily/weekly chores or duties and most importantly, model cooperative behaviors.

Have a realistic perception regarding your junior athlete's current ability level and potential for future success. It is natural for parents to believe that their child has what it takes to make it and that with enough money and training anything is possible. However, there is a genetic, in addition to the social component to achieve athletic excellence. There are very few documented cases of athletes making it to the professional ranks without some sort of hereditary predisposition for athletics. If neither you nor your spouse were talented athletes or have some other history of exceptional athletic ability then the chances of your child possessing the motor coordination necessary to be a high level athlete is slim. Furthermore, in general very few youth athletes make it to pros and of

those, even fewer have lucrative careers. Playing sport professionally is a nice dream; however, the reality of the situation is that it is highly unlikely.

Help your junior athlete set realistic goals based on their current ability level and potential. Parents need to discuss expectations and the reality of high-level play. Make sure that your child understands the skill and commitment necessary to achieve at a high level and then help them set up goals accordingly. Goal setting involves designing a plan to attain desires. At the heart of goal setting is having a realistic perspective of what the current ability level is, what is attainable, a timeframe to achieve by, and most importantly, how it is going to be done. The goals should be process orientated (i.e., focus on improving skills not on winning) and quantifiable (i.e., measurable). Help them come up with a structured practice schedule to work on the skills that would most benefit their game and some progress sheets to keep track of their current status and improvement. Take video of skills before and after defined periods. Charting progress from the start to the end of each goal-setting period will allow them to see gradual changes when effort may not appear to be paying off. This evidence of improvement can help sustain morale and motivation during times of struggle.

Teach your child that he does not have to be a superstar to have fun. Help point out the other aspect of being involved in sport that are enjoyable, such as being with friends, being outdoors, going out for pizza after the event, etc. Praise effort and improvement, not outcome. Make a point to notice the effort being made and commend it. Make an attempt to look for and point out things that he/she did well. Likewise, bring attention to the amount of improvement that is

being made. Let your child know that regardless of performance he/she is still a good person.

Know when to say when. We have become a society predicated on the false notion that more is better. From a training and commitment perspective nothing could be further from the truth. Over-training is one of the leading causes of athletic injuries and burnout. It has been estimated that as much as 50% of youth athletic injuries are related to overuse. Particularly when dealing with children whose bodies and minds are developing, it's imperative to regulate the amount of training and commitment as well as to beware the signs of over-training, staleness and burnout. As a general rule, children should not train in excess of 20 hours a week. If more than 10% of participation time in any season is missed due to injury then overuse may be a contributing factor. Over-training may result in to decreased desire to participate, serious injury, or a disruption in the growth and maturation process.

The physical and psychological symptoms of over-training, staleness and burnout may include a combination of any of the following:

- Extended deterioration in performance
- Lack of motivation to practice or play
- Sleep disturbance
- Loss of self-confidence
- Drowsiness and apathy
- Quarrelsomeness
- Irritability
- Emotional imbalance
- Excessive weariness that is prolonged
- Lack of appetite
- Fatigue
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Anger/hostility

- Confusion.

If your child begins to exhibit multiple symptoms for more than two weeks then it may be time to back off and take a break.

Be a good role model. Children develop the attitudes and model the behavior of their parents. Demonstrate a positive and relaxed attitude if you play with them and also when watching matches. Model appropriate behavior such as cheering for effort and demonstrations of good play by all of the players, not only your own. Never degrade or belittle player performance, coaching or officiating staff. Be supportive, positive, and encouraging.

Share a healthy interest in activities. A parent should attend matches whenever possible. Be familiar enough with the game to be able to discuss it with your child. Encourage children to discuss their feelings regarding performance, outcome, and how to move forward. Help your child emotionally when he/she is having a difficult time in the activity. Listen and respect them. Help them feel good about his/her overall development. Encourage other interests outside of sport where the child can have fun and show interest in their overall development.

Help maintain perspective and build a child's self-esteem. Try not to make too much of successes and failures. Be sensitive to the issues surrounding competition and any other external or internal pressure that your child may feel to play or perform. Watch for the warning signs that your child may be feeling excessive pressure to participate or perform or if they are having a difficult time

dealing with the stressors of sport. Warning signs of excessive pressure or inadequate coping with the stressors of sport include:

- Feeling a lot of pressure to win
- Experiencing less enjoyment
- Talking about quitting
- Too focused on what they are doing wrong
- Unable to communicate concerns or upsets with coach
- Overburden with too many extracurricular activities
- Not paying enough attention to progress in school
- Acting cocky or demanding
- Experiencing a drop, instead of an increase in self-esteem
- Feeling less motivated
- Dealing poorly with losing
- Hyperactivity coupled with depression
- Disrupted sleep
- Rashes
- Headaches
- Muscle stiffness
- Nausea
- Lethargy
- Frequent unexplained illness
- Loss of interest in training and competing

Help point out the things that are within their control such as effort, improvement and sportsmanship as well as the things that are not, like the skill of opponents and contributions of teammates. Be positive in your comments and feedback. Focus on effort and personal growth not winning. Make appropriate comparisons. Help the child think constructively. If children constantly get the message that they are loved and valued as individuals then they develop better resilience and coping skills.

Help your child work on specific skills that will improve their performance and self-esteem. Look for positive displays of skill, effort, etc., and make specific

positive comments about it. Don't compare your child with other players. Focus on their individual development and the strides that they have made.

The Don'ts

Do not put pressure on them to do more than they are capable of or to win.

Keep perspective about your child's capability with respect to their age. Do not expect them to consistently perform physically, mentally and emotionally beyond their current maturational level or compare them with other players or yourself.

High unrealistic expectations usually produce excessive parental coaching and criticism. Most parents are not adequately qualified to coach and the criticism is often overwhelmingly negative and counterproductive.

Do not expect them to live out your unfulfilled potential. This can be a big one - where you wanted to be a professional athlete, but for whatever reason you didn't make it; so you now want, expect your child to become a pro. This doesn't work. They will have and need their own dreams. Otherwise, the motivation to achieve will be difficult if not impossible to sustain.

Do not push your child or limit them. There is a fine line between encouraging and pushing your child. Parents often push children to initially get involved, to participate in a specific sport, and the timing in return after injury. If you push too early, particularly to compete, you run the risk of scaring them away from the activity. Players have different levels of competitiveness, maturational development and reasons for participating. Most for the sheer fun of it, others for exercise, and still others have a highly competitive nature and strive to demonstrate abilities. When and if your child desires to compete, he/she will let you know. If a child does not have the motivation or desire to participate or

compete at a high level, then as a parent you just have to back off. Unwanted pushiness may disrupt the dynamics of the parent-child relationship by destroying the sense of unconditional love, acceptance and trust. Further, pressure to play and perform can lead to decreased desire to participate, performance anxiety, guilt, anger, fear or resentment, eventually feelings of staleness or burnout and/or possibly serious injury.

Alternatively, parents can stifle the dreams of a child through lack of physical resources or emotional support, or by passing comment in a negative way; it can even be communicated by tone of voice or body language. Children can read emotional signals. Be careful what signals you give and when supplying feedback make only positive and intuitively challenging comments that will increase their rational thinking about the subject matter and further learning. Gauge the timing of your feedback to when the child is receptive. Do not force it upon them. Particularly after poor performances, the child may or may not be open and receptive to feedback or he/she may need some time before he/she is willing to talk.

Do not make your junior athlete feel guilty about the amount of time or money being spent on activities. As the time, financial and emotional commitments increase so too does generally the parental involvement, demands and pressure to achieve as well as a child's feelings of guilt to produce. Children generally place enough pressure upon themselves to satisfy perceived parental expectations. Additional comments about time or money commitment will only intensify the feelings of guilt and detract from their desire to participate.

Do not hold back love or support based on performance outcome. It's important for your child to understand that regardless of performance you still love and support him/her. Do not criticize, get angry, irritable or withdraw love, attention or support after poor performance or losing. Try to find the positives in it and take a learning perspective. Ask more questions rather than barking out negative feedback. Ask questions like, what did you do well today? If it did not go well, what would be a more productive way of handling the same situation next time? What can you do to improve?

Along similar lines, try to match the level of your support, enthusiasm and commitment with that of your child. Avoid being overzealous. Remember that it is the child's experience and not yours. Do not get too excited when your child performs exceptionally well or wins. And finally, do not tie special rewards or privileges to winning. Reward them for effort and not performance outcome.

The Academic Road to College

Freshman Year

During the freshmen year college may seem far away, but it is not too early to get on the right track. Meet the counselor, find out about some colleges that you and your child may be interested in and the kind of courses they require. Broad course selection and high grades are important. Challenge your child to build his/her vocabulary by increasing their reading.

Sophomore Year

October: Take the PSAT/NMSAT. It is only offered once a year. The PSAT contains math and verbal questions similar to those on the SAT, as well as a new multiple-choice writing skills section. It helps them prepare for the SAT and grants them a possible chance of getting a national merit scholarship. To become a finalist, you need great grades, high SAT scores and a recommendation from the school. The scores do not count, but they will become familiar with the exam as well as be informed as to the areas that need most improvement.

Junior Year

October: Take the PSAT/NMSQT. Practice makes perfect, so have your child give the test a try this year as well.

January: Check registration deadlines for the SAT or ACT. Register for the SAT or ACT. Ask the counselor for the applications or register online at www.collegboard.com (SAT) or www.act.com (ACT).

January through June: Think about and discuss what schools your child might like to attend. Think about what his/her major may be. Meet with the school counselor to review academic record. Start researching schools on the web, look at catalogs tapes, attend “college fairs” or “college nights”, etc. Make sure that grades are high this year. When colleges look at transcripts, they put a heavy emphasis on junior year grades, so put the extra time in.

May or June: Some colleges require students to take the SAT II: Subject Test (of these three, two are usually Math IC or IIC and Writing). Check to see if the schools of interest require these tests. These one-hour tests are also offered in many other subjects, including Biology, Chemistry, Physics, American and World History, and many foreign languages. It is a good idea to take certain specific subject tests (for example, the sciences) immediately after the subject has been taken in school. You will get the test out of the way, and you can choose which scores to send to the colleges using the score choice option. If you are not happy with your scores, you can always try again or take a different exam.

Summer: Visit as many campuses as possible. Look beyond the nice classrooms and the big library. The big difference between schools is the students. Talk to them, hang out with them, and you will know if the school is right for your child.

Senior Year

August through November: Start early. Get college applications directly from the schools or online at their website. Register to take SAT I & SAT II (if necessary) or ACT again if there is a need or desire to improve scores.

October: If they know where they want to go to college, have had a verbal offer from the coach of the school of interested, and are reasonably happy with grades and test scores, then apply for Early Admission. The deadline for Early Admission is usually between 11/1 and 12/15. Complete applications now and make a calendar of due dates for regular admission. Neatness and accuracy count. Have someone read and critique essays before submitting them. Make copies of the application, mail it registered mail and get a receipt in case you have to prove the post date. Remember, however, if accepted the student is committed to going there.

October through June: Check for admission deadlines. The application deadlines for the California schools are generally between 11/1 and 12/15. The application deadline for most of the Division I schools is January 15. Complete admission applications now. Do not procrastinate. When completing the applications, remember that neatness and accuracy count. Have someone read and critique your essays before you submit them. Make copies of the application, mail it registered mail and get a receipt in case you have to prove the post date. Watch out for the “senioritis.” Colleges still care about grades. Don’t let your child be a slacker!

April: You should be receiving responses from schools.

May: Compare college offers and decide on which school to attend.

The Athletic Road to College

As you look ahead to life after high school, it's nice to have a plan to follow from early on in your high school years. This section has been prepared to serve as a guide to help the student-athlete year to year in the planning for college athletics. Hopefully by the time a choice is made about enrollment in a college, a student-athlete would have gathered all necessary information to make a sound decision.

Freshman and Sophomore Years

I am not suggesting that the player has to choose the college or university that they want to attend by your Freshman or Sophomore year in high school, but they do need to be working on developing a resume of educational and athletic experiences.

Do not wait until the Senior year in high school to be worried about grades and a good athletic resume! Start now! As a freshman, players need to be concerned about developing a good class ranking, a good grade point average, and a good playing resume. Keep a complete record of competitive experiences, including all sanctioned matches and high school level play especially noting top finishes.

Achieve a ranking. Whether it be AJGA, FCWT, IJGT, your state or local organization. I've heard coaches say to their students "Don't worry about your ranking." Well, nothing could be further from the truth! A ranking is one of the only yardsticks that college coaches have to measure a player by. Remember that your child is competing for attention with other players who are trying to play

for the same school. If the other player has a ranking and your child does not, they have a competitive advantage over them.

Make visits to different colleges when you travel. If you and your child are vacationing or playing a tournament near a college, take some time to visit or at least drive through. Go to a college match or tournament if one is held near your area. Talk to players or students if you have the opportunity. At the very least, you and your child will get to see the atmosphere that the teams compete in.

Junior Year

The Junior year is the most important year of all! You and your child must start doing research on schools that are of interest. Talk with other parents, friends, teachers, counselors, and athletic instructors.

Make a list of colleges that you and your child might be interested in learning more about. Your list could be very long (50!) or very short (2). Contact these schools and ask for a catalogue. Do a virtual tour at www.ecampustours.com.

Help your child prepare a letter and skills video to send out to coaches letting them know that you have some interest in their school. The letter should include a resume of their academic and athletic accomplishments. *Highlight good tournament results and big wins!* By all means, maximize your playing schedule and play your very best during your Junior year!

The summer after the Junior year in high school is extremely important if they want to play Division I athletics. Coaches will be watching players at all levels of play, including your local district events, sectional events, and all

national events. Keep in mind that coaches not only can watch in person but also can watch on the Internet. Coaches regularly view all tournament results on the Internet and will see your child's name in print regularly. Beginning July 1st coaches can make contact with players. They can call at home once a week.

Senior Year

Try to shorten the list of schools to something manageable. Identify criteria that are important such as location, quality of the academics, the specific course of study (major) that is of interested, size of the school, quality of the athletic program, the coach, the team members, etc. List the criteria by priority and rate each school in each category on a scale of 1 to 5 (poor to excellent). You can find schools that match your preferences by going to www.review.com.

Early in your senior year, your child must register with the NCAA Clearinghouse if they plan on attending a NCAA Division I or Division II school. For enrollment papers to the Clearinghouse, contact your high school guidance counselor or visit www.ncaaclearinghouse.com. The NCAA Clearinghouse regulates the student-athlete's eligibility into any NCAA Division I or Division II school. All coaches have to firstly make sure that a prospective student-athlete is registered and accepted by the NCAA Clearinghouse before pursuing a relationship and allowing an official visit.

In the fall of your senior year, try to schedule visits to the schools of high interest. These can either be official (paid for by the school) or unofficial (paid for on your own) visits. The NCAA allows a maximum of 5 paid visits per athlete (and only 1 paid visit per school per athlete). Students may make unlimited

unofficial visits to any school. Before making any visits, be sure that the school has a record of your child's most recent or highest standardized test scores (ACT or SAT) on file. This is mandatory for official visits. Remember, college coaches are trying to sell their program and themselves. Try to look at the whole picture. The athletic team is just one portion of the college experience!

When your child visits a college make sure that they are prepared! Both of you should have already (at the very least) read about the school, the athletic program and the coach. Help them prepare a list of questions for the coach.

Examples of some questions are:

1. Describe a typical practice session.
2. The facility itself – Is there indoor and outdoor available?
3. The schedule – full fall and spring schedule available?
4. How far do you usually travel to matches?
5. What means of transportation is used (van, bus, airplane)?
6. Will the coach work with players individually?
7. Does the school allow players to play non-collegiate tournaments during the school year? If so, who pays?
8. What sport equipment does the school supply?
9. If a scholarship is being offered, what all does it include? Be specific!
10. Will I be able to play in the starting line-up on this team or how is the starting team determined?

During the visit, it is important for the player to present an image that the coach is looking for. Dress appropriately, listen when the coach speaks, and speak up when it is his/her turn to talk. All coaches are looking for “team players” – they want to know that your child can get along with others, and make good choices that affect the success of the team as a whole.

“National Letters of Intent” are sent out two times a year – November and April. The exact dates vary sport to sport and year to year but in Golf it generally begins on the second or third Wednesday of the respective months. The November signing period last only one week. This is referred to as the early signing period. If a student-athlete is unsure what school to attend, then I recommend waiting until the April signing period. If a school really wants them they will hold the scholarship for until April! Most coaches have top choices and try desperately to sign these in November. However, the largest percentages of student-athletes sign in April. Any signing of a National Letter of Intent needs to be thoroughly discussed. Remember, once a student-athlete signs they are committed to attend that school. If they back out of that commitment it will cost them one year of athletic eligibility.

Organizations That Govern College Athletics

NCAA: The NCAA is the National Collegiate Athletic Association. It is the largest organization in the United States that governs athletics in colleges. The NCAA establishes rules and regulations in all college sport programs, both men’s and women’s. The NCAA is divided into three divisions. Division I, II, and III are described below:

Division I – Division I schools compete at the top college level. Most Division I schools offer scholarships, however, there are some that do not (such as the Ivy League schools) Division I Women's Golf programs are allowed to fund a maximum 6 full scholarships. In Division I Men's Golf, programs are allowed to fund a maximum of 4.5 full scholarships. This is NCAA rule. (Keep in mind that some programs may not be able to fund the maximum number of scholarships allowed by the NCAA.) At present, there are 290 Division I Men's Golf Programs and 228 Division I Women's.

Division II – Division II schools compete at this level based on criteria such as the size of their school, their facilities, or how much emphasis they choose to place on this particular sport. In Division II Women's Golf, programs are allowed to fund a maximum 5.4 full scholarships. In Division II Men's Golf, programs are allowed to fund a maximum of 3.6 full scholarships. Currently, there are 199 Division II Men's Golf Programs. There are 109 Women's Programs.

Division III – Across sport, more colleges compete in the Division III level than any other level. Division III offers no scholarships based on athletics. They do, however, offer academic scholarships and financial aid based on need. There are 270 Men's Golf Programs and 145 Women's.

NAIA: The NAIA is the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics. This organization is yet another governing body for college athletics in the United States. NAIA schools are usually comparable to the NCAA Division III schools in size and commitment to athletics. In both NAIA Women's and Men's Golf, programs are allowed to fund a maximum of 4 full scholarships. There are 309

NAIA member schools that sponsor various athletic programs. Contact the respective school of interest to determine whether they have a golf program.

NJCAA: The NJCAA is the National Junior College Athletic Association. This organization is the governing body of junior college athletics. There are 504 NJCAA member schools that sponsor various athletic programs. Junior colleges may or may not sponsor a golf program. Check with each respective school of interest.

Once all of visits have been made, take at least one week to make a decision. Make a list of all of the positives and negatives for every school that are being considered. The list should reflect the original list of priorities. Keep in mind that at this point the list of priorities may have changed a little bit. And that is OK. It just means that your child has learned more about him/herself and college athletics during this whole process.

College Planning Checklist

Freshman Year

- Develop an athletic resume (Player Record); Keep records
- Work on a ranking
- Record high school and tournament athletic results
- Visit college campuses (when available)
- Attend college matches (where available)
- Strive for good GPA and class rank

Sophomore Year

- Continue to develop an athletic resume (Player Record); keep good records
- Continue to work on ranking
- Continue to record athletic results
- Continue to visit college campuses
- Continue to attend college matches
- Keep the grades up!
- Look up colleges on the Internet

Junior Year

- Plan your tournament schedule for maximum visibility
- Register for the SAT I, ACT, and TOEFL (if applicable)
- Keep the grades up!

- Make a list of colleges you are interested in
- Contact schools and request a catalogue from each
- Prepare a letter to send to college coaches
- Type Athletic Resume
- Construct an Athletic Skills Video

Senior Year

- Register for the SAT I, ACT, SAT II and TOEFL (if applicable)
- Register with NCAA Clearinghouse
- Plan your tournament schedule for maximum visibility
- Update Athletic Resume
- Shorten your list
- Send contact letter and video to college coaches
- Schedule official or unofficial visits to colleges of choice
- Make application to college(s) of choice
- Keep the grades up!