

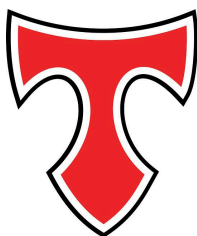


NORTH OCONEE HIGH SCHOOL

2026–27

GUIDE FOR THE COLLEGE-BOUND STUDENT-ATHLETE

ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT • COUNSELING OFFICE



INTERESTED IN PLAYING SPORTS IN COLLEGE?



The college athletic recruiting process can be confusing. While this planning guide can serve as a tool to help families navigate the college recruiting and admission process, the student is the key to completing the necessary tasks in the recruitment journey. School counselors, coaches, and teachers at North Oconee High School are support personnel for the process, but the student is in the driver's seat. Realistic evaluations of ability, both in the classroom and in the sports arena, are key components in having a successful recruiting experience. The information provided in this document should be used to help further an athlete's opportunities beyond high school.

REMEMBER

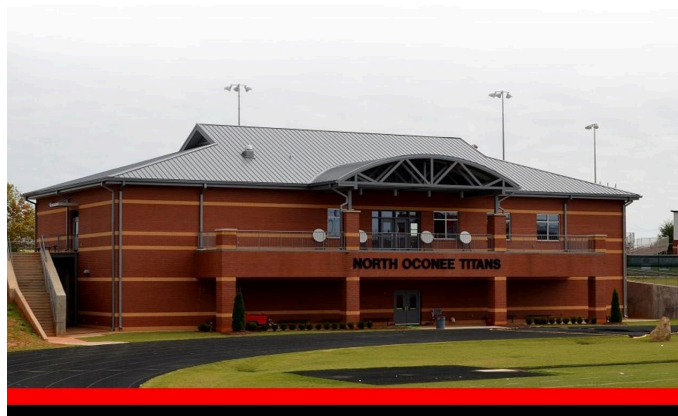
The student is in the driver's seat. Counselors, coaches, and teachers are support personnel, but the student must take ownership of the recruitment journey.

Sincerely,

The NOHS Athletic Department & The NOHS Counseling Office

CAN MY STUDENT-ATHLETE COMPETE AT THE COLLEGIATE LEVEL?

- Be realistic. College sport positions and athletic scholarships aren't available to everyone, even students who are exceptional athletes. There are too many athletes and a finite number of Division I, II, and III schools. The vast majority of colleges and universities are not Division I schools, and yet they have very competitive sports programs.
- Student-athletes will need to meet important criteria to reach the next level. A significant number of student-athlete competitors are seeking to fill college sports positions and earn scholarship offers. A student may be a star athlete at their high school, but how do they stack up when compared with other high school star athletes around the country and the world?
- Begin to identify academic and athletic abilities, then compare those abilities with the different division levels and target the right schools that will provide the best chance of competing for an opportunity or receiving a scholarship or incentive package. Ask all coaches and others who will be honest and candid to be a part of the college list conversation.
- Discuss athletic abilities and the division level that would be a good fit for the recruitment process. Sometimes the truth hurts, or perhaps the conversation will be a surprise in that the coach sees skills in a different light than the student perceived. This is a critical first step in the process. Students may waste time if they focus their efforts on colleges with the wrong athletic division and academic requirements. By targeting the right academic schools in the right athletic talent division, students can focus on legitimate prospects.
- To compete at the college level, coaches are looking for a student-athlete who possesses applicable sport-specific tools such as strength, speed, hitting, hitting for power, fielding, and more. After that, they look at character and mental toughness: the will to win, attitude following failure, performance under pressure, and respect for family and teammates. The NOHS Athletic Department strives to develop a program that provides our student-athletes with opportunities to grow athletically, academically, and morally.



WHAT DO COLLEGE COACHES EXPECT?

- Very few high school student-athletes receive college opportunities, scholarships, or incentive packages because a coach “happened to find him or her.” Only the elite athletes, typically the top 100 nationally, receive enough media coverage and recognition that they are automatically recruited without having to make an effort. The other 99% have to take the initiative to contact the colleges and coaches where they have an interest. Most college athletic recruiting budgets are small, and many coaches rely on students to contact them. College coaches are very busy and don't have the time or budget to travel around the country to see every student-athlete compete.
- Phone calls, emails, cover letters, profile resumes, stats, videos, and references become key tools for the coach in the recruiting and evaluating process. One might think it's too self-promoting to make the initial contact with a coach and to market themselves; however, this is the norm. These days, college coaches assume interested athletes will seek them out. It's an expected practice.



KEY IDEA

Interested athletes are expected to seek out programs and make the initial connection. A complete profile should include both academic and athletic information.

A FEW COMMON-SENSE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT.

College coaches expect recruits to understand that academic grades are a primary focus in the recruiting process. This means preparing in the classroom as much as on the field. Failure to take care of academics often means failure to achieve athletic goals. Division III institutions, for example, do not offer athletic scholarships; academic performance is just as valued as athletic performance in the recruiting process there.

ACADEMICS MATTER

Regardless of how talented an athlete's abilities are, grades can make the biggest difference in admissions and financial aid outcomes. Every college has academic scholarships or grant money awarded to students and student-athletes who demonstrate academic achievement. Rigor and a high GPA can open doors for college admissions, reduce tuition costs, and provide another area to highlight on an athlete's resume. College coaches want a complete profile to review, so when initial contact is made, share both academic and athletic information.

- 1.** Be honest. Communicate interest or disinterest in an appropriate manner and don't waste a coach's time.
- 2.** Be an effective communicator. The student-athlete, not the parent, should write or email the coach when appropriate, and should always return a coach's call, even if no longer interested in the program.
- 3.** Respect goes a long way. Spell the coach's and school's name correctly in every letter or email, and provide accurate student-athlete contact information, including the best times to reach you.
- 4.** Complete applications and follow up. Send grades and teacher recommendations to schools of interest, and get paperwork done as quickly and early as possible.
- 5.** Come prepared. Have thoughtful questions ready for coaches during calls or official visits.
- 6.** Do your homework. Know the athletic program, the coaches' names, the division, the current record, program history, and the positions the team might need.

KEEP IN MIND

Most coaches are working with limited budgets, very little time, and a small staff. Be persistent, prepared, and polite. Strong character goes a long way.

THE GAME PLAN

FRESHMAN / SOPHOMORE YEARS



- Become familiar with the current NCAA Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete, available at ncaa.org. It provides extensive information on the college athletic recruiting process.
- Create a free profile page at eligibilitycenter.org so your information is ready when recruiting conversations begin.
- Establish a four-year academic plan to meet all core course requirements; see your school counselor for the Graduation Checklist.
- Take a strong, rigorous academic course load that still allows you to earn good grades. GPA matters for the NCAA sliding scale and for college admission and academic scholarships.
- Strive for A's and B's in your core academic courses. This strengthens your Core Course GPA for the NCAA, your eligibility for Georgia's HOPE Scholarship, and your standing for academic scholarships.
- Take the PSAT so you have scores available for coaches to review; the PSAT and SAT are now administered in the College Board's digital, adaptive Bluebook format.
- Talk with your coach about ways to increase your exposure, such as summer camps that showcase your skills, sharpen technique against higher-level competition, and let you gauge where you stand regionally and nationally.
- Keep video of your play to share with coaches and recruiters, and keep records of your athletic achievements and extracurricular activities.
- Review college athletic websites and rosters. Many programs post a simple recruiting questionnaire, and rosters can show graduation trends and where a program tends to recruit from.
- Follow the NCAA on social media for grade-level-appropriate guidance, and keep your own social media presence clean. Colleges do check; make sure your accounts reflect your brand in the best light.

EARLY ADVANTAGE

Build your academic foundation, keep records of athletic accomplishments, and begin learning how college recruiting works before you need it.

THE GAME PLAN

JUNIOR YEAR

- Continue a strong, rigorous academic course load and confirm with your counselor that you're on track with NCAA-approved core courses.
- Register for and take the SAT or ACT in the spring semester, or when you finish Advanced Algebra (Algebra II) or AP Pre-Calculus. Also register for the PSAT so scores are available to coaches.
- Attend college nights and fairs, and read the admission materials schools send you.
- Begin visiting college campuses. NOHS students have two excused absences for college visits during their junior and senior years.
- Develop a list of prospective schools with your counselor and coaches, weighing both academic achievement and athletic ability.
- Request college applications as early as possible, ideally the summer after junior year.
- Develop an athletic resume, and keep updating your records of athletic and extracurricular activities.
- Familiarize yourself with current NCAA and NAIA rules on recruiting, eligibility, and financial aid, including how name, image, and likeness (NIL) opportunities and revenue-sharing agreements now factor into a program's overall offer.
- Meet with your coach for an honest, thorough evaluation of your athletic ability and the division level that's a realistic fit. Ask about their involvement in your recruitment, such as responding to questionnaires from college coaches.
- Send a letter of introduction and athletic resume, and follow up by phone, to coaches at schools of interest.
- Continue attending sports camps, and keep a file on each college or university that shows interest in you.
- Continue building video of your games and send footage to prospective coaches by the end of junior year; for spring sports, do this earlier.
- Register with the NCAA Eligibility Center by the end of junior year if you are beginning to be recruited. There is a registration fee; fee waivers are available to students who received an SAT or ACT fee waiver.
- Watch college games at your target level of play to see how your skills compare.

JUNIOR-YEAR FOCUS

This is the year to turn exploration into action: campus visits, a realistic college list, coach outreach, athletic video, testing, and NCAA registration.

THE GAME PLAN

SENIOR YEAR

- Continue working hard in your academic courses.
- Submit your NCAA Eligibility Center registration in the fall if you did not complete it as a junior. Email your counselor to request that your transcript be uploaded to the NCAA Eligibility Center; transcripts are typically sent at the end of each semester.
- Take or retake standardized tests as needed; check collegeboard.org and act.org for national testing dates.
- Obtain college applications from college websites.
- Discuss your athletic goals with your school counselor during your junior or senior planning meeting.
- Complete financial aid forms early: the CSS Profile in the fall, if required by your target colleges, and the FAFSA as soon as it opens on October 1. Attend the Oconee County Schools Financial Aid Information Session in the fall; check the counseling blog for details.
- Continue visiting campuses that interest you. Call or write ahead for an appointment with a coach, admissions officer, financial aid advisor, and department chair.
- Apply to several colleges. Even an early decision application is never a guarantee of admittance. Confirm with your counselor whether a program is binding and requires an academic and financial commitment before an athletic decision is made.
- Continue writing, calling, or emailing coaches to express interest, and keep your athletic resume updated.
- Respond promptly to college questionnaires and similar requests.

STAY PROACTIVE

Students and parents must take the initiative and work on their own behalf. Staying on top of information throughout high school makes the application process much easier.

RECRUITING TRACKER

Keep your college-by-college information organized.

College / University	Coach + Contact	Resume / Letter	Video	Application Date	Visit Date

Use this page as a working checklist. Add notes, deadlines, coach responses, and next steps for each school you are considering.

BEFORE AN OFFICIAL VISIT

Make sure your NCAA Eligibility Center account and required NOHS athletic records paperwork are complete when applicable.

***Student-athletes can complete the athletic release form each year during Rank One registration or complete the NOHS Athletic Release Form directly (counseling office).

NCAA ELIGIBILITY CENTER & NAIA

The NCAA Eligibility Center and the NAIA are the two organizations that oversee collegiate sports eligibility. The NCAA Eligibility Center certifies whether prospective student-athletes are eligible to compete at the Division I or Division II level; Division III schools handle their own admission and eligibility review and do not use the Eligibility Center. The NAIA operates a separate eligibility process for its member institutions. Both organizations publish detailed guides explaining the rules and regulations that govern recruiting, eligibility, and financial aid, and both recommend beginning the certification process no later than April of junior year or August of senior year.

- Complete an Athletic Records Release Form in August of senior year (on the Rank One form or you can complete the form in the counseling office). This form authorizes NOHS to release your transcript, and eventually proof of graduation, to the NCAA, NAIA, or a requesting college. Completing this form is the student's responsibility, and it must be filed before a student can take an official, college-financed visit, try out, or practice with a college team.
- Register for a free profile at eligibilitycenter.org, and follow the NCAA and NAIA on social media for guidance geared to each grade level.
- Follow the NCAA and NAIA on social media for grade-level guidance and updates.
- Certain programs might need SAT/ACT scores, make sure you take the test your junior year of high school.

IMPORTANT NOTE

The recruiting landscape has changed with name, image, and likeness (NIL) compensation and direct revenue-sharing agreements at some Division I programs. These developments can affect how offers are structured, but they do not replace the core eligibility steps. For offer-specific questions, contact the college's compliance office.

Students and families should confirm current rules, deadlines, and forms directly with the NCAA, NAIA, and individual colleges because these details can change from year to year.

SAMPLE ATHLETIC RESUME

USE THIS AS A MODEL

The sample below shows one way to format an athletic resume. Names and details are illustrative only.

JOHN SMITH

2001 37th Avenue • Bogart, GA 30622 • 706-111-7500 • jsbball@email.com

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

- GPA of 3.2/4.0; enrolled in four AP courses
- Digital PSAT score of 1200 (610 EBRW – 590 Math)
- ACT composite of 28; digital SAT score of 1210 (610 EBRW – 600 Math)
- Honor Roll, grades 9 and 10
- Plans to pursue a degree in Communications

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

- Student Government, grades 9–12
- Natural Helpers, grades 10–12
- St. Vincent de Paul volunteer, grades 9–12
- Band, grades 9–12

ATHLETIC BACKGROUND

- Basketball: Junior Varsity (9, 10), Varsity (10–12); MVP (9); “Mr. Hustle” award from coaches (11); All-Conference First Team (12); Most Improved, Summer Select AAU
- Soccer: Junior Varsity (9–10); center halfback with 8 goals (grade 9); left wing with 14 goals (grade 10); First Team All-Conference

REFERENCES

- Mr. Jim Smith, Head Soccer Coach
- Mr. Bill Blas, Head Basketball Coach
- Mr. Barry Bonds, AAU Head Coach

SAMPLE COVER LETTER TO A COACH

USE THIS WITH YOUR RESUME

This sample is illustrative only. Personalize it for each college and coach.

Date

John Smith
2001 37th Avenue
Bogart, GA 30622

Dear Coach _____,

I am a 6'2" junior forward at North Oconee High School in Bogart, GA. I am interested in attending Sample University after I graduate. As a sophomore, I started for our region championship basketball team, averaging 10 points, 5 rebounds, and 5 assists per game. This year, my junior season, I have been elected team captain and currently average 21 points per game. Our team continues to be successful and is anticipating a return to the conference championship.

Academically, I have a 3.5 GPA and earned a 1200 on my digital PSAT. I plan to take both the ACT and SAT this spring. My current schedule includes all core requirements along with two Advanced Placement courses. I will have my college entrance scores sent directly to Sample University and to the NCAA Eligibility Center as soon as they are available. My high school will also send my sixth-semester transcript once it is ready.

I am very interested in attending Sample University because of its reputation for academic excellence, its outstanding basketball program, and its campus environment. I am particularly impressed by the graduation rate of student-athletes at Sample, as well as the national reputation of the Business program. My academic and athletic record is competitive with other players currently in the program.

Please send me information on the Sample program at your convenience, and let me know what additional information I can provide for the basketball coaching staff to evaluate. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
John Smith

WHAT MAKES IT PERSONAL?

The sample connects the student's academic and athletic profile to specific features of the college instead of using a generic, mass-sent message.

QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING A CAMPUS VISIT

While on a campus visit, consider asking coaches and administrators about the topics below. The NCAA's site (ncaa.org, under Student-Athletes / Future) also offers suggested questions.

- Academic resources and support services
- Scholarship renewal terms from year to year
- Financial aid and total cost of attendance
- Admissions requirements
- Study abroad and internship opportunities
- Athletic training and medical expenses
- Degree programs and graduation rates
- Team time demands during and outside of season
- On-campus housing
- Coaching philosophy and style
- Injury and rehabilitation support
- Schedule planning and time management
- Realistic expectations for playing time



A campus visit is an opportunity to learn about academics, athletics, and life on campus.

GO BEYOND THE FIELD

Ask questions that help you understand the full student-athlete experience: academics, financial aid, time demands, health and safety, housing, coaching, degree programs, and realistic playing-time expectations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Portions of this guide were adapted with reference to the NCAA Guide for the College-Bound Student-Athlete (ncaa.org), the NAIA (playnaia.org), the NCAA Eligibility Center (eligibilitycenter.org), the College Board (collegeboard.org), the ACT (act.org), the CSS Profile (cssprofile.collegeboard.org), Federal Student Aid (studentaid.gov), and Saint Ignatius College Preparatory's Student-Athlete Planning Guide. This guide is intended as a general planning resource; students and families should confirm current rules, deadlines, and forms directly with the NCAA, NAIA, and individual colleges, as these details can change from year to year.

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