

**Recruiting College Baseball Players:
The Most Effective Way to Recruit**

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Abstract

Recruiting is an essential part of a baseball team's success. Four year colleges look to Junior Colleges to find talented athletes as well as successful students. Finding students at a Junior college allows head coaches to make criteria for students that will support and enhance their program athletically and academically. If students are successful at the Junior College level it is likely that they will transition smoothly to the four year college level. To move from the junior college on students are recruited by coach recommendations and observation via video, email, phone calls or visits. This study was a descriptive mixed method design. The plan was to develop a survey and provide college coaches or recruiters with an opportunity to confirm how they use recruitment information by giving coaches a survey of multiple-choice, and one open ended question making the survey short but detailed. The study surveyed 10 to 20 college coaches, knowing that 20 provide better data. The participants were selected from a variety of types of colleges, including private and public, large and small, and two-year and four-year institutions. The researcher emailed the survey directly to the participants who have agreed in advance to participate in this study. The surveys were available in google mail for the researcher who will tabulated and analyzed the data.

Introduction

When high school athletes go to junior college to continue their education and pursue the sport of baseball, they intend to move on from junior college to a four year college or to go to play professionally and get drafted. As junior college coaches, the goal is to place all sophomore players in one of those spots. Often the goal is to find a four year college that offers them scholarships to play at a high level of baseball and finish their schooling. Colleges strive to place those students, and the question then becomes, what is the best way for college baseball players to be recruited? Is it to make connections with coaches, to email, call, have players observed, send video, or is it one of these, a few of these, or all of these ways of contacting other coaches and schools to move players on to the next level? The aim/purpose of this study is to provide players with data to increase their chances of acceptance to college baseball programs. There is a need for a more efficient application process so that talented players are not

overlooked. The research question for this study is: what is the most effective method of contacting coaches for players when applying to baseball programs at the college level?

Background and Need

In sports from the time young children start participating in teams the number one goal today is to win. Often there is a lack of understanding in what team sports represents, learning to work together, having a schedule, depending on others, following the lead of a coach, and much more. Today athletes play because their parents want them to, and coaches play only the best players with the intent of winning, not to improve their skills. According to an article by Jeff Bradley (2014), coaches are hired to win; if they don't win, they are fired. A common example of this practice is when high school coaches play pitchers for too long, risking hurting their arm, but because the goal is not to improve the player's performance as a pitcher and it is to win, the pitcher stays in the game. Many times junior colleges also focus on winning and to the detriment of the player they don't focus on individual player improvement but final game scores.

The students who attend junior college tend to be local players. Because junior colleges do not have scholarship money available like Division I schools, they can not afford to get players from out of their area; therefore they recruit local players (Smith, 2017). These same local players however are still sought out by larger schools making recruiting more challenging as a junior college.

Coaches are one of the key factors in recruiting. Of the few studies done on why students pick the colleges they do, the reason for choosing a college is who the head coach is, and how he or she is seen by players and the community looked at the overall program, how much time players are given in games, how much opportunity is given to

players, as well as academics (Schneider, 2012). The results indicate that a successful program for student athletes is one that wins games, allows players to get playing time, grow as a player, learn and improve skills. It also suggests that academic support from coaches is an important part of college sports for the college athlete.

Because of the changes in technology and the advances in video it is becoming more popular and helpful in college recruiting. Coaches can confirm style, ability, and talent based on what they were told by their current coaches. Junior college coaches benefit from their players transferring, so they do whatever they can to make their players look the best they can be even if it is not an accurate representation of the players ability.

With video, four year college coaches can see if the feedback they get is in fact the truth. With video, recruiters and coaches can look at the player's actual performance whether a homemade video or a professional video. Coaches can see specific pitches or reactions to particular plays. This tool can make players stand out (Sweetow, 2009). Video allows players and recruiters to communicate globally. According to one article, recruiting at four year colleges is not limited to local areas because of access to the world via internet and video (Corona, 2013).

One of the challenges for junior college baseball players is grades. "For decades, junior college sports teams have been characterized as housing student-athletes who lack blue chip status because of academic or athletic deficiencies" (Sturdivant, 2014). Grades are hard to keep up when a player has the schedule they have. They are in class full time, play baseball full time with three games per week during the season, and many of them work jobs to support themselves. Often these players are on their own without support of their families due to lack of funding or even more often due to broken

relationships. When these players get to college, they need to improve, work as a team, learn, and continue to play to finish out their education. They have to learn the skills to stay on top of their work as students and play. They can not miss class or get behind because of baseball. Grades are a challenge for student athletes. Of all college sports, baseball spends the most time away from campus. In 2009 there was an increase in college baseball players performance academically and had been improving since 2007 (Wolverton, 2009).

In order for a Junior College student athlete to move on to the next level at a four year college, they must meet certain academic requirements. Most student athletes must acquire an AA degree, which covers all General Education requirements plus their emphasis on their major of choice. Four year college coaches have different needs and requirements depending on their coaching style as well positions that need to be filled that year. To ensure a student athlete has as many opportunities as possible along with the AA we strive for high GPAs, giving them an edge on other athletes.

In 2016 the findings from an "NCAA Goals Study" were released (2016). The last similar study had been conducted in 2010. This survey study was conducted to learn more about student/athlete interests in today's world. Some of the initial findings indicated that the amount of time student athletes dedicated to academics had increased. Division I athletes went from 35.5 hours a week in-season in 2010 to 38.5 hours a week in 2015. Division II athletes went from 35.5 hours per week in 2010 to 38.5 hours a week in 2015. Division III athletes went from 38.5 hours per week in 2010 to 40.5 hours a week in 2015 .

The same survey found players were also dedicating more time to sports. Division I athletes went from 32 hours a week in-season in 2010 to 34 hours a week in

2015. Division II athletes went from 30 hours a week in 2010 to 32 hours a week.

Division III athletes went from 27 hours a week in 2010 to 28.5 hours a week in 2015. In a survey done by Duffek (2017), the increase in time on practicing increases performance. It gets players closer to the 10,000 hour rule that states that athletes who perform higher than others practice for over 10,000 hours .

While academic time and playing time increased, sleep time decreased. Athletes reported sleeping 13 minutes less in 2015 than in 2010. On average student athletes according to the survey, only sleep 6 hours and 16 minutes. Student quality of sleep however has not changed in the five years according to student participants (“NCAA Goals Study”). An increase in playing time, an increase in studying time and a decrease in sleeping, show the difficulty of being a student and an athlete at the same time. Yet still these players graduation rates are continuing to increase.

According to an article written by Michelle Hosick (2018), there are seventeen Division I teams that, because of players academic performance, are ineligible to compete. The year before there were 23 teams that were ineligible (Hosick, 2017). The rate of graduation however continues to climb for NCAA student-athletes. According to an article entitled “Graduation Rates”, In 2002 there was a 74 percent graduation rate which had risen 12 percent in 2016 to a graduation rate of 86 percent. (“Graduation Rates”, 2017). The College Sport Research Institute (CSRI) provided statistics in 2015 that indicate that for baseball the graduation gaps are greater than those of football but less than that of basketball (“Adjusted Graduation Rates”, 2015).

Playing athletics in college can be costly and not all players can afford to play for the school without enough of a scholarship. “The Price of Poverty” by Huma Ramogi and Ellen Staurowsky, indicates that at some of the best athletic and academic colleges

the coaches make very high salaries and players are left without full scholarships. In football in Texas for example the coach's annual salary is \$5,161,500.00 and there is a shortfall in scholarships on campus of \$308,040. In basketball at Louisville the coach's annual salary is \$4,073,093 and the team scholarship shortfall off-campus is \$57,330 (Ramogi and Staurowsky, 2011).

According to Remillard (2014), the four top factors that most contribute to players college choice are the academic reputation of the school, the the athletic scholarship, geographic location, and athletic facilities. The 5 reasons that least influence student-athletes are high school friends, package deal, academic advisor, and director of major/department .

Statement of the Problem

The importance of academics varies at different junior colleges in regards to athletics. Some coaches make it a priority, and others don't. Some of the obstacles that face coaches who do make academics a priority are a struggle with student attendance and teacher support of those absences. Many junior colleges have low transfer rates in student athletics. Because of some school policies inhibiting student athlete absences for sports, students struggle to play a sport and have academic success at the same time. Coaches have to be creative and think of alternatives to regular academic classes. Coaches for example can work on plans that focus on online classes offered by the college. Coaches can hold study sessions, review grades regularly and be on the phone with coaches around the country who are looking for players to find a place to send their players so that they are able to move on.

According to one article, there are 486,567 baseball players playing high school baseball while 56,878 baseball players play college baseball ("College Baseball",

2015). Only 11.6 percent of high school players compete at any college level. According to the NCAA, 7.1 percent of players move on from high school to play NCAA baseball, 2.2 percent move on to play NCAA Division 1 baseball, 2.2 percent move on to play NCAA Division II baseball and 2.8 percent move on play Division III out of high school ("Baseball", 2017). This low percentage is however higher than that of basketball which only 3.4 percent of players play for an NCAA school, and 6.8 play football for an NCAA school ("Estimated Probability", 2017). These numbers demonstrate how difficult it is for high school players to move on to place for Division I, II and III baseball and why the recruiting process is so important at a junior college level as well as how hard it is to move kids on. Knowing how best to have players recognized gives players a better opportunity to be in these statistics. The average Junior College, no matter the number of wins or success, has a low percentage of players that move on to a four year college. Usually the players are in their second or third year, even though sometimes players can be in only their first year. Knowing this brings up the question as to how to give our students the most opportunity and exposure.

The Purpose of the Study

Recruiting is an essential part of a baseball team's success. Four year colleges look to Junior Colleges to find talented athletes as well as successful students. Finding students at a Junior college allows head coaches to make criteria for students that will support and enhance their program athletically and academically. If students are successful at the Junior College level, it is likely that they will transition smoothly to the four year college level. The aim and purpose of this study is to provide players with data to increase their chances of acceptance to college baseball programs. This study

elicited feedback from coaches regarding their preferences for recruiting college players. Once these players are successful on the field and in the classroom and it is time to play at a four year college, they need an effective way to get them to their next destination.

Methods

This study was a descriptive mixed methods design. The researcher developed a survey and provided college coaches or recruiters with an opportunity to confirm how they use recruitment information by giving baseball coaches a survey of multiple-choice, and one open ended question making the survey short but detailed. The researcher selected 20 coaches to fill out the survey. The participants were selected from a variety of types of colleges, including California private and public, large and small, and two-year and four-year institutions.

A google survey was developed and provided to college coaches or recruiters with an opportunity to confirm how they use recruitment information. The survey was emailed directly to the participants who had agreed in advance to participate in this study. The surveys were completed and tabulated and the data was analyzed. No tests or remuneration were provided. Participants' personal information was held confident.

The survey of local Junior College coaches asked what their preference in recruiting tools indicated that one hundred percent of the coaches at four year colleges preferred a video over an email or a reference from a coach. The same coaches were asked how to best distinguish between videos, as they require a lot of time and effort to review.

The surveys were returned by email attachment to the researcher who will

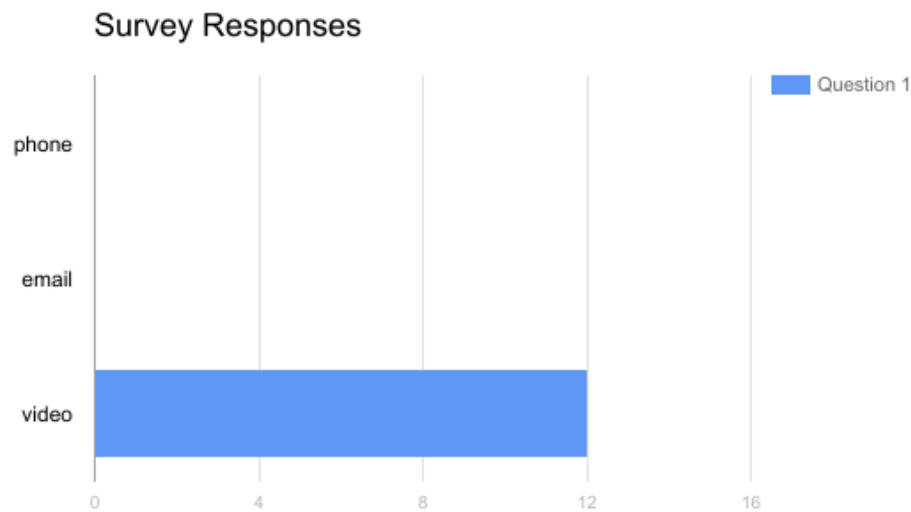
tabulate and analyze the data. No tests or remuneration were provided. Participants personal information are held confident. No randomization or controls were used. The researcher tabulated the data for frequencies and percentages of responses. Since the surveys did not require personal information, this was the best, safest way to collect the data. The researcher was the only one to collect and analyze the data, so no one else had access to the data.

Results and Analysis

Coaches were emailed a google survey that asked the following questions with multiple choice answers:

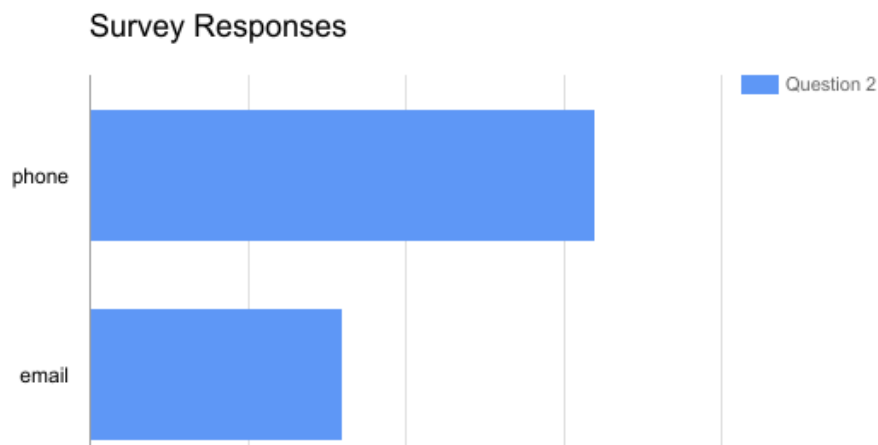
1. What is your tool preference for recruiting a college athlete?
2. What is your 2nd tool preference?
3. Do you prefer one tool to recruit, two or all three tools to recruit?
4. If you answered that you prefer more than one tool, list the tools in order of preference

For Question 1. The coaches were given the following tools as their first choice, phone email or video.



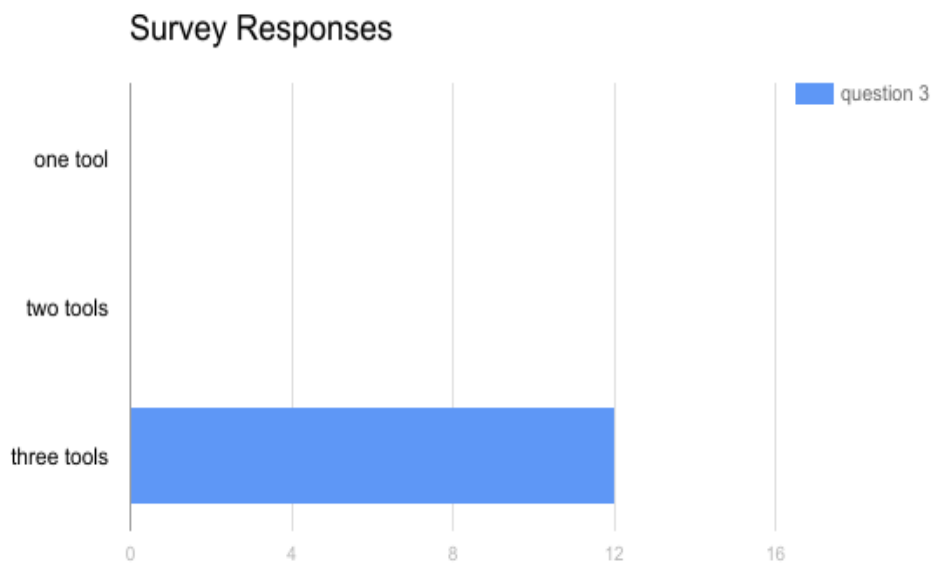
Based on the survey results above, the most important tool to recruit was unanimous by all survey participants. The coaches chose video as the number one tool to use to recruit if they can only choose one.

For Question 2. The coaches chose the following recruiting tools as their second choice.



The graph above demonstrates that eight of the twelve coaches preferred the phone as a second tool recruiting option, while four of the twelve preferred email.

For Question 3. The coaches were asked if they preferred to use one recruiting tool, two or three.



The results above show that again the coaches were unanimous and prefer all three recruiting tools over one or two.

In conclusion overall the results of the survey from the 12 coaches that responded were that 100% of the coaches prefer to use video to observe players. Eight of the twelve coaches preferred a phone call over an email as their second choice. Four of the twelve preferred email as their second choice. All however were in agreement that they preferred video, email and a phone call.

After completing the survey, two coaches volunteered to talk on phone to discuss the survey further and more in depth. Typically, coaches do not share tips towards recruiting because competition is so stiff, keeping some of their recruiting strategies a secret. The interviewer asked what part of each tool they thought was valuable. One participant/volunteer said that phone calls allow him to get a sense of the players personality and character that one can only get from having a two way interaction. The other participant stressed that an email gives a sense of how well players write and communicate which may also indicate academic success.

Video was the tool of choice for all coaches as seen in the results above. However, the two coaches interviewed had different reasons for why video was important for them. The first coach used video to critique talent, ability and strength, which is typical for most coaches. The other coach focused strictly on the player's body language.

Implications

Knowing what four year colleges want is essential in guiding student athletes so that Junior College coaches can ensure the best success for their students. This study has given information that indicates that the focus on having players recruited needs to be on building phone relationships with coaches and spending time making high quality videos that show all aspects of the athletes. This study also suggests that coaches need to have social skills that allow them to connect with other coaches and keep relationships active. Coaches also need to have skills in technology for online interaction with other coaches as well as the ability and tools to create well made

videos. It is key that players show their talent for videos and always give 100 percent as there may be recruiters observing them when they play as well.

Baseball coaching staff and players need to work together to create the ultimate videos and to showcase their talent. Students and staff can look for players and coaches strengths in video making to create the very best videos and take those skills and continue to improve on them each year.

Summary

Baseball players in Junior college rely on recruiting to move to the next level in athletics and academics. This study investigated what it is that the four year college baseball coaches and recruiters are looking for in regards to the best way for them to see players. Twenty college four year college baseball coaches were contacted to fill out a survey to provide data as to if they prefer to recruit with video, phone, email. The participants were selected from a variety of types of colleges, including private and public, large and small, and two-year and four-year institutions. Coaches were asked what option and tool did they prefer to recruit with. Is it video, email or phone. The surveys were returned and analyzed. Due to today's technology and easy access to creating videos as well as playing videos, 100% of the coaches preferred video as their first choice for recruiting if only choosing one tool, however 100% prefer to use all three tools. The surveys were returned and analyzed.

For junior college coaches, this may be valuable information. Four year college coaches are looking for video, email and phone as resources to recruit. This means that junior college coaches need to make sure that they make players aware of this information as well and support and help players make good videos. It also means that

making connection with other coaches is helpful for players. As phone calls and emails are useful and also favored, junior college coaches sending those emails and making those calls will be more valuable when it is coming from someone they know and trust.

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