

## [THE SCHOLARSHIP CHASE: NORTHERN CALIFORNIA SOCCER ADVICE FROM COLLEGE COACHES](#)

- Tom FitzGerald

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What's the best way to try to land a spot on a college soccer team?

Here are some pointers, as offered by Bay Area university coaches, directed mainly at high school freshmen and sophomores:

-- Starting in your sophomore year, try to make a list of colleges that would meet your academic needs. Big school or small school? Urban or rural?

"The second concern," said St. Mary's men's coach Steve Rammel, "should be, 'Am I good enough to play there? Do I respect the coach? Can I grow in that environment?'"

-- Then contact the college coaches, preferably by e-mail. Detail your accomplishments and let them know when your high school or club team will be playing. Club tournaments are preferred by college coaches because of NCAA rules limiting high school game evaluations and contacts.

-- Try to attend a summer camp at the college in which you're most interested. It's a good way to get noticed and to build a relationship with a coach. Also, it doesn't count as an official visit.

-- Study hard in school. If you don't, you're limiting your opportunities.

"There's more academic scholarship money out there than athletic scholarships," St. Mary's women's coach Paul Sapsford said.

-- Find a club team on which you can play to the highest level of your ability. "Get different coaches, high-level coaches," San Jose State women's coach Dave Siracusa recommends.

-- Practice hard; a college coach may be watching.

"The training session tells a lot," said USF women's coach Pam Kalinoski. "A kid could have a bad game; you don't always get an accurate gauge."

-- Shore up your technical skills and try to get in the Olympic Development Program.

-- Impress a college coach with your interest in their school.

"They have to convince me that Santa Clara is the best place for them, finances aside," women's coach Jerry Smith said. "Then we'll talk about scholarships. But we don't do a lot of bargaining."

"Persistence and perseverance work with me," San Jose State's Siracusa said. "If somebody wants to be a Spartan, I'll go watch them play."

-- Don't let being a walk-on deter you. Forward Aaron Chandler was a non-scholarship player his



first two years at USF; last year he was the Most Valuable Player in the West Coast Conference.

-- In choosing a university, try taking soccer out of the equation. Kalinoski played on four unbeaten teams at North Carolina, where coach Anson Dorrance tells recruits, "If you break your leg on the first day, would you still want to be in school here?"

Says Kalinoski, "You want the other factors to be in place so that if the soccer doesn't work out you won't be miserable."

-- Try to keep financial aid in perspective.

"For some kids and parents, the scholarship is the final payoff," Smith said. "If you look at it as the payoff for the investment you've made on youth soccer -- all the trips, the hotels, the club fees, the equipment -- that's the wrong approach. The payoff is to have a healthy, happy, well-rounded child. If there's a scholarship, let that be the icing on the cake."

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