



Guide to

SPORTS SCHOLARSHIP



BY

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A Sports Scholarship in the USA: **Updated and expanded 2019**

A Comprehensive Guide for
Student-Athletes & Parents: A
simple blueprint to help you
reach that goal

Cormac McArdle

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Preface

My name is Cormac McArdle and just like hundreds of student athletes across Ireland and Europe, I had the privilege of benefiting from a sports scholarship in the United States. It proved to be a life-changing experience for me and I bet that there are many teenagers Europe wide who are interested in this path, but simply don't know enough about the process to follow it through.

I didn't intend on writing a scholarship guide for prospective athletes until I was approached by teenagers and parents who had questions on my experiences in America and how I made that dream come true.

As a result, I decided that I should put together a guide that would explain in as much detail as possible the process of looking for a scholarship with tips on the various options and advice on how to balance sport and education, while coping with living away from home. Scholarships are available in a variety of sports and the first thing to realise that you don't have to be an elite athlete to qualify – there is a college for every standard. You will see the proof of this by reading the success stories (chapter 11) of the lives changed by completing a scholarship in the USA. As a matter of fact, I recommend you skip through the book reading all the stories of success first. They will inspire you to read all the way through and actually do the Proven Plan to finding, keeping and completing a scholarship.

My own experience is that I went on a Soccer Scholarship firstly to Thomas University in Georgia in 2002. I remained at Thomas University for a year and half until an offer came from Division 1 University of Memphis soccer. This was an offer to play a really high level of soccer and I became Memphis' first ever Christmas transfer. I remained there for two and half years and graduated with my Education Degree in 2006.

Those four years were both the most challenging and rewarding years of my life for many reasons. I describe the four years as a roller coaster. I didn't have a huge support network, outside of my family in Ireland via phone, my coach at the time and my team-mates. My family really didn't know much about my academic/sports life in the United States. The coach I found was pretty happy if things were going well on the pitch. My team-mates were paddling the same boat as me especially those that were international players. We had to learn to grow up quickly moving through the unknown path of college life.

This guide is for any kids outside of America and their parents who want a locations support guide when thinking about the process of a Scholarship to USA. I hope it will serve them well and hope in the future that kids will become will be one of the success stories of the future.

My **biggest tip** for getting recruited is to dream big. Take action on that dream by being proactive and seeking out the information on the various college divisions and programmes and you make the best decision based on the knowledge that you possess. Put together a highlights video, write your academic letter of first contact and sports resume that will impress the coaches and show that you're interested in their programme. At the same time don't neglect your current studies as I have heard unfortunate stories about kids missing out on their dream move to college in the USA because of one subject fail or the lack of a

science subject in their leaving certificate. Keep one eye on the future but totally focus on your current reality. This guide is to inform and instruct you on the process of obtaining a scholarship, what to expect during your time in the States and some success stories to inspire you to greatness upon graduation.

Good luck!

Yours in Sport,

Cormac

“Do your work. Not just your work and no more, but a little more for the lavishing sake. That little more which is worth all the rest. And if you doubt as you must; and if you suffer as you must- do your work. Put your heart into it and the sky will clear. And then out of your very doubt and suffering will be born the supreme joy of life”. –Dean Briggs



Pic. Memphis 2004 Conference C-USA Champions

The greatest feeling in the world is when all of your hard work and commitment to your sport finally pays off. The team above won the C-USA conference league and tournament in my junior year at Memphis. The picture was taken after completing the double by beating UAB (University of Alabama, Birmingham) at Louisville University. You can see our fitness coach Robert Nicholson enjoying the win with a look of satisfaction. This team worked tremendously hard throughout the previous few years to reach this platform. Our coach Richie Grant was standing beside Rab also enjoying the moments after the thrilling win.

Although you only really celebrate for a few days after the win, it is the years following that fill you with pride knowing you have achieved something a great many others will never get the chance to do. Most people will certainly never totally understand your achievement. You have got to experience it to understand it. Pele's quote below sums up the whole experience in two sentences. I relate lots more amazing people and success stories both on and off the field of play in Chapter Eleven.

"Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice, and most of all, love of what you're doing or learning to do"-PELE

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*“I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul” – William Ernst
Henley*

Introduction

Now more than ever there are opportunities, to move to an American University on a part paid or fully paid academic/sports scholarship. American college coaches recruit from Europe every year. I regularly hear about missed opportunities from students because of a lack of knowledge or clarity on the recruiting process.

There are hundreds of scholarships on offer every year, but to be able to receive one of these offers, an athlete must be recruited personally by an American college coach. In Chapter three and four I explain what is requisite in order that an athlete is recruited successfully. Being recruited involves taking the time to obtain a visa through the USA State Department. Your academic records must be sent to American colleges in American grade format while you must also register for all of the American college entry exams.

There are numerous different routes an athlete can take to investigate if they are eligible for an offer of a lifetime to complete four years in an American college and further develop themselves. I personally experienced two different College division levels in the USA. NAIA (National College of Intercollegiate Athletics) and NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) Division 1 soccer. Both of these levels are different ends of the spectrum. I will explore and explain them throughout this guide.

After finishing college I returned to continue my soccer career in Ireland before injury brought it to a premature end. I still consider those four years in America to be some of my fondest memories. Both college teams I was a part of, enjoyed great success in different ways. My first University (Thomas University) achieved their highest ever ranking in my time with them (2003) and my second University (Memphis University) won separate competitions, the Conference League and Conference tournament, for first time in 11 years. This feat has not been repeated by University of Memphis since 2004.

The process of finding a college in America can be both a daunting and a stressful process. It is my wish that this guide helps kids and parents find the best information on which to base their final selection. The number of kids who quit and return home early for whatever reason is alarming. This guide should also help those who are possibly homesick or falling out with a coach who is asking for more of their talents. Those kids should reach out to a success story on social media and share their dilemma for better guidance. The degree is more important than the sports although it may never feel like it at the time.

“Champions do not become champions when they win the event, but in the hours, weeks, months and years they spend preparing for it. The victorious performance itself is merely the demonstration of their championship character”.-T Allen Armstrong

Misconceptions

The following are some misconceptions on the process of finding a sports scholarship in the USA.

1. Only the top level Athletes with eye popping talent receive full scholarship offers to Colleges in the U.S.

There are many personal stories I know of and have heard of people of all standards getting offers to play in college in America. Every level is catered for and coaches always look for more than pure talent. They look for academics, leadership traits or drive for success. Anything that may give them the edge in their programme. A lot depends on how the coach wants to distribute his/her funds. Some coaches will split scholarship across three players rather than just one. Athletes can also look for academic funding and extra funding. Contact your prospective college about this before committing.

2. Sports will pay most of my child's tuition fees for the length of time he/she is there.

Funding is given out at the coach's discretion but as mentioned above most of the time your athletic scholarship is split between academics and sports. Fees do crop up unexpectedly, therefore it is advisable to have some savings in case of it being needed. Get everything written down in your athletic contract such as valid confirmation on fees covered.

3. Scholarships are good for four years.

Each scholarship is awarded on an annual basis. If the athlete is performing well over the year then it is most likely the coach will renew the scholarship but it is not guaranteed. I have heard stories of the coach deducting scholarship money after a year based on poor performance. Keep this in mind. Work hard each and every year to keep that scholarship.

4. Grades are not a deciding factor.

The best players in their sport still have to perform in their academic classes to be eligible for the next semester. I personally played alongside an excellent player who didn't keep up academically and failed out of college. This can be a big problem for European students who are only interested in sport and not college classes. Most colleges require you keep a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or above but you can be sure your coach will expect a GPA of 3.0 or higher for academic rewards and more scholarship money. With the resources available to college students i.e. free tutors and study classes, there are very few excuses.

5. Scholarships are only available for popular sports.

Most large colleges offer scholarships for all sports from swimming and basketball to athletics and soccer. Smaller colleges offer fewer but most common sports are in every college no matter their size and offer a scholarship of some sort. Women have far more opportunities for high paying scholarships because of Title 9 and having equal amounts of female scholarships to their male scholarship numbers.

“Do not tell the world what you can do – Show It”: [Napoleon Hill](#)

Chapter 1

A Sports Scholarship - What is it all about?

Study differences between America and Ireland

In Ireland the pressure is on the student to know exactly what they want to study from an early age. The student picks a degree course and sticks with it for the four years. In America it is a different system that I personally think benefits the student athlete better. In America you follow the Liberal Arts approach where students choose between humanities, science and business subjects for their first and second year. Students then select specialised subjects such as education, law, finance or engineering in their final two years of study. I liked the idea of having two years to learn different subjects and then after the two years being able to select your strongest subject area. In Ireland you have to make the decision of study in your first year. Although with that being said you can always change a degree programme and start a different degree at any time in Europe.

What is an Athletic Scholarship?

An Athletic Scholarship is a form of scholarship awarded to an athlete to attend a college or university and represent their sports team in their various sports disciplines. Scholarships vary in size. The size of scholarship depends on the athlete's ability to play in that sport and how much funds the coach has at his/her disposal. There are big expectations on each athlete to perform at high standards for the length of the contract, while also attending classes, throughout both fall/autumn (Aug) and spring (Jan) season.

Your four different years in college:

A degree usually lasts for around four years. Some students can take 4½ years to finish their degree (especially if they complete a major with a minor) or else they complete summer classes that brings them up to four full years. Be mindful that summer classes are expensive and most coaches will not pay for summer classes or your extra semester after you finish your senior year. This is important to talk through with your coach if you need extra time to graduate. Communication is key.

The College Years are named as follows:

1. 1st year: Freshman
2. 2nd year: Sophomore
3. 3rd year: Junior
4. 4th year: Senior

What is the difference between a Major and a minor degree?

For a bachelor degree your major is the main degree you choose to study with your minor being a secondary area of study. An example would be choosing a Business degree for your major and doing a minor in a language like Spanish to boost your Business major. Some student-athletes like to choose a major for the area they wish to pursue in their career and then do a minor in an area that just interests them. An example of this would be completing a major in mathematics and a minor in an area they just have personal interest in like chemistry or art history.

What is NCAA?

The NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) is a non-profit organisation that oversees eligibility requirements for athletes who wish to compete at college Division 1 or 2 level in America each year.

There are over 17,000 International students enrolled and competing in different sports each year. Before playing for your prospective college, all athletes must meet minimum academic requirements and an athlete can do this through registering and obtaining a cert through the NCAA eligibility centre. If and when you have a coach interested in recruiting you then she/he and their academics team will help you with this. I recommend registering yourself when starting out the search before you get in touch with coaches. For more information on this visit www.eligibilitycenter.org. The phone number for contacting the eligibility center for International students is (001) 317/917-6222.

It is worth noting that you also need to register for NAIA Colleges separately from NCAA. The NAIA eligibility center can be found at the email address www.playnaia.org. This website explains everything you need to play at this level. Remember, playing at D1 or NAIA levels simply means that playing at two different levels, which is determined by how many students attend that college (size of college). A common misconception is that the levels are completely different standards in talent. While my experience is that student athletes are challenged more at D1 with the fitness levels and speed of the game being higher it still needs to be noted that I played with and against better individual soccer players at times in the NAIA level. The fee for international students to sign with the NAIA eligibility process is \$95. This is sent off with the official transcripts (Leaving Certificate Results) from Highschool (Secondary School). This must be an official transcripts sealed and sent from your Highschool. You then create an online profile to create an online presence for coaches to view.

What are my responsibilities when I sign with NCAA?

Once registered with NCAA you must maintain your academic eligibility and follow the rules for studying in the USA to maintain your status. An athlete must maintain a certain Grade Point Average (GPA) to keep their eligibility in their chosen sport. Most colleges aim to keep a team average of 3.0 GPA out of 4.0 GPA.

Your responsibilities, while at home before you leave and in the States, are extremely important for getting high grades for a few reasons as most coaches will mention you are a student-athlete not an athlete only. Remember you have a dual purpose for being in the States.

1. Firstly you are trying to pass grades to qualify for your college of interest.
2. Secondly on the coaching side it is important to prove to the coach that you are interested in attending class and not just there for sport. Coaches cannot just take your word for it so they check grades regularly and determine the risk of investment.

If you are a European then the coach will look specifically for your SAT results. Good SAT results and a reasonable Leaving Certificate are needed in order to qualify for the college of

your choice. You do not have to be an amazing student but the coach will not waste their time on somebody who may neglect their studies and as a result struggle to pass their class.

How divisions are divided:

Remember the divisions are split by the size of the colleges and not by the talent of sport or student athlete. There are superb players in different smaller divisions and colleges but in general the better players can be found in Division 1 whose Colleges Athletic Departments also have the biggest athletic funds for their sport. Be sure to check what other sports are offered at the college you are talking to. If for example you are looking at men's baseball in a college that has men's basketball and American Football then the baseball athletic fund may not be a great amount. On the other hand the softball (women's) scholarship funds at that same college may be a large amount because of Title IX agreement. I talk about the different levels further down at the end of chapter 1.

Amateurism explained:

According to the NCAA website (www.ncaa.com) once you sign with the NCAA you must answer questions about your sports participation to determine your amateur status. The following activities may impact your amateur status:

1. Signing a contract with a professional team
2. Playing with professionals
3. Participating in tryouts or practises with a professional team
4. Accepting payments for playing sport
5. Accepting prize money above your expenses
6. Accepting benefits from an agent
7. Agreeing to be represented by an agent
8. Delaying your full-time college enrolment to play in organised sports competitions

It can get tricky here for any player who is involved with a semi-professional or professional team in Europe and is breaking into the first team. If this is happening with you then run it by a college coach you are chatting to and see what answer comes back. Once you are not getting paid then it should be all right. I played a few games with Dundalk FC before leaving for the States and once in the States I remember a coach screaming profanities about my amateurism. I hadn't a clue what he was talking about until it was explained to me. In fairness I wasn't being paid for my sport and I was part of the youth team at the time so I had little or nothing to worry about. Now I know what that coach was talking about though.

Like anything else from this guide if you're unsure then ask somebody more experienced than you. If your dream is to play at college in America then don't ruin this chance for a handful of matches being paid. Check before playing while in the process of being recruited.

What is involved in a typical soccer college season August-December?

A typical soccer season would involve a player reporting back to campus for pre-season around the second week of August. Some soccer colleges begin official training with a mid-night two-mile run. Some colleges will have their senior captains practise a week before they officially meet as a team. This is usually "optional" but highly encouraged. Pre-season can be pretty brutal physically without adding the weather into the equation. Usually a few players quit in pre-season because they were not committed or couldn't handle the

intensity of a college pre-season. There is a big difference between American fit and Irish fit in terms of sport and the Americans are usually far fitter than Irish kids. The American College game is more intense. The Irish kids don't realise that until they turn up for pre-season.

Fall Season: August-December.

The soccer season typically runs from mid-August to end of November depending on how far the team goes in the national tournament if they qualify. Generally games are played twice a week during this period. The term is full-on with classes and exams or papers. It may also involve travelling for few days at a time playing matches so communication with your teachers is key and class-work must still be submitted. Classes are ongoing to the middle of December and then there is a month's break for Christmas.

Spring Season: January- May.

After Christmas, if soccer is your sport, you train regularly and play six or seven friendlies or mini tournaments depending on the fixtures your coach organises. You also attend classes during this period of spring from January until May. The fact a season is short can be a deal breaker for some athletes but I quite enjoyed the intensity of a short season and the team building spring season that followed. Different sports have their competitive season after Christmas or during spring time, for example tennis and basketball play their competitive season from January to May while their downtime may be when the soccer season is in full swing from late August to late November.

List of sports and when they play their competitive season:

The NCAA governs 23 total different collegiate sports programmes at Division I, Division II and Division III colleges in the United States. There are six different sports offered in Fall/autumn. Out of those six sports, two of them are available to both men and women. Winter offers the busiest of the seasons in college sports with ten different sports during this period. Out of those ten sports, seven are offered to both men and women. The spring season offers more sports options than the fall/autumn season, but not as many as the winter season. Eight sports are offered during the spring season. The winter season is a combination of Fall/autumn and spring games combined.

Fall Season Sports:

1. Men's and women's cross-country
2. Field hockey
3. Football
4. Men's and women's soccer
5. Women's volleyball
6. Men's water polo

Winter Season Sports:

1. Men's and women's basketball
2. Bowling
3. Fencing
4. Men's and women's gymnastics
5. Men's and women's ice hockey
6. Men's, women's and mixed rifle
7. Men's, women's and mixed skiing
8. Men's and women's swimming and diving
9. Men's and women's indoor track and field
10. Wrestling

Spring Season Sports:

1. Baseball and softball
2. Men's and women's golf
3. Men's and women's lacrosse
4. Rowing
5. Men's and women's tennis
6. Men's and women's outdoor track and field
7. Men's volleyball
8. Women's water polo

Two-sports combined scholarship:

One of my success stories is on Luke Keogh who is a qualified attorney after finishing his college sports career and further attorney studies. During college Luke combined playing soccer with athletics in his off-season from soccer. Not many students have the ability to combine sports while also remaining successful in class. From talking to students who have combined sports, most fall into this situation after arriving at their college and realising they have the talent or speed as in Luke's case to compete at a different sports. Luke ran 800m, 1500m and 5,000m indoor and outdoor after Christmas when his soccer season was finished. It is recommended to concentrate on recruitment to a college in your strongest sport and then when you are signed and arriving in college keep an eye out to see if other sports offer something in the off season. A lot will depend on the attitude of the coach in your main sport. The main consideration for the athlete is to decide if taking part in another sport will benefit you or hinder you in progressing to your next season. Each situation is very individual to the student-athlete, coach and the team or college.

How much is a scholarship worth/costing?

College education is the most rewarding benefit of the scholarship student athlete experience. Full scholarships cover fees, room, board, tuition and books and in some very rare cases even flights. On average a scholarship to D1 College covers anything up to \$30,000 per year according to www.scholarshipstats.com. Some scholarships can cost less and some are up to \$100,000 per year. Some colleges may cover more areas like food and books. To some European family's this doesn't sound overly exciting but to an American this is a huge achievement and something the family can be very proud of. It is why American parents spend their weekends driving kids around to their sports in preparation to earn a scholarship offer to a college.

Scholarships sports get what is called a scholarship equivalency. This means that they get a certain amount of scholarships over the four years of the athlete's durations.

I will use a golf sport example that is 3.1 full scholarship for the coach's programme.

3.1 full scholarships over four years and tuition is worth \$30,000.

$3.1 \times 30k = 93k$ and most coaches divide that money over four years, which equates to 23k per year so the coach has to figure out how best to spread out the scholarship money. Academics come into play here also as explained below. The bottom line is if you get a full scholarship off a coach then they expect you to be a difference maker in their programme.

Most coaches choose to stack a scholarship using academics and athletic scholarships. This is why it is so important to put as much effort into academics as sport. If the kid is academically well above average then maybe they can get a higher scholarship from a coach, thus proving how important academics really are. If you are leaving recruitment until final year of secondary school then most coaches have spent all their allocated money. So if the coach has \$23,000 sports plus randomly for example \$20,000 academics then they can make up a number of scholarships worth \$43,000 for the year. Some will go as partial scholarships and a few may be full scholarships to really talented individuals.

I spoke with former Thomas University and current Armstrong University coach Eric Faulkner who has recruited many foreign soccer players and he shared this wisdom.

"Make sure the student athlete makes the right choice based on the right fit for themselves and not the highest scholarship money. Of course money is important but perhaps College A that costs more dollars than College B but it ends up being a better experience. Also it is vital to get all offers in writing. According to Eric the term full scholarship is thrown around a lot. Make sure you the student have a list of what is covered and what is not covered. Question everything from health insurance to taxes on the scholarship," he stated.

Example of admission dates:

Admission dates are as follows below for University of North Florida.

Application Term	Submission Deadline
Fall (Sept)	May 1
Spring (Jan)	October 1
Summer (June)	February 1

If you are hoping to start in August/Fall then you must have all materials submitted by May 1st. It's never too early to look for offers.

Admission requirements for University of North Florida as an example are:

1. Application fee for admission which is \$30 non-refundable fee (cheque or money order only in U.S dollars).
2. Completed application for admissions. A mailed application is fine although you can complete an online application but realise you must mail some items in the post with this application.
3. International high school and Leaving Certificate transcripts.
4. English language proficiency.
5. Official test scores. If as an example you are entering University of North Florida the SAT requirements to gain entry for undergraduate programmes is 460 for Maths and 460 for English.

Remember that admissions can be different for all colleges so to avoid disappointment make sure you look up international admissions for any college that you are emailing and double check what is required. Do not leave it in the hands of the coach as they are extremely busy people. It is the responsibility of the applicant to know what is required.

What visa am I looking for?

Essentially you are looking for an F-1 student visa. Before you can get that form for entry to the States you must fulfil some requirements.

You must show:

1. An affidavit of financial support. You must have a minimum of \$3000 dollars in a homeland (Irish) bank account so that show you have financial backing to survive on. Some colleges ask for different amounts of money.
Remember this is separate from any money you must show if you do not have a full scholarship to college there. The affidavit must be signed by a sponsor you have to provide funds and must be signed by your bank.
2. Bank certification of the student visa to prove the funds are in the bank.

What are the health requirements for enrolling at college?

Health requirements may be slightly different at most colleges or for entry to different State Institutions however, on the whole, most colleges you must show an immunisation documentation form. You must also show proof of health insurance. Family health packages may be fine but there are companies who specialise in this area of health insurance for study abroad. If you do not have family health insurance then check out alternative options. Quite possibly your coach can guide you on this information. Remember that most States require you to have proof of medical insurance that meets a minimum standard as a prerequisite to registration.

Mentally Tough:

Become comfortable with a lack of response or rejection emails from coaches/colleges. Looking for the perfect college? This does not exist. Remember you can impact many different college programs. In personal reflection there are programmes that are better suited to you as a person. You must know yourself as to what suits you best?

Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Do you like smaller classes (more one-to-one time with professors) or large classes?
2. Would the pressure of a large D1 programme overwhelm you?
3. Would a college with 700-1200 (NAIA) students be a better match to you?
4. Would going to a college with 30,000-50,000 (D1) students just distract you from what you're trying to do in terms of soccer success?

How do you deal with rejection?

Remember if you work hard and email hundreds of coaches you won't hear back from most of them as I will explain further down. If you do and, unfortunately for whatever reason, they cannot fit you into their programme then don't burn any bridges as they may help you down the line. Simply reply back with a thanks for your reply, wish them well for the upcoming season and leave it at that.

Are you mentally strong enough to deal with rejection from a coach? Are you fully aware that there are many others out there on the same journey? I would recommend not giving up on a college programme until you get a definite no.

Chapter 2

Recruitment Strategies

“Too many coaches teach technique when they should be teaching strategy”. – **Martina Navratilova**

Most sport scholarship private companies or colleges tell you what way you should go looking for a scholarship but they do not teach the correct strategy for completing this process. It is my belief that if you can master a good recruitment strategy then everything else eventually falls into place.

“Overwhelmed” is usually the phrase I hear when chatting to anyone beginning the process of finding a sports scholarship in the United States. Unless you have been actively recruited by a coach, family member or friend to take the option of a scholarship then the process will be overwhelming at the beginning.

First of all don't panic as the majority of people feel this way at the start but as you put together a simple strategy or action plan then and only then will the process become clearer. The reason I hear most for failure to get a scholarship is usually because of two different reasons that I encountered both while teaching in Colaiste Ide. Firstly, I realised some athletes were either far too overconfident in their sport talents and didn't put work into recruitment or, secondly were far too lazy about the process and again didn't put in the work required.

There are a few different strategies for getting recruited from Europe to an American college.

1. First things first, realise the college coaches are out there actively looking for players.
2. Make sure you are in the best place to showcase your talents.
3. I would highly recommend asking somebody to video and edit your best performances from any competitive matches you played, whether that is with your secondary school or club team or even a training session. The easiest place to log the video(s) is YouTube and tag the link in an email to the coach.

Listed below are a few strategies for finding that college.

Strategy 1. Do It Yourself

“If we knew what is was we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?” - Albert Einstein

While I do recommend that any athletes seek professional guidance it is possible to do all of the work yourself. There are past examples of people doing it themselves and this can be an anxious period second-guessing if you have ticked all of the boxes in your application. It is hoped that this guide eases that anxiety for anyone who does complete the work themselves.

Follow these steps:

1. Look up what area of the country you may like to travel to. New York is vastly different from Florida.
2. Google colleges in that area. Research the soccer programmes in those colleges. A tip is that if there are no foreigners then don't email the coach as they don't recruit abroad.
3. If there are foreigners then send your first contact email with resume attached. Have an idea of their programme, results, team and schedule. That impresses coaches.
4. Once you get contact back and a coach is interested then fill out an application form. Register for the NCAA and NAIA. Follow the coach's advice.
5. Keep your options open on other colleges. You may still get a better offer.

There are recruitment companies out there who simply upload your details to their website and allow coaches to contact you with offers. Simply put, go to the www.ncsa.com and fill out a free recruiting profile. While I don't think this is enough, it is a start. You can start looking for a scholarship two or three years before you graduate secondary school (high school). The problem for most European kids is they don't start looking for a scholarship until final year of high school whereas American kids have been searching for four or five years by the time they leave high school.

Take full responsibility for your own recruitment to colleges. Do not leave it in the hands of anybody else. You can seek help and talk to many different athletes who have gone before you but keep emailing coaches and gaining information on schools looking for players in your position. Do yourself a favour before you contact a college coach by researching each college team and see if they are graduating a player in your position and then mention that

in your email. It will impress the coach and show them you may have what it takes to make the move to America. An alarming number of European athletes are lazy in their approach and send generic emails to coaches. This simply will **not** get a reply. Get started early with the recruitment drive to save yourself time at a later date.

How do I get discovered?

Firstly remember the coaches are constantly looking for new recruits. There is no one method that works for everyone in terms of being discovered. The more times you discuss your plans with friends and family the more stories you hear about athletes who have gone before you. This helps you on your journey. Those experiences are passed on to you. Seek out different family friends or people living in your town that have completed a Sports scholarship to the US before you make a decision.

Offer them lunch or a coffee and question them on how they got on:

1. How did they go about finding a scholarship?
2. What did they find enjoyable about their experience?
3. What was their happiest point?
4. What was their toughest point?
5. How did they deal with being so far away?
6. What would they give you as a tip for recruiting?
7. And most importantly, do they know any coaches they could reach out to see if they are looking for new recruits?

Some European students don't finish their education for a number of different reasons but do not let somebody's bad experiences put you off your journey to success. If anything you should learn from what happened to them and keep an eye out for it in future. Once contacted, most college coaches seek third party evaluations from people they trust and then they will recruit you once they have done their research on you as a student, person and then athlete. Understand that it is all a process and is never rushed.

Although all levels are catered for in America, the higher the youth level you play in your sport, the better the scholarship opportunity for you. If you are a youth international in your country then you usually will have a choice of many colleges. Playing youth Airtricity League will tell the coach you are at a certain level. This helps in the recruitment process. Don't panic if you are not at this level most coaches will have a third party evaluator (mostly ex-players from their college that they have remained friendly with) come and look at matches you play. They are fully aware that hidden gems also come through the lower leagues system.

I have seen many students of very average sports or athletic level get recruited as there are various levels for all students in America. You have to know what your strengths are so you can relay this information to the coaches. Sell yourself.

“You cannot dream yourself into a character; you must hammer and forge yourself one”. – Henry David Thoreau

How do I contact a college coach?

There are a few ways to contact a college coach. The simplest method is by going directly to the athletic website of the university and looking up the staff directory. For example the University of Memphis website is www.memphis.edu. On the main page always look for athletic button. Press it and go to the athletics website which is www.gotigersgo.com.

An alternative method could be to google the name of your prospective college and athletics together (i.e. Memphis & Athletics). This should give you the page for the athletic website directly. Find your sport and make sure they are recruiting foreigners or else you are wasting your time.

You then send out a letter of first contact with your sports resume attached. Both the letter and sports resume combined will explain both your academic and soccer abilities in terms that they understand. You must also go to the team’s website and fill out the online college recruitment questionnaire. It is not enough to do just one or the other as both are important. The more of an impression you make on the coach at this early stage the better.

As I have stated numerous times throughout this guide you must grab the coach’s attention with your email in subject line or first paragraph.

Some examples of this may be:

1. Three-time club player of the year.
2. Airtricity premier league U17’s player.
3. Ireland Top 5 Golfer with 1200 in my SAT’s.
4. All Ireland U16 tennis champion looking for scholarship.
5. Ireland International U16 goalkeeper.

Also add in the following on the subject line after your attention-grabbing line.

1. First Name
2. Last name
3. Year of graduation

An example of that would be “Ireland top 5 golfer Cormac McArdle 2021 Graduation”.

Use your solid information early but don’t try and lie as one phone call (to a third party reference) and the coach will figure out whether your being truthful or not. The other tip to note is that coach's talk to each other regularly so if you think you can fool one coach with false information and your name pops up in conversation then the coach may relay their experience of dealing with you on to their colleague. These coaches call all your references and anyone else that may know you or play against you. You will be well scouted.

How do Coaches Evaluate Prospects?

Firstly, understand that college coaches are extremely busy people. Their job is results-driven and they are under huge pressure to earn their next paid contract. That means they work hard at recruiting, often years in advance. Their job is on the line each year. You can be a vital cog in their attempts to be successful and keep their jobs. If you earn a big scholarship offer then they expect a lot from you as early as possible in your college career. Most coaches realise it takes time for a student to settle into the environment but in such a results-based career there isn't all that much time.

In this technology driven age there can be no excuses for not making contact with coaches so you must use the internet as your most powerful recruiting tool. Upload a highlights video you made and send it to as many college coaches as possible. Some coaches claim they don't have time to watch all the videos but if it is received from a source, who they respect, then they will watch the highlights. If you don't hear back from a coach don't be disheartened as they may not have received the video or they haven't the time to watch each one. Keep the confidence high and keep sending out emails and videos.

Steps coaches use to evaluate prospects.

1. The coach will evaluate any highlights they have seen of you.
2. They will then get a third party evaluation.
3. Third party will scout a game you are playing in.
4. Then if they are really keen will perhaps they will fly for a visit and watch you play.
5. If you impress on these steps and in a few matches, then and only then, will they step up their offer.

College Stepping Stone System:

I would encourage thinking of using the Junior College or Community College as a stepping stone to a higher level whether that is NAIA, Division 2 or even Division 1. I have heard stories of students being offered scholarships to a Division 1 programme but not have a subject in their Leaving Certificate. They then forget about the opportunity of the stepping-stone system altogether. Don't quit because of one obstacle. I would advise to be very careful when selecting subjects for completing Leaving Certificate if you are thinking about the offer of a scholarship.

You have three options in this situation if you lack a subject:

1. One is to sign up to a third level College of Further Education in your country, complete a science subject and study on your own time and take the test.
2. The second is to sign up to complete the science subject in the Leaving Certificate that same year in your home country.
3. The third option is to defer a year altogether and save money while training and preparing for moving the following year while you take the Leaving Certificate subject. Be aware that this can be deflating if you are gaining momentum in your effort to find a college.

Highlights Video Tips:

From conducting research for this guide I spoke to various coaches about tips they would recommend for prospective students. One of the more regular tips I received was how important the highlights video is as a first point of contact while I was also made aware of some of the errors that student athletes make in completing this video.

One experienced coach mentioned how there is a need for awareness in the players of the standard of video they are posting. One coach mentioned how embarrassing a video he received was. The players all wore different coloured shorts and socks, while the grass wasn't even cut or lined. The coach knew after one minute of watching that the standard was nowhere near good enough for his college. You're completely **ruining** any chance of the opportunity of a scholarship before you get speaking to the coach.

My tip would be to get an experienced videographer to do a highlights reel. If you do not have a fantastic highlights reel then don't bother at all and ask the coach to come and watch you play a match. If your parents are handy with a phone that may work from a height if you can edit the footage well and mark yourself on the plays.

Another coach mentioned how he has received videos of highlights reel of students who got their friends to record the match with a phone and the coach couldn't watch the highlights as the phone was moving up and down and the friend recording was laughing and screaming at the player.

Vital tips for a highlights reel:

1. Invest in an experienced videographer to complete at least three match highlights to capture your best moments.
2. Complete the video from a height so the coach can view the footage clearly.
3. As the video plays complete a one-minute interview detailing your intentions with regard to progressing your sport thus allowing the coach to learn about you off the pitch.
4. Then ask the videographer to mark you as a player with a small circle or arrow during each play.
5. If there are few different plays then break up the video into your strongest assets. Offence, set plays, defending, or taking corners, free kicks.

Researching colleges online:

There are thousands of colleges out there and the process of looking at colleges for the first time is overwhelming. I recommend committing a lot of time getting to know the different levels and colleges in those divisions. Set aside time every day to look up the college and their athletic programmes.

Each college has:

1. A website

2. Athletic Department
3. Different Sports Programmes.

This is a really good place to start gathering information. I would get different folders for the different divisions and separate the folders writing details on each sports programme of your choice. Then keep tabs on who you emailed, who replied and what coach has received what from you. Remember, as mentioned already, if you go to an athletic department and that coach has no foreigners then there is a good chance they will not recruit so don't waste your time.

Get real with recruitment:

According to www.ncsa.com less than 1% of college athletes earn a Division 1 full scholarship. More than 1,800 colleges have athletic programmes and 94% of them are outside of Division 1. My recommendation would be to apply to any division you qualify for academically. This is why it is so important to check exactly what level your academics are at. If you are missing a science subject then it is something you can do for an evening class Leaving Certificate or simply do one subject in the Leaving Certificate later that year.

Many athletes don't appreciate the importance of going to a Junior College (Ju Co) or Community College as a stepping stone to a bigger four-year college. Both of these colleges are two-year colleges. There are JuCo programs which are based in beautiful campuses and compete for National titles too. Also remember that academics are not as strict for entering these colleges compared to Division 1, 2 or NAIA programmes. You must simply be 18 years of age (or older) and a graduate of secondary school (High School).

International students who are going to transfer after two years must have completed SAT's to transfer. Some classes may not transfer. I know of students who have become champions at Junior College and then made a transition to four-year colleges through their college coach's network links. Also remember if you do enter Junior College you should start looking for a transfer around six months after you start especially if this was your season. Do not leave that process until your last few months as all places will be filled. Of course, it is easy to transfer colleges when you are playing really well and showing a great attitude to the coach. (S)He will make the effort in recruitment for you.

"There will be obstacles, there will be doubters, there will be mistakes, but with hard work, there are no limits." -Michael Phelps

How do I apply?

So you have chatted to a college coach and the coach is very keen to sign you up. Work very closely with that coach and make a list of what is required of you for applying to that college. Lists are great. They keep you organised and accountable.

If you are an international college-bound student-athlete I would advise you to submit the following academic documents:

1. Contact the admission office of that college and get advice on how to prepare and get into that college specifically. Usually you will need to fill out an application form and pay the international student fee for the application returning via mail or scan/email.
2. Otherwise you will need your academic records for grade nine and up which is from Junior Certificate in Ireland, year 10 in England and Wales, year 11 in Northern Ireland, S3 in Scotland, and year 9 in Australia. (Records must be translated to English if it is not your first language.
3. Proof of graduation including any certificates, diplomas or Leaving Certificate exams results (must be official copy and never been opened) that is posted by your school.
4. SAT or ACT score. You will need to sit a SAT (a mathematical, verbal and written aptitude test). From my research I found there are two test centres in Ireland. One in Waterford and one in Dublin. Tests are held six times a year. For more information on this look up www.collegeboard.ie. Since 2016 there has been a change in the way SAT's are scored and all the information can be found at www.compassprep.com.

Next Steps:

- Once the application and payment is received the athletic compliance office should send you information on your visa process and immigration news.
- The international student office receives an I-20 form and sends it to the student-athlete via their coach. All student-athletes that study in the United States need a Form I-20, "Certificate of Eligibility for Non-immigrant Student Status" from their college. You take this form with you to America.
- Bank Affidavit: An original letter in English on official bank stationery stating there are sufficient funds in bank account. Dollar amount (in English) must be included.
- Once admitted the university should set up your university email for any further correspondence.

Don't forget there is usually a deadline for submissions by first year academic students. This is why it is so important to communicate well from the beginning. Another tip is never burn bridges with coaches if they don't respond as quickly as you would hope. It is all a process. Remember that American kids research for years but start the application process around a full year before starting college so you, as an international student, usually don't have that time. Make a list of requirements from your coach, act quickly on that list and be organised as you usually have a small window of time to act on fulfilling that dream move.

Christmas Transfer:

Personally, my Christmas college transfer from Thomas University to Memphis University was hectic and only for both a quick-acting recruiting coach and student-athlete the transfer would never have happened. I spent countless hours sending forms over and back to America while holidaying at home. My dad was great in the process dropping tools at work, at a minute's notice, if I needed to send forms off. While at the time I didn't realise how lucky I was with the transfer going through it was only around graduation when my coach at Memphis told me it was touch and go as to my transfer going through a few years earlier and he commended me on my quick acting that Christmas at home. Remember attitude is everything in these situations.

What Sports Level should I aim for?

There are thousands of different higher levels of education in the United States and four different division levels in the college sports game in the United States.

These divisions are separated by size of the college. I found the following statistics on the NCAA website www.ncaa.com :

1. Division 1 has 346 member colleges, 32 conferences and 6,552 sports teams. Division 1 holds the greatest number of students with some colleges taking in over 100,000 students onto their campuses each year.
2. Division 2 has around 307 member colleges, 24 conferences and 4,705 colleges. The colleges usually enrol anything from 2,500 students to 15,000 each year, which is much smaller numbers than Division 1. The colleges also have smaller athletic departments.
3. Division 3 has 439 member colleges, 43 conferences and 7,910 sports teams. Up to 81% of these colleges are private institutions. These schools are much smaller in size and offered a lot of academic scholarships and no sports scholarships.
4. NAIA (National Athletic Intercollegiate Association) was established made up of small four-year colleges throughout the United States and its standard level of sports is comparable to D2 colleges. There are 249 member colleges and 29 conferences.
5. Two-year Community Colleges or Junior Colleges have 1,462 members. Junior Colleges offer two-year associate degrees as well as an entry point to a four-year college. This is another example of a stepping stone example for European students if the student has missed out on a scholarship direct to a four-year college. These institutions offer students two years of sports and academics before the student graduates and looks for a transfer to a new college for the remaining two years of eligibility.

The great news is there is a level for every single standard of soccer player, men's and women's in the United States. The very best soccer players don't always qualify for the

bigger colleges so a lot of the talented players play NAIA division. A very average player could move to a NAIA college and become a four-year starter, captain and hero on campus for their dedication to the college team. I have heard many of these stories in years gone by.

Personally, I never focused on which exact college I wanted to go across to team-wise, as this was out of my control. I simply worked as hard on my training every single day and had faith everything would work out while concentrating hard on sending out countless emails. I never lost that faith, although it feels like a rollercoaster at times. I remained confident throughout the process by reaching out to well over 150 colleges. Remember, when you don't hear back don't get disheartened, as most colleges note your name and sports player profile and keep an eye out for you during that year, waiting to hear from a third party source or scout.

Strategy 2: Colaiste Ide Soccer

Below you will find a letter from my old coach at Colaiste Ide named Danny Crowley:

Having worked in the education/football industry for the past 18 years I have to say that I cannot recommend going to the USA on soccer scholarship highly enough. There are too many success stories to mention but there are many former Coláiste Íde students all over the USA. Many of them have graduated and are working in a plethora of different industries including cancer research, finance, graphic design, the sports industry and many more.

In my opinion Coláiste Íde is the number one place to go for any student hoping to obtain a soccer scholarship to the USA. The benefits of attending Coláiste Íde are many, for example, students are improving their academic profile while they are also getting ideally prepared for life as a student athlete in the USA. During their time in Coláiste Íde our students are completing a QQI Level 5 Sports, Recreation & Exercise award. They are also learning how to research universities in the USA and all the different levels of schools available for them to apply to. We also get our students qualified as soccer coaches and for many this is the first step on their coaching journey. A number of our former students are now Head Coaches or Assistant Head Coaches in Universities in the USA.

A lot of young men and women dream of making it as a soccer player and becoming rich and famous. While there is nothing at all wrong with having a dream like this the reality is that a tiny percentage will ever make it as a professional. This is why third level education is so important and why it should be a priority for our school leavers. Going on soccer scholarship is the ideal way to combine education and soccer. The level of soccer and education is excellent in the USA and it is a win-win for our students to get their third level education paid for because their academic profile and soccer ability is at a high level.

Kind regards

Danny Crowley

Coláiste Íde Soccer

Decide. Commit. Act. Succeed. Repeat. – Tim Grover

The College:

It's one of the biggest, most unsung, success stories of Irish education system. Colaiste Ide is a College of Further Education based in Finglas, Dublin, Ireland. I highly recommend the sports courses and the Association Football course (FETAC level 5) is one of the finest soccer courses in the country. I personally attended this course September 2001 through to May 2002 and then went on a scholarship in August 2002. The "Ide" is and always has been Ireland's leading provider of opportunities for soccer players to further themselves in America on a soccer scholarship or in Ireland from a playing/coaching next step. Ide has many links to coaches and past players still working and coaching in America. As mentioned previously the college closed the soccer course in 2013 and reopened in 2017.

The Course:

Sports, Recreation and Exercise 5M5146 NFQ Level 5

OVERVIEW

This course gives students the academic, physical, technical, tactical and psychological knowledge necessary for the demands as a student athlete with particular emphasis on soccer coaching. In addition, it offers a broad introduction to Sport, Exercise and Recreation studies, providing students with the necessary skills to take up employment at entry level in the leisure industry. Students will improve their knowledge, competence and understanding of physical fitness and sport both practically and theoretically. Graduates often progress within the college to one of our QQI/FETAC Level 6 Sport and Leisure Management courses on offer. Many past students have gained lucrative soccer scholarships in the USA.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

- Leaving Certificate: Five passes at Ordinary Level, or
- Leaving Certificate Applied, or
- QQI/FETAC Level 4 award, or
- Others including mature students are assessed individually and personal interview
- Medically certified evidence of fitness to participate in exercise
- Personal interview and football assessment (Trial)

PRINCIPAL AREA OF STUDY

Sports and Recreation Studies, Exercise and Fitness, ITEC Gym Instruction, Sports Anatomy and Physiology, Sports and Exercise Injury Prevention, Nutrition, Soccer Coaching and Occupational First Aid Communications, Work Experience, Teamwork, Kick Start 1 & 2, 4v4 workshop, 7v7 workshop, Strength and Conditioning workshop.

ACCREDITATION

QQI, ITEC

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AND PROGRESSION

This course offers progression options for learners to programmes in Universities and Institutes of Technology. Third-level institutes also reserve a number of places on degree courses for mature learners (over the age of 23). Learners must apply to each institute individually.

Learners who complete this major QQI award at Level 5 are eligible to apply through the CAO system for entry into participating courses in the QQI Higher Education Links Scheme (HELS). A limited number of places are available and applicants are ranked according to results achieved in their QQI major award.

PROGRESSION

In addition to progression options within the college to one of the QQI/FETAC Level 6 Sport and Leisure Management programmes, graduates may choose to apply to a range of courses in Institutes of Technology, including DIT.

DURATION:

1 Year

COURSE CODE:

6315

Throughout the one-year course named the Sports and Leisure Management- Soccer course you will complete various subjects. I personally had a great experience in Colaiste Ide which provided the base for breaking into the Dundalk F.C first team during the 2001/2002 season and also gave me the sporting foundations and complete physical mental, and academic preparation for a move to America a year later. I cannot speak highly enough of the course.

The Competitions:

Throughout the year you represent the team in All-Ireland Colleges and Universities Football competitions and Colaiste Ide have set the standard in those competitions throughout the previous 15 years before closing the course in 2013. The course reopened in 2017. Ide completely prepares the student both mentally and physically throughout the year for a move across to the USA on a sports scholarship as you train five days per week while also taking academic classes throughout the week.

The competitions are as follows:

1. Colleges & Universities Leagues
2. F.A.I Umbro Cup
3. All Ireland Colleges Cup
4. Belgrove Cup
5. Bob Eustace Cup

The Annual 10-Day Trip:

Through attending Ide you will meet and showcase your skills to college coaches and given the “chance of a lifetime” opportunity to showcase your skills on their annual 10-day tournament in America. Throughout the year you write letters of scholarship interest to different coaches and give them information about the American tournament with the hope they will attend and make you an offer of a scholarship. I am informed by Danny Crowley that as of 2017 Colaiste Ide will be going to Florida for the first time in their history. Previously the team used play in the Memphis Invitational Cup. This is an amazing trip and a great way to showcase your talents to coaches from all over the country. You get to experience the sports side of college throughout this trip, doing tours of campuses, mixing with current college students and experiencing the American culture first hand.

Athletes Academic Misunderstanding:

I felt privileged to return and teach in Colaiste Ide for one year in 2007 and I clearly noticed the single biggest mistake athletes make is they are over-confident and completely under-prepared for the process of reaching out to college coaches. Most students at Ide are there for footballing reasons first and foremost and don't realise the importance of their academics. To be successful in America both your academics and soccer skills go hand-in-hand. Firstly, athletes have to understand the first point of contact with a coach is by email (letter of interest). It is vital you work on a respectable email to send to coaches as two or three lines similar to a text message simply will not impress the college coaches. Teenagers don't realise this. The mistake athletes make is that they concentrate on the illusion that they are going to play professional sports in America and forget that they are attending college first and foremost and playing sports secondly. Athletes also forget that attending college stateside means completing up to three or four classes a day in America along with playing sports full-time. If you cannot pass classes in Colaiste Ide then my guess is you won't last too long in America.

Closure and rebirth:

Unexpectedly Colaiste Ide closed its doors in 2013 but reopened in 2017 and long may it continue. My old head coach Jim Conroy is no longer working there but he has started a private scholarship business called “Soccer Scholar”. Google it for more information. Jim was the life and soul of Colaiste Ide so I felt terrible for him when higher powers pulled the course due to funding. Thankfully there has been a rebirth of Colaiste Ide and Danny Crowley is now at the helm.

Jim Conroy and Danny Crowley ran the course in my time at the College (2001/2002). Danny is a top-class soccer coach who has undertaken the reopening of the course (2017) and he has great knowledge and experience in the area. Not only has Danny a pedigree background in playing soccer but he has a wealth of experience coaching both amateur, Airtricity League and college teams. Danny was the CFAI combined manager for six years and manager of Team Ireland for the World University Games 2013 in Kazan, Russia and 2015 in Gwangju, in South Korea.

With Danny's experience and knowledge I am confident the course can get back to the success that both Jim and Danny aimed for and achieved each year. Colaiste Ide has also taken European students and even American kids themselves down the years to help them prepare for college life in America. If this is an option you would think about then I advise you to apply directly to www.colaisteide.ie/Sports-and-Leisure-Management-Soccer-

The Benefits:

There are benefits to attending Colaiste Ide. You are entering a team environment in which a full year is dedicated to preparing you academically, physically and from the soccer point of view for America. It is quite hard to replicate that while trying to scout yourself individually or while getting recruited by a private business because there is a lack of meet-ups with the business. The more contact time around people who know the process is very helpful indeed. To assist you, the student, I recommend you ask how often the private businesses meet up to train. Also do those businesses offer training plans for the year, to help you prepare, if they do not train regularly?

I personally benefited from full-time training at Colaiste Ide and it propelled me to success before I departed to the United States. Colaiste Ide offers a variety of classes throughout the year for SAT examinations. These exams are vital for entry to any college programme. People tend to take these exams lightly but standards of points scoring has risen since my time in Memphis.

I lived in digs, around the Finglas area, for the full term of Colaiste Ide, which was a good trial period of living on my own away from home. Although it was only an hour from home it still gave me the confidence to try living abroad. At the end of the year, on reflection, I realised up until then I wasn't homesick at all. This built confidence for me as I chased my dream of a full-time career in football while also earning a degree at the same time in the States. This gave me the belief that a move to America was something I would be capable of doing. Although different challenges lay ahead I knew that the year of accommodation in Dublin was the first hurdle to have to overcome.

"No trainer or coach or expert can make you good or great or unstoppable if you're not going to do the work, or if you're waiting for someone to make it happen for you. It's on you. And that's why I'm telling you all of this, not because I want you to know what I do for my guys, but because I want you to know what you have to do for yourself". -Tim Grover.



Pic above Danny Crowley

Strategy 3: Private Businesses

Business: Soccer Scholar USA

“Lifting student athletes beyond their vision of capability!” -Soccer Scholar

Soccer Scholar USA aims to assist potential student athletes on their quest to obtain scholarships at American Universities. Founded and run by educational professionals, our dedicated team has over 25 years of experience with contacts which stretch from the east to west coast of America.

With the cost of university ever increasing, obtaining a scholarship to an American university can quite often make a lot of sense financially. This, twinned with the facilities available and increasing popularity of the sport in the USA, means there has never been a better time to consider studying stateside.

At Soccer Scholar USA we guide you right the way from assessment to graduation. Our excellent Academy Team has a wealth of experience in preparing student athletes, both academically and physically, for the transition. We pride ourselves on not charging elaborate fees or guaranteeing every applicant a deal. Instead we look at every aspect of our applicants and assess their eligibility before we invite them to assessment. From here they must train hard and prepare academically to try obtain a place on our ‘Development Squad’ who will showcase in the USA and be exposed to dozens of college coaches and recruiters.

Being educational professionals, we wholeheartedly understand the importance of getting a qualification in this day and age. We also understand that sometimes our education system is not designed to accommodate the student athlete who might excel on the field, but find the classroom more challenging. Our staff have helped over 300 such individuals obtain scholarships and our testimonials speak for themselves.

Why not make your dream a reality?

Yours in Sport,

Ryan Conroy

Secretary

00447515 725481

ryan@soccerscholar.co.uk

Birth of Soccer Scholar:

What you just read above, is the letter, Soccer Scholar send to applicants every year who show interest in obtaining a scholarship in the United States. Soccer Scholar is directed by Jim Conroy who was my original head coach in Colaiste Ide. Jim first completed the Colaiste Ide course himself over 23 years ago and then started working on the course part-time. He has since retired from Colaiste Ide but now runs his business Soccer Scholar. Jim and his team not only help athletes in the process of finding a suitable college but he remains a constant guide to you, via email/phone, over the four years of college. He has seen the transition of over 300 students in 20 years at Colaiste Ide before retiring from the college four years ago. I cannot speak more highly of him and his experience involving all aspects of obtaining a scholarship and completing the four years.

Ryan is Jim's son. He is secretary and co-owner and oversees running of the business. He has sampled college life himself so you are in good hands when dealing with Soccer Scholar for your scholarship needs. On the plus, side Soccer Scholar has now twinned with Portsmouth F.C so if you are of a certain standard before the opportunity of a scholarship (the age of 14/15/16) then potentially doors can be opened for trial matches in England for Portsmouth.

Individual Dedicated Process:

After speaking to Ryan himself he had the following to say.

“What makes Soccer Scholar USA different from our competitors is our personal touch. Unlike other organisations, we do not mass recruit. Instead, we focus on a small number of dedicated athletes and look to create a team atmosphere amongst our players. By training once a week, we provide our recruits with hours of contact time. We do not believe that a one-off showcase is enough to prepare players for the USA and try to steer away from this model. By getting to know athletes, a trust and relationship develops. This is vital for when we travel to the USA, as our schedule is hectic. Regarding fees, we are considerably cheaper than all our competitors and we guarantee recruits the chance to travel to the USA and play in a major college recruitment tournament. The athlete will also get the chance to experience American hospitality as well as university tours and cultural experiences.

“Soccer Scholar USA is run by a father and son who are education professionals. All we look to do is provide other students with the opportunities that shaped our lives,” Ryan explained.

Soccer Scholar meet once a week for training on Sundays and they have just set up a youth academy to help train up kids for what is expected in preparing for America. For more information regarding their training sessions just contact Jim on the following details below.

Contact Information:

Website: www.soccerscholar.co.uk

Facebook: Facebook.com/SoccerScholarUsa

Twitter:

[Twitter @soccer_scholar](#)

Alternatively Jim can be found at:

Mobile:

[0876953292](#)

Email:

jimmconroy@hotmail.com



"A leader never stops learning, never stops teaching, never stops looking to the future". -Bill Clinton

Some dos and don'ts about strategies of recruitment:

- Do consider all strategies of recruitment without making a hasty decision on any one method.
- Complete an email address for college recruitment only. A good idea of this would be first and last name and year of graduation i.e. billybloggs2022. A professional email will impress the coach.
- Do a cost analysis of any private companies (you can find) and Colaiste Ide (fees and cost of trip) compared to completing the process yourself to see how much you will have to pay and what you get for those costs.
- Be as honest as possible with any coach you talk to about your knowledge, experience and achievements.
- Do complete a highlights video or a match in which you played particularly well. This is a big hit with coaches in America.
- Don't stress about not hearing back from American coaches right away. Most are in their current competitive season as you are emailing them. They are extremely busy during this period.
- Do ask any coach you are in contact with what their preferred method of communication is. Keep a diary of names and numbers or email list.
- Do ask the company of their history and success on kids traveling to America although this is usually on their website.
- Don't make a decision until you have had time to discuss all options with your parents or somebody who has gone before you.
- Do make short "to do" lists a priority while looking for a scholarship as it helps you to remain organised. (See sample list below)

Do it yourself sample list for starting out looking for colleges:

Day 1 search:

1. Google NAIA Colleges (List all Conferences)
2. Pick one Conference i.e. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools)
3. List all Colleges in that Conference.
4. Research five Colleges in that Conference (i.e. William Carey University).
5. Quick pick which coach recruits foreigners* (i.e. William Carey University=yes)
6. Email that coach and each coach in that Conference that does recruit from abroad.

If a coach has foreign players in their roster then they do recruit from abroad.

Day 2 search:

1. Google five more colleges.
2. Repeat the process.

The same process can be done with D1 and D2 but also Junior Colleges.

Chapter 3

Introduction Email & Athletic Resumes

“Communication is important. Otherwise, the most you have to go by are actions and assumptions. If it’s important to you, make an extra effort to talk to the person or people directly. Then use your intuition and logic to make sense of the whole thing. You can’t make a whole decision on partial information”. –Doe Zantamata.

Introduction Email:

It is important to make contact early as possible in the recruiting process. In fact, the recruiting process is starting earlier than ever in America. Most kids are being recruited from the age of 15. I recommend making an early impression on the coach, of your intent to play college sport, through the communication of an introduction email.

Coaches receive hundreds of these emails a year so you **must make the email stand out** in the subject box or first paragraph. For example, you must state your biggest **selling point** to entice the coach to read through and contact you back. A college coach will always remember a well written email and sports resume. If your email catches their eye they will then make an effort to find your highlight video or get a third party scout to watch a match you play in. One of the biggest tips I want you to take away from this guide is how important your email strategy is in the recruiting process. It is vital cog in the wheel of recruitment. As mentioned previously your email name must be solid. An example of this would be first name/last name/ year of graduation. Billyblogs2022@hotmail.com is very solid. It might be funny to have a goofy email with your friends but don’t expect a reply from a coach with one.

Coaches cannot make contact with you as an athlete before your Junior Certificate (15 years old) but if you initiate contact then the process can begin. From Ireland I think the best time to start this search is Transition Year. In your introduction email you want to show the coach you have researched the programme, are interested in becoming a college athlete and can give them a schedule of how or where they can contact you if they are willing to watch you play.

Sports Resume:

It is so important to give your coach an idea of your character when completing your Sports Resume. If you coach kids then mention this, especially if you lead the session. Let the coach know as much about your extracurricular activities so that he/she knows they are recruiting a quality person. The coach knows already what they bring for getting you college ready but they want to know will you make an impact around campus and in the community. Don’t just mention you play soccer for Shelbourne U17. Add the details for example. [I play for Shelbourne U17. We play matches once a week and train three times. I also do fundraising for the team and coach the U11’s on a Saturday morning.](#) Do not sell yourself

short in this part. You have to break down your everyday activities in order to fully express your involvement so that it is clear to the coach.

How many times to email a coach?

As mentioned previously, with regards to email, you want to stand out from the crowd but do not annoy the coach so much you ruin the opportunity of a scholarship. I admit it can be frustrating when you don't hear back from the coach. As a reminder, coaches are extremely busy people during the season and tend to switch off during the holidays. The process is hard and takes determination and patience from your end of things. It is hard to know the difference between emailing a coach to get attention and emailing a coach who 100% will not recruit you from your country because of previous issues or no interest in players from there. There is a thin line in the process.

I would email a coach around three or four times over three weeks. Send a slightly different email every time.

1. Email 1: Email the coach, complete the recruitment form or questionnaire and follow up with a phone call (day 1).
2. Email 2: Send a second email acknowledging the first one but this time attach your letter of intent and resume plus highlights reel if you have it (day 10).
3. Email 3: Email again and call. Mention the previous attempts to get in touch while acknowledging how busy the coach must be, but you are keen to start the recruiting process (day 14)
4. Email 4: Write a short email detailing you will wait for further contact from the coach if they are willing to recruit you in the next number of months (day 21).

Some people recommend completing a follow-up to this method a few months later. I feel personally (my opinion only) if you haven't received any information back at that stage then just move on and regardless keep emailing more coaches. A coach will get in touch if there is any chance he/she is looking to recruit from your area.

An option would be to drop an email and call every two months thereafter.

If the coach has begun contact with you then keep them updated every few weeks if you have questions or just to relay an achievement to them.

Guidelines:

1. Make sure you personalise each introduction email to the coaches as most will not respond to a poorly written letter or an athlete that has not taken time to personalise the email showing intent and basic skills needed to pass college classes. Coaches receive hundreds of emails each year so you are trying to make your **email stand out**. You can do this by showing that you took a few minutes to research how the programme has done or how long the coach has been coaching at the particular

college. Know what seniors are graduating and add that to the email if it is your position.

2. **Do not send one generic email** to a few different coaches on the same email. This will not impress them and in fact it is their biggest hatred as a coach.
3. First things first - have a decent sounding email address that you are using. Maybe include your name or part of it and year of graduation. i.e. Billybloggs2018@gmail.com or jennyreilly2020@hotmail.com. While soccerhero@outlook.com might be who you are for your club team, it isn't professional enough for emailing coaches in the U.S.
4. Include contact information of your current coaches who will be contacted by the American college coaches overseas. Also include phone number and email addresses of past/current Coaches who are willing to give you a reference. A tip here would be not to invent some high-flying coach as a reference as coaches can sniff this out with one call to your reference. Your coach may not recruit you if your references don't comply with solid information so choose your referees honestly and wisely.
5. Coaches know you are nowhere near "College Athlete" ready right now but you must include as much detail as possible to stand out from the competition for your position. Any awards or teams played for will help. The higher level the better. Coaches then tend to reach out to old team-mates to scout for them. Ironically you could have been watched by a scout without your knowledge before the coach will inform you they are then going to watch you.
6. Let the Coaches know your exact plans for SATs and where you will be playing for next year or two. When do you plan on moving to the States if you earn a scholarship? Let them know all this information.
7. Get somebody to look over your email preferably an English teacher who can improve the wording and language.
8. Collect as much information about the coach you are hoping to contact especially a phone number and email address. Keep an organised list of coaches you contact and who contacts you back. Update this when needed.
9. Follow up the email with a phone call which shows huge intent. Have your facts about the programme in order and written down so you sound professional on the phone.
10. Don't panic if you don't get an email or call back. Keep going with your search. Email and call over the three-week period I mentioned above and move on. The coaches are very busy during season and most likely they will have an ex-player from your

area who will go watch one of your matches. In a lot of cases because of recruitment rules the coach actually cannot email you back. Take this into consideration when frustrated in your search. Persistence is key and will make you stand out from the other student athletes who quit emailing.

11. If you are in contact with a coach regularly continue to update the coach on academic or athletic progress as you achieve it. This can be a monthly update. Leadership or captaincy roles are impressive along with winning leagues or cups plus SAT updates. Show the coach you are consistently keen throughout the year with how you are doing and that you are keeping an eye on their programme also.

Example of an Introduction Email:

Dear Coach ...Gill..... (Coach Name),

My name is...Billy Bloggs..... (Your name). I am part of the ...2022.... (Year) graduating class in ...Colaiste Ide..... (School), in ...Dublin..... (Town) and ...Ireland..... (Country). Tell the coach you are very interested in their programme for many reasons. Get personal about their programme .i.e. *You have had three winning seasons back-to-back coach and I want to make that four winning seasons to start with and continue the winning tradition in Memphis. With my leadership and determination, I hope you can find space on your roster for me next season. I see you graduate a left back which is my position.*

The second paragraph should be all about the coach and the programme itself. Mention in a humble way why you would be a good fit for their programme. If it's a winning programme then you can help them reach greater success. If it is a losing programme then tell them why you can help the coach turn around the programme with your fighting spirit and leadership abilities. Where did the team get to in the rankings in the previous few years? Can you mention that as research point and tell the coach how you will help them reach a higher position.

I play ...left back..... (Position) on the ...All-Ireland winning Ide team..... (Team). List **your awards or accomplishments**. Make yourself **stand out** in this paragraph. Did you ever volunteer to coach a kids team? If you have a highlights reel on YouTube then include the link. List any other sports or **awards in academics** if possible. Ask the coach to contact your reference list once you are confident in that list. Include email and phone numbers on your reference list and three contacts if possible. Also let the coach know if you are **playing any tournaments of note** in the United States or your **home country**. This will give the coach a better understanding of your level and how you could impact his team. Attach a sports resume. This helps the coach build a picture of your strengths.

If you have taken the ACT or SAT test scores then list the scores in this email. Also include anything that may help you show your strength academically. Tell them what you plan to study at that college. Update your email and sports resume as often as needed. Mention you have attached a video highlights from a few matches which is edited.

Inform the coach you will follow up with a phone call and thank them for taking the time to hopefully respond to you.

Thanks,

...Billy Bloggs 2022..... (Name)

Left Back, Colaiste IDE (Position and College)

...+353867878658..... (Phone)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=billybloggs2022 (Highlight video)

Example of a poor email

From: ronaldobloggs@hotmail.com

To: gill1995@outlook.com

Subject: footy

Hey coach,

My name is billy and I am top scorer for Colaiste Ide this year. I love football as much as you I am sure. I'm playing since 6 and this year is 12th season. I want to be a pro. First I need a scholarship. Does your team have any?

My team Colaiste Ide and going to a tournament in March and I am hoping to score a lot there. Are you going to that tournament? I am going to do a video of my matches sometime this year. I am going to do business in College. Does your College have business courses?

My coach is happy to tell you about me being top scorer. If you want to chat to him then let me know and I will tell him. I am really excited about tournament in March. How is your season going?

Thanks,

Billy

The Bad (Follow up Email) Group mail

From: ronaldobloggs@hotmail.com

To: coachreilly78@outlook.com, coachjimowens@hotmail.com,
coachbarker@memphis.edu, jright@union.com g57hatter@wrightstate.com

Subject: footy tournament

Hey coaches,

Thanks for coming to my tournament in Memphis. I heard some coaches are keen for me to sign. Do any of you remember me? I play forward to Colaiste Ide and scored 4 in the first game and 3 in the second. We lost on penos in the semi-final. I was injured for that match.

Am I good enough to get a scholarship to your College? If so write back to me. I don't know what I will study but I can sign next year. I will be a great player for your team.

Let me know,

Thanks

Billy.

First Example of a good monthly email update (if you are being recruited)

Subject Box: SAT Mock Results

Hey Coach,

Just a short email to update you on my academic progress.

I scored (Test result) on the mock SAT I took last week. I have been keeping an eye on your team's progress. Great win 2-1 at (Name Opposition University). I hope you finish the season out strongly and chat to you soon.

Sincerely,

..... (Your name)

"Trust is the glue of life. It's the most essential ingredient in effective communication. It's the foundational principle that holds all relationships".

–Stephen Covey

Second Example of a good monthly email update

Subject Box: Cup Final Result from yesterday

Hey Coach,

We played in our final yesterday. I played the full match at right wing and scored two goals while assisting in one. I am stepping up my own training. Is there a programme for weights you could send me to build myself up for when I arrive next year? I am keen to be in the best shape possible and hit the ground running at college. I noticed the team is finishing the season stronger than it started. This is great for Conference run at the end. I am keeping an eye on the season and best of luck in the run in.

Good luck finishing up the season. Is there anything else I can do from this end of things?

Thanks,

..... (Your name)

When to stop emailing:

There does come a time to stop emailing coaches. If the coach has emailed you back and mentioned you do not fit the programme athletically or qualify academically then there is no need to continue emailing that coach. This is unless over the course of the year you knuckle down and improve your athleticism or academics (which I believe one can with dedicated work). If the coach mentions he doesn't need somebody in your position or doesn't EVER recruit from your country then there is no need to continue chatting to that coach.

I would return an email of "thanks" to any of the coaches who do have the manners to take time to update you even if it is with bad news. I would also mention in that email that you would appreciate them mentioning to any other coaches about your situation. It may open up doors. I do know, from experience, that prospective students who show big effort and organisation in their recruitment drive will be mentioned in different conversations to coaches.

"Achievement seems to be connected with action. Successful men and women keep moving. They make mistakes, but they don't quit". –**Conrad Hilton**

Example of a Sports Player Profile:

<p>Legal Name:</p> <p>Nickname:</p> <p>Height:</p> <p>Weight:</p> <p>Position:</p> <p>Home Phone:</p> <p>Mobile Phone:</p> <p>Email Address:</p> <p>Birthdate:</p>	<p>Billy Boggs</p> <p>No Tricks</p> <p>6 Feet</p> <p>85kg</p> <p>Left Back/Left Wing</p> <p>If applicable</p> <p>+353874838384</p> <p>BillyBoggs2022@gmail.com</p> <p>September 30 2004</p>	<p>Attach Photo</p> 
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Secondary School: Willow Heights School,
144 Old Dublin Road,
Dublin 4.

Academics:

Leaving Certificate 2019:	Hons	Pass
English Honours Leaving Certificate	85%	
Maths Pass Leaving Certificate		92%
Irish Pass Leaving Certificate	65%	
Biology Pass Leaving Certificate		78%
History Honours Leaving Certificate	65%	
French Pass Leaving Certificate		76%

SAT Scores:

(If applicable and if not mention when the exams dates are in the near future).

Math	(Mock)	400
English	(Mock)	600

**Formal SAT Test on February 14th, 2019 (Ireland). **

Sports Achievements:

1. League winner on U14
2. Represented regional team U14-U17
3. Played in the Team at the Milk Cup 2004 & 2006
4. Top Scorer in Team 2005
5. Trials at Of the premier league 2006
6. All-Ireland sprint champion 2004

My Goals for University:

1. Pass all classes in each semester.
2. Top scorer and assists among freshman players.
3. Major in Education.
4. Go to Nationals with team.
5. Earn personal accolades.
6. Become captain.
7. Win Nationals with team.
8. Win All-American honours.
9. Go professional in sport.

Current Extra Curricular Activities:

1. I coach U 10's Shelbourne soccer on a Saturday. I set up drills, do the warm up and cool down and clear away gear.
2. I also work one on one with the strikers on finishing drills with Shelbourne U10's.
3. I work in family bathroom business three evenings per week. Duties include lifting of all goods into store, opening boxes and organising stock.
4. I am part ofShelbourne F.C..... flag day twice a year (Charity work, if you have never done any then do as it looks great on resume)
5. List any extra-curricular school activities.

Coach Reference:

Coach Jim Conroy
Email: jimmconroy@hotmail.com
Phone: +353876953292

Coach Danny Crowley
Email: dcrowley@colaisteide.ie
Phone: +353872454982

Coach Martin O Neil
Email: MartinONeil2016@gmail.com
Phone: +353867898765

Some Dos and Don'ts of Emailing your Coaches:

- Do create a quality email address with your name and a date of graduation in it i.e. billybloggs2022@hotmail.com
- Don't create some crazy email address that will bug a coach.
- Do start preparing your letter of interest and resume right away (DAY 1).
- Do catch the coach's eye in your subject line and first paragraph (see examples above).
- Don't prepare a generic email for all coaches as an introduction. The coaches like to see you took the time to research their programmes. It shows not only can you research and learn, but that you are really interested and not wasting their time.
- Do add your current coach's references details whether that is email address or phone number. If the coach in America cannot contact your current coaches they will be very concerned whether or not you are being honest with them.
- Do tell your coach about your SAT's/mock results or when you are hoping to take the test.
- Don't panic if you don't hear back from a coach. They are extremely busy people.
- Do follow up your email with a phone call. It shows your intent and desire to succeed and stand out from the herd.
- If you are in regular contact with a coach and an offer is being prepared then follow up your emails with regular monthly update emails.

Chapter 4

How to prepare myself

“An investment in knowledge pays the best interest” -Benjamin Franklin

Moving to America is both an exciting and a daunting experience. The four years can be full of ups and downs depending on how well your college team competes as a team and how classes are going for you personally. Too many people struggle for balance and put all of their efforts into the sport and fail classes. Unfortunately, if you fail to pass your classes then you become ineligible for your sport the following year. A tip would be to do summer classes if you find yourself in this unfortunate situation. My coach at Memphis always reminded us just to get to class and the rest would take care of itself. I never missed classes. With a little bit of hard work you will be fine.

I remember my time in America fondly. I loved the challenge of all four years. They could certainly be the best years of your life. It helps to know what to expect and have a good support network around you. While your Irish friends sit at home, and take the common road, in the comforts of home, you will grow both personally and professionally by stretching yourself and moving out of your comfort zone.

I have heard about kids who fail to finish the four years in America. This can be for a variety of reasons but underestimating the workload of what is involved in college and sports combined must be play a part in this. One of the main reasons I feel is that most students are not prepared for what it takes to complete four years abroad. There can be huge highs and many lows to balance those highs. This guide will hopefully put an end to people finishing before the four years are up and graduating which is most important.

Common Reasons for not finishing Scholarship:

1. Injury
2. Personal Illness
3. Homesickness
4. Partner becoming pregnant in home country
5. Family member becoming unwell in home country
6. Lack of support group
7. Lack of family support nearby
8. Finances
9. Failing classes
10. Not stepping up to standard their coach has placed on the team
11. No guide to help them through the process.

America as a country is huge. Texas as an area of land is 13 times larger than all of Ireland. A person from Boston sounds very different compared to a person from Alabama and it is

likely they have led very different lives. It is important to remember that not all colleges are the same and what is true for one university in one state may not be true for another college in another state or region. With that in mind it is important to research many different areas of information about what college you are looking to apply to or more importantly if you have signed for a college sports team so you are totally knowledgeable on all aspects of that institution.

Admissions Testing for College:

There are two types of standardised college admissions tests for entering college in the States - SAT and ACT tests. All universities and colleges accept both tests as admission purposes. Most coaches look for you to take SAT test to help complete your application form. You take one or the other and can take them numerous times to improve your test scores. I would certainly recommend completing these tests even before you complete the Leaving Certificate exam. The earlier and more you practise the test the better for yourself.

Vital elements to preparing for either test.

1. Understand how the test works (research it).
2. Review the book material.
3. Practise, practise, practise.
4. Get help if you need it i.e. grinds or group study (set one up if there is none).

SAT Preparation:

Since 2016 there has been a complete overhaul in the scale of testing of SAT and ACT's. Testing on the old scale was based out of a scale up to 2400 points. Testing is now based on scores up to the NEW SAT 1600 scale. The SAT consists of testing around the subjects English and Maths. Simply put, the higher you score in your SAT the better the opportunity of you getting more offers of colleges. If you score high around 1100-plus points then there is a possibility of academic scholarship offers along with sporting scholarship offers. Forget about getting into Stanford University unless you score over 1500 points. Common scores expected from European sports students tend to be around 800-1000 points combined Maths and English. The SAT is a standardised test meant to show schools how prepared you are for college by measuring key skills like reading comprehension, computational ability and clarity of expression. Thankfully, since 2016, the student does not get docked $\frac{1}{4}$ points anymore if they put an incorrect score down as was the old SAT test.

The test is multiple-choice and this is similar to college tests. You will be given a test score between 600 and 1600. As mentioned previously there are two SAT test centres in Ireland one located in Waterford and one located in Dublin. The Dublin centre is at Saint Andrews College, Booterstown Avenue, in Dublin. There are online tests you can take and different books you can buy to prep yourself for the official exam. I advise you do the preparation courses and read through the books. The earlier you can take the exam whether you feel prepared or not the better. You have a starting point with which to begin studying from. If you are looking for a SAT prep course then check out www.gmat.ie, although it will cost you. The exams are held six times throughout the year with the first being in October, November

and December and then March, May and June. Sign up to the first test and aim to retake once or twice more if you can afford it. I cannot overestimate the importance of having high scores on your SAT for trying to secure a better scholarship in the future.

A **tip** here is if you take the test more than once officially, the best sub score from different tests are used to give you the best possible score.

Here is an example of a student taking the exams in October 2016 and December 2016.

	Math	Critical Reading	Total
SAT (October 2016)	420	460	880
SAT (December 2016)	460	440	900
Scores used	460	460	920

If you are a European parent trying to register your child for the SAT tests then you have two options.

1. Register the child online
2. Postal mail registration.

Deadlines are typically three or four weeks before the date of the test and typically you must pay online registration with a credit card. Ask for a SAT paper Registration Guide, from the private business you are working with, for more information.

If you live outside of Ireland then google the local SAT test centre but make sure it is a centre that others have used for SAT entrance exams to enter American colleges. Research, research, research!

ACT Preparation:

The ACT consists of four sections - English, Maths, Reading and Science plus an optional writing test. The test is scored between 1 and 36 points. 20 - 25 points or more is considered a very good score from a European student athlete point of view. On average most American students score around 20 on the ACT test. Like any other test preparation is key. It is no different from sports training. The more practise you put in the better your results will be.

Similarities between SAT and ACT:

As mentioned previously there have been big changes in the SAT test since 2016. According to prep-solar.com from the outset both the SAT and ACT tests are not very different.

1. Both tests now have similar sections (Reading and Maths in a predetermined order).
2. Offer an optional essay section (doesn't count towards your final score).
3. You will now not be penalised for incorrect scoring as per the previous tests.
4. Now contains passage based reading and written questions.

Key differences to both tests:

1. Total time for each exam ACT- 2hours 55mins and SAT 3 hours (times without essays).
2. Order of sections ACT- English, Maths, Reading, Science, and optional Writing.
SAT – Reading, Writing and language, Maths (no calculator), Maths (with calculator), and Essay (optional).
3. Time per section
4. Number of questions
5. Scoring
6. Cost

My tips

- If you do not like to be rushed then you have more time per question in the SAT test than the ACT test.
- If you are not a science geek then the SAT may be a better option as the ACT has a complete section dedicated to Science. In fact, Science constitutes 25% of the ACT score.
- The SAT test contains a Maths with no calculator sub-section. If you struggle with Maths, and especially without a calculator, then you will probably fare better on the ACT test. If you are confident in maths and can move quickly with a calculator then the SAT test is better for you.
- The SAT test provides you with maths formulae page whereas the ACT test does not. On test day you must memorise formulae for the ACT test.
- How important is maths for your final score? At the end of testing maths accounts for 25% of your final score in the ACT test, and on the SAT test it accounts for half of your total score.
- Are you good at pin-pointing evidence-based areas in your text to support your answers? If so, the SAT test would be better for you.
- SAT reading questions are generally easier to follow and thus answer than ACT reading.

Pick the test which is right for you:

If you are really not sure what test is right for you then I recommend you to take both official practise tests. Don't just guess which you would be good at or leave it to regret. Decide after you have given both tests a practise go.

Another method could be to take a SAT and ACT quiz to figure out the best direction for yourself to test for the official test.

Remember some States require the ACT only or SAT only and all others require either or.

The 14 States that require the ACT test are:

1. Alabama
2. Hawaii
3. Kentucky
4. Louisiana
5. Mississippi
6. Missouri
7. Montana
8. Nebraska
9. Nevada
10. North Carolina
11. South Carolina
12. Utah
13. Wisconsin
14. Wyoming

The eight States that require the SAT are:

1. Colorado
2. Connecticut
3. Delaware
4. District of Columbia
5. Illinois
6. Maine
7. Michigan
8. New Hampshire

TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language):

Any prospective student athletes from a non-English speaking country are required to take the TOEFL test. The TOEFL determines whether or not the student athlete has proficient English to complete college in the United States. Similar to the SAT and ACT, the sooner you take the TOEFL in your home country the better. I recommend completing the TOEFL two years before attempting to move to America along with the SAT.

My Personal route through a College Programme:

I only heard about Colaiste Ide a few weeks before the course year began. If I had the benefit of hearing about it or how to research colleges in Transition Year then things may have been more organised. Trying to pick a college programme can be completely overwhelming. People think going directly to Division 1 is the correct route. This is not always the case. The perfect programme doesn't exist. There are many different programmes that you can impact for numerous reasons. I have heard of athletes being

inducted into the sports hall of fame in their Junior colleges or Division 2 Colleges so there is a level for every standard of soccer player. Stephen Beattie who has just won both an Airtricity League title and FAI Cup for Cork City FC in 2017 season is a previous National Division 2 Player-of-the-Year for Northern University. Forget about the divisions because as I mentioned earlier the divisions are split depending on the size of the college and not always the standard of soccer or soccer players.

I was gutted leaving Thomas University after one-and-a-half years because our coach had recruited a very strong squad and I felt we would have moved to greater strengths as a team. The fact was I couldn't turn down the challenge of a move to NCAA Division 1 soccer. As it was a Christmas, I then had six months spring to get up to the fitness levels required for Division 1 football. I ended up playing left back in my senior year as we lost a Scottish left back who didn't return for our final senior year.

It is important to note my stats in each of my years which gives you an idea of the level of standard. It is important also to mention that I could handle 90 degree heat in August but I really struggled in my first year to adapt to the humidity throughout that first season. I also battled my fair share of injuries during my first year at Thomas and two years at Memphis. I must admit I didn't find the jump from NAIA to Division 1 tough going from an athletic point of view, but I didn't give myself enough time to recover from injuries because the season was so short.

1. Year 1: NAIA Thomas University - 1 Goal and 5 assists from left wing
2. Year 2: NAIA Thomas University - 22 Goals and 10 assists from forward
3. Year 3: D1 Memphis University - 0 Goals and 3 assists from left wing
4. Year 4: D1 Memphis University - 1 Goal and 5 assists from left back

Although I mentioned previously when you are searching for a programme that divisions are split due to size, I personally felt there was a big difference in the level of NAIA and Division 1 soccer. Don't get me wrong I played alongside and against some amazing soccer players in my time with Thomas University (NAIA). However, some of these players wouldn't have had the correct attitude and application for Division 1 level.

Division 1 is made up of more athletic players and the demands are far higher on the athlete. You don't get to hide as much on the pitch and intensity levels of runs are greater. With such a short season (three-and-a-half months) if you encounter any injuries it is hard to gain fitness and momentum back. This obviously depends on what type of injury you have picked up. I battled niggling injuries throughout my entire time at Memphis and trying to quickly return and play at a high intensity during season was a challenge.

Unless you are a player with Youth International honours, it can be a challenge to attract many offers without emailing the coaches. To combat this you will need to put a big effort into your email and resume strategy. My advice would be to contact plenty of different programmes in different divisions with your letter and resume. Look outside the top 30 programmes in each division unless they have international coach. The really top programmes have recruited years in advance but they still look for the gem in the rough. While researching through the team profile if you notice no international players on the

website then you can be pretty sure the coach doesn't recruit those players. If the coach is from anywhere in Ireland or Britain then I am confident they will at least point you in the right direction, so don't hesitate to contact them. Those coaches remember what it is like to be in your shoes starting out so they most likely will be willing to pass your details on.

GPA (Grade Point Average) Information:

Grades in the United States are measured by a number called Grade Point Average, or GPA, in both High School and college. GPA is the cumulative average of all your grades of your classes and is based on a scale from 0 to 4.0. GPA is calculated by dividing the total amount of grade points earned by the total amount of credit hours attempted. Check with your coach what the requirement is for your Grade Point Average to maintain eligibility on your team. There is usually excellent Student Support Services at each college to maintain eligibility.

I had some team mates who failed to make the right grades and couldn't return to the college team because of it. Some cared and took extra classes but I remember some who didn't care at all and left the college. They were there only for the football side of it. Years later I am sure they will regret this decision to quit with no education.

Year-long contracts or four-year contracts - Myths Debunked:

When student athletes agree to sign for a college most think this is a four-year agreement. In the majority of cases this is only on a year-to-year contract basis. At the end of the year the coach can pull scholarship money or add more on to your scholarship depending on your performances throughout the campaign. I would recommend working financially on whatever scholarship you have been offered in your freshman year and if any more is added on throughout the next four years then consider that a bonus. It is true, that some National Letters of Intent do offer four-year contracts where your scholarship does not decrease, but this is in a small number of cases. Most coaches do not pull the contract unless there is a violation of team or athletic department rules. In some cases, poor or bad behaviour can cost you your scholarship.

International Medical Insurance:

Finding an international health plan should be **top of your list of priorities** when you are planning your move abroad. International students do not have any government-related health insurance requirements to meet while they are studying in the United States. Some institutions require students to buy their school-sponsored insurance coverage while others allow students to purchase a plan of their own choosing. Check with the college you are moving to what health insurance team coverage gives the athlete. It is easy to dismiss this part of the process but when needed insurance for a hospital stay can cost a lot of money. Plan for the best but even though hopefully you won't need it, have a back-up plan for the worst-case scenario.

Weather check:

An important recommendation would be to research the area of the country that you are hoping to live in while attending College. There is a big difference in living, attending college and playing a sport at the University of Maine, New York compared to spending four years attending University of Georgia, in the State of Georgia. The average temperature in Maine is ten degrees throughout the year and they get around 70 inches of snow throughout the

winter. In comparison, the average temperature in Georgia is around 20 degrees and there are over 200 sunny days. Georgia only gets around one inch of snowfall throughout the winter. There are pros and cons to both locations. I had a friend attend college in Maine and he had to constantly train indoors because of the freezing temperatures and snow but he had a great career there. On the other hand, I spent time living and playing soccer at Thomas University in the State of Georgia. You are required to play matches in 40 degrees of heat which can be extremely challenging. Add the humidity factor to this and it is not easy to play in either area of the country. I personally suffered heat stroke in my first competitive college match in Miami and had to be subbed off after 35 minutes. One cannot imagine what it is like to have to play in the extreme heat of Miami during the month of August. The teams play in anything up to several different States during the season. You cannot control where you play. Preparation is everything.

It takes a full year or so to know what to expect. My second year went a lot better as I knew what to expect and prepared better. Remember to do your research.

Location check:

Similar to the weather check above it is extremely important that you check the location of your prospective college. If you are used to growing up around Dublin City which has over one million people and you move to Thomasville Georgia which has under 20,000 people living in its town, then you are in for a culture shock.

On the other hand, if you are used to living in the countryside and you move to New York City to university then you may become homesick or overwhelmed with the sheer volume of people in New York. Personally speaking, it didn't matter where I went to college and how many people lived there once I had the opportunity to continue playing soccer at a high level. At the end of the day location is important to some athletes but it was not as important in my case. I actually experienced both ends of the spectrum attending Thomas University and then Memphis University. Thomas had around 1000 students in contrast to 25,000 students at Memphis.

On reflection I feel I may have been overwhelmed if I had of moved directly to Memphis as a freshman. I would have been expected to make a big impact and between that pressure and a huge campus I may have felt overwhelmed. At Thomas University the campus was very small and the classes were 20 students or less in numbers. I had more direct contact with professors which was a help when trying to pass classes and stay eligible. Do your research and think about what way you would like classes and campus to suit you before you choose your college wisely. "Know thyself"!

Accommodation:

Living in the dormitories on campus is an excellent idea in your first one or two semesters. A tip I found when researching for this guide is to contact the International Office of your college once you have committed to your scholarship and ask for an orientation pack to be posted to your home. This will give you all the information about the college and give your parents peace of mind about where you are moving to.

The plus side of living on campus is you are close to classes, libraries and other facilities such as the sports training pitches. You will get to meet new students, both athletes and non-athletes, and this helps your transition of living in a new country. You won't be so isolated if you live in the dormitory and will make friends in no time. Most students in the dorms are first year and you can all support each other through the year. A few of your team-mates will also be in the dorms. There are usually activities organised for everyone in the dorms like movie nights, trips to the cinema and different sports activities to help students bond.

After a few years, if settled, students usually move into an apartment or house-share. This is a great step for second or third years when you are more settled in the new environment. It helps to move in with some American team-mates or friends as they will know how leasing an apartment operates and unless your coach or college help you lease an apartment you may struggle to lease one with all internationals in the house.

Another option for students may be homestays in which you are placed with a family for your first year not far from campus. This involves you staying with a family, having your own room and meals provided. This option is very helpful in immersing yourself in the American culture and still having the comforts of home while in your new country.

Student Services:

Make it a priority to avail of the student services that your college provides. Most colleges provide amazing classwork student-athlete services including one-to-one work, help with small study groups and year-long mentoring of student athletes who have a busy schedule throughout the year. You as a student need to realise that although your sports schedule may involve missing some classes, you still have to complete classwork. It is vital you stay on top of your studies because in order to continue playing the following year you will have to pass classes. Don't let the work build up. Seek this information out on your orientation day which is early August for most institutions. This is helpful because your schedule throughout your season is hectic and having student support services means that you can avail of skills classes to enhance personal development or simply a peaceful place to go and study and ask questions about your academic responsibilities. Other services provided by most campuses include student counselling, career advice, financial aid, course registration and guidance. Making the best of these services is a vital option that some students ignore. My advice is to avail of everything that is on offer by the college.

When should I leave for my college?

You cannot, for visa reasons, arrive more than 30 days before your programme starts. At my first college my coach arranged a few summer camps before pre-season to cover the costs of our flights but more importantly to settle into the heat and humidity at my first college in Georgia. This was helpful both financially and physically. Arriving in the country can be overwhelming as there is tight security control. Arrange for your coach to meet you at the airport unless you have family or team-mates to meet you. This will help you settle in the first few weeks. Most athletes wait until the last few days before pre-season to arrive back to the college.

On a side note a few athletes used the summer to remain on campus and train to better themselves for the following season. I always returned home to work and earn money so I don't know how they covered costs. I was very impressed with one player's fitness when we

returned from our summer break. He was flying and eventually became captain after I transferred to Memphis. That's the level of commitment every coach dreams of. Interestingly that ex-team-mate, Johnathon Carroll, is now a personal trainer in Boston so his hard work paid off. My success stories chapter will give you a better understanding of what completing a degree will lead to and the progression routes different people took after finishing their scholarships.

Chapter 5

Questions to ask the Coach

“Effective teamwork begins and ends with communication”. -Mike Krzyzewski

I cannot stress enough the importance of communication classes in Colaiste Ide or secondary School (High school). Good Communication skills are important no matter what job you have and should be no burden to carry. **Think about this clearly in your mind.** This first few emails or phone calls could be the beginning of the next five years of your life or even longer if you go on to become a coach yourself. If you chat with a coach over email or by phone it is extremely important to ask the right questions to show you are interested in their programme and intelligent enough to make a good impression. Make sure you research the coach, his history and the programme. Write an attention-grabbing email that shows you have researched their website and know their results from the previous few years. Then you sell them how you could make a difference to their programme.

Questioning the coach on their programme is very important. Below are sample questions that may help you. These questions are **not for your first point of contact letter** but vital if you are in regular contact with a team or coach. Remember, there is a big difference between chatting to a head coach and chatting to an assistant coach. The head coach makes all the decisions. The assistant coach may promise you the world but until the head coach starts making offers, I would continue the search for other colleges as you cannot put all your eggs into one basket. If you are honest with the coach then they will be more upfront with you.

With this in mind it is important to have questions prepared while chatting to prospective coaches. You can get a lot of information off a college website in terms of schedule, results and team squad list. It is important to ask the coach other questions and you will learn a lot about your coach from questioning them. They reveal a lot about their coachable skills if they take the time to chat to you about your enquiries or concerns. The coach should be selling you their programme. I have listed many different questions. Some are relevant in your first phone call and some not until a later date. In most cases if you are European and are chatting to the coach then he/she should have a fair idea of your standard of level.

Finally, before listing questions, I want to reiterate, that these questions are for when you are in regular contact with an interested college coach and not your first point of contact letter to the college coach. A coach can almost feel your enthusiasm down the phone as you speak to them so be mindful to sound really interested even if you have other offers. Don't lie about offers to get a better offer from the coach you are talking to. Chances are they know each other and are in regular contact so you may trip yourself up and ruin any chances of an offer by not being up front with the coach.

Recommended Questions to ask a Coach (For Child and Parent):

1. What size of scholarship do you have on offer?
2. Can you break it down and send it to me by email?
3. What position do you intend on playing me in your team?
4. Are you recruiting many people in my position?
5. As a first year Freshman do you think I will play right away?
6. What type of training and conditioning does your team do every day?
7. How do you travel to away matches? How many times next year will you travel to matches? How many days are a team gone from campus?
8. Will those trips be of any cost to me the student?
9. Does the school provide student services to help their athletes?
10. Are there tutors/mentors available to athletes?
11. What does a typical day look like in season compared to a typical day out of season at your programme?
12. Is there any work on or off campus for me to earn money towards my costs in America?
13. Do you have workout facilities?
14. Where will I be living? Dorms, on campus or off campus?
15. Are scholarships for one year or four years?
16. Are there any summer obligations within your programme?
17. Are there any team study halls and student mentoring?
18. Can you explain Grade Point Average to me and what is your team GPA?
19. What do most of the team major in?

20. Does your college provide _____ as a major as I am interested in that area?
21. What medical expenses does the college cover?
22. Do I need personal insurance on top of that college cover?
23. How much will I need financially to cover costs of living each semester?
24. What equipment will players be expected to pay for?
25. Have you any foreign players on your team?
26. Have you recruited from _____ (country) before?
27. What happens next in the recruitment process?
28. What do you need from me for the recruitment process?
29. Do the athletic and/or academic departments offer real-world opportunities like internships in my final year?

Chapter 6
I have my scholarship!
What's next?

"If you fail to prepare then prepare to fail". -Jim Conroy

Contracts:

Make sure that all of your scholarship agreement is in written contract format and signed by you. Coaches are honest for the most part but once everything is in writing then it is a signed contract. Only then you can start preparing and looking forward to the move across to America. If you are unsure of the contract or need it broken down then email the coach and list the items you need clarification on if the coach has promised a full ride (full scholarship).

Full Scholarship cover the following:

1. Tuition
2. Fees
3. Room
4. Course related books
5. A small number of scholarships will include food
6. On very rare occasions scholarships will include flights

Over the four years the coach may reward a junior or senior with extra money on scholarship (I personally witnessed this) as a reward for excellent performances on the field or academically in the classroom. Coaches are also always on the lookout for a leader and will reward these players handsomely if the player can transform a programme.

What to do in your first week in the country:

Getting off to a great start in your first week in a new country is vital for settling. Having a list of what is needed for your first few days will help you immensely. All the necessities, that you take for granted, at home, will need to be replicated in America.

The coach at my first college, Vinny, was excellent for helping athletes settle. He showed us the dorms right away so we saw where we would be sleeping and explained what we needed to buy immediately. He then drove us down to buy whatever we needed in Walmart. This really showed his man-management skills outside of sport. I have been told that all coaches are the same for their helpfulness off-field. Remember to ask the right question before leaving. Interestingly on researching for this guide I have chatted to a few ex-scholarship recipients who told me horror stories of their time landing in America for a scholarship opportunity and having to completely fend for themselves as the coach didn't bother helping them out in the first few days. This is something that can be avoided with a

simple email by you or your parents and getting a written guarantee that somebody will be available to help with settling in the first week, starting with a lift from the airport etc.

Below is a list of the important items needed for your first day. Not all are essential, but I feel pretty important.

- Bed covers
- Bed sheets
- Pillows
- Kettle
- Mini fridge
- Food
- Snacks
- Water
- Gatorade (Hydration drink)
- Washing powder for clothes
- Map of Campus
- Map of Local City/Town

As always contact the coaching staff with any move in questions before you leave your home country. The student card is important for any college but especially for much larger campuses so it is important to get your student card sorted as quickly as possible as you will need it to get into different buildings, sports facilities and for security purposes. The card is sometimes also needed for entry to dorms and for your dining plan if you need one.

I would go ahead and order a bicycle if you live on a massive campus or if you live within cycling distance to a smaller campus/training. This will boost your fitness for sport and wellbeing. Stay in control of getting around the place rather than waiting on lifts. If you live too far from the campus to cycle then forget about buying a bike.

Settling in during your first week is new and exciting if you go right into Orientation Week and training in your sports. Outside of those two events I would try and organise setting up a bank account. I always banked with Bank of America and found them to be very helpful throughout my four years in America. On your first free day go to a phone shop and set up a contract phone. There were great deals back in 2002 for international minutes. I always used T-Mobile as a phone company but be careful to not go over your minutes as you will be left with a big bill. Having a mobile phone means you can stay in contact with team-mates and friends which definitely helps you settle. These days you have Facebook and skype which is free and really helpful for staying in touch with family and friends.

First week of classes:

Your first week of classes is called your Orientation Week or Welcome Week and this is the time you take to sign up for classes and become acquainted with your classes, classrooms, teachers and campus. This is an **important week** which you should not skip and pretend it isn't important as it can lessen the anxiety of new beginnings, in a whole new country. You

will need to double check that the classes you are signed up for are correct and actually classes you are interested in taking. Other than the serious side of classes and getting used to your new surroundings this week is full of fun and parties, social activities and prize giving. It is a great way to start the new academic year.

Schedule:

As soon as you figure out your chosen college and when you decide on a departing date for flying, then get to work. My first college coach arranged for soccer camps for any international students who needed to acclimatise to the heat and humidity. It did help. Most students arrive just before pre-season so download the previous year's team schedule from the website and get an idea of where the team travels to. You can nearly predict the following year's schedule except it is in reverse so if you travelled to play University of Tulsa then more than likely they will travel to your home pitch the following year. Some teams can be gone from their campus over four or five days and it is important to talk to your coach about what is expected with classes during this time. Food and lodging should be provided for you during this time. Chat to any professors about your schedules to find out if they are concerned about you being able to pass their exams and classes with such a busy schedule. Great communication, as mentioned previously, is vital in these situations.

Unseen Costs:

Even if you are given a full scholarship including books and food, realise there are other costs that add up.

1. Flights to and from your college in America can be expensive.

If you fly twice per year at Christmas and the summer then potentially you could pay up to \$2000 dollars plus for flights alone (New York is cheaper to fly to than Atlanta City). This cost must be covered by the athlete or their family.

2. Other costs that do add up are for food.

As mentioned previously, in my Freshman year at times I ate pot noodles heated in my dorm room as my food wasn't covered at either of my colleges unless on the road travelling for matches. Other food like cereals or toasties are quite handy. The food wasn't ideal for playing sport but needs must. In my first few weeks in America I dined out in restaurants quite a bit until I got my bearings. This was simply as I hadn't a clue how to survive in the dorm rooms plus car loads of other dormers would be heading for an all-you-can-eat buffet which sounded great to me. They proved to be expensive so once I got my bearings I would eat breakfast and dinner or snacks in my dorms, and lunch at college. Some of my team mates had food cards and would shout me lunch from time to time which was nice.

3. Hydration Drinks:

I found buying water and hydration drinks like Gatorade quite expensive but it was vital to maintain hydration levels. If food is provided in the scholarship remember that the food is only for one or maybe two restaurants on campus. This means you are limited to eating at

certain times of the day or evening. Weekends may mean less opening hours for the restaurants also.

4. Your currency compared to the US Dollar.

Check out what the currency in your home country is like compared to the US dollar. It fluctuates quite often and can lead to more expense if your currency is weaker.

5. Other costs are maintaining your room with hoover, cleaning products, brush and mop.

Something as simple as cleaning your clothes, can add up especially as most coaches provide you with two training kits for the year and you wash them every day after practise. This can be tricky if you train twice a day. Also, there is the cost of washing your clothes if you live in a hot and humid area.

Daily Routine:

Most college teams train in the afternoon around 3pm. We did have 5am sessions at Memphis most Mondays and also in the afternoon. Classes start at 8am and run until 10pm. If you sign up for regular scholarship hours then you will complete 12 credits for the semester which is around four classes a day on average. My schedule usually went something like this. If it was a normal day's training then I would rise around 7am for an 8am class. Firstly, I would grab some breakfast and get to class. Classes would run right through to 2pm with a few breaks in between. I would have had lunch at 1pm if possible. I always biked home and then to the training room to prepare for training at 3pm. Training always ran to around 5pm and then I would do ice baths and shower up if no extra treatment was needed. I would bike home, have some food and hit the library or books or go to the gym if I wasn't under pressure with assignments or exams that week. Basically, your schedule can be full-on from 8am to 9pm or even later. If you can fit in some calls to home, internet time and leisure time with friends then you have done well. I usually was in bed, before 12 if possible, to give myself time to rest and recover for the next day's training.

A typical day on average from my experience:

- 7am - Wake up
- 8am - First class
- 9am - Second class
- 10am - Free hour
- 11am - Double class
- 1pm - Lunch
- 2pm - Training room for pre-training exercises
- 3pm - Training with team
- 5pm - Training finished and showered unless sorting injury
- 6pm - Dinner
- 7pm - Study Hall/Library depending on workload

- 9pm - Relax and unwind (hang out with friends or television)
- 11pm - Bed

Remember each day can be totally different. Some weeks we trained at 5am. I might have class then at 10am so I could nap after training or rush to an 8am class. Your fall semester could be totally different from spring semester classes. If you're happy to take all classes in the morning, then do that. Some students like to mix up their classes and have a sleep in the morning and a class or two in the evening. Have a think about that before you leave and you can be organised for the first week orientation and sorting classes. If your schedule isn't working out then you usually can change a class or two in the first few weeks. Each college will provide deadlines for this.

Weekly Routine:

The weekly routine differs vastly when you are in season compared to the out of season. In the fall semester a weekly routine would be classes Monday to Friday usually from 8am to Noon or 2pm. Training then from 3pm to 5pm consisting of warm ups, full training session and cool downs. After that it depends on whether you have evening classes or exams/papers due to be completed. If so, you can avail of the student athlete study services then that would be helpful with such a busy schedule. If fall is your season then most likely every second week you will travel for matches. Every other week you will have a home match. With very little down time you may struggle to balance meeting friends, extra training, talking to family back home and studying. Don't panic as the season moves along you will become more organised and your habits will allow you to balance everything better.

Monthly Routine:

Fall:

From a soccer point of view your first month of August is taken up by signing up to your classes, starting your semester and all of your pre-season. Then September through to November is full-on with your season in full swing plus catching up on classes missed and papers due in. I found it very hard to balance missing two or three days of classes and trying to complete classwork on the bus or at hotels. This is vital though. You don't want to leave yourself way behind and a chance of failing classes. In all aspects of being a student athlete remember to build better habits each year as you learn how to better manage your schedule and responsibilities.

Then in December your sport will have completely finished its season although I found we as a team we played 5-a-sides and trained in our own time without the coaches. Early December can be full-on with Christmas exam time. The month of December is a great time in college as everybody is in top form ahead of going home to their families for few weeks and they can reflect on their season gone by.

Spring:

Again, bearing in mind it is a soccer season then training starts back at the same time as classes around the 10th of January. You then train depending on the coach's schedule. For the most part training is the same as fall time and 3pm every day. Our coaches liked to keep

us guessing and we would have fitness testing and 5am sessions most Mondays but also randomly from time to time. We then played friendlies throughout February, March and April. Some of these matches can be 7 V 7 tournaments and some round robin matches throughout the day between three or four different colleges. The matches are an important part of the spring season as the team needs to play competitively to keep up the standard and it gives the manager something to focus training and preparation on.

Summer Schedule:

Student Athletes usually get around two-and-a-half months off for the summer but a top college programme will supply summer fitness schedules for their athletes. Most students like to do different activities throughout the summer. The majority of student athletes like to go home for their first summer especially, if not every single summer in which they have holidays. There are other options available to students.

Other Options:

- Summer study at college to graduate on time in the four years or earlier than four years required (some athletes graduate after 3½ years).
- Working for the summer in your home country
- Sports camps in America to earn money for college
- Travel if you have the finances
- If you're Irish look to play Gaelic in an Irish American city and work
- P.D.L (Premier Development League) summer soccer for any soccer student-athletes

The P.D.L is a development league sponsored by United Soccer Leagues in the United States and Canada, forming part of the United States soccer league system. The league has 72 teams competing in four conferences, split into ten regional divisions. Unofficially, it is considered to be the fourth tier of competition, behind Major League Soccer, the North American Soccer League and the United Soccer League. With USL Pro re-branding as the United Soccer League in February 2015, the PDL dropped the "USL" descriptor from their name, simply operating as the "Premier Development League".

I played with the Memphis Express in the PDL back in 2005 and it was a very enjoyable experience. The Charlotte Eagles are the current PDL champions, having defeated the Thunder Bay Chill 2–1 in the 2017 PDL Championship game on August 5, 2017. I also worked in Boston for a summer and represented the Boston Wolftones while working to save money for college. This was a fantastic summer where the Boston Wolftones went unbeaten before I returned to college. The PDL is an excellent stepping stone to playing professional soccer in the United States or even back in Europe. I would advise playing most summers if you can get work to help cover the costs you incur throughout your college year.

“Excellence is not a singular act; it’s a habit. You are what you repeatedly do” - Aristotle

Some dos and don'ts about preparing yourself

- Do get your introduction letter to college coaches in order and make a sports resume to add as an attachment. This is vital as first impressions are very important.
- Do make sure you get a preparatory book on the SAT exams and start preparing for exams.
- Book into SAT exams at first opportunity. As mentioned previously sign up to the October test and retake as many times as you feel necessary or can afford. This may pay dividends for scholarship choices.
- Do follow up all leads from college coaches even if it is not your number one offer.
- Don't listen to any other classmates' or friends' thoughts, if they are negative, on any offer or your decision to move to a particular college. (I was personally recruited early in the academic year with three other students and two of those dropped out after listening to friends in the class and negative comments. I was delighted with where I chose in the end). Take in the information but be confident with your own choices.
- Do find out if the college offers orientation or information packs to prospective students. Get them to post the pack as early as possible so that you can get information on the college before you leave.
- Do check location, weather and team history of the college.
- Don't get too stressed about situations that are out of your control. At all times only concern yourself with what you can control like training and preparation for your sport and how you contact and communicate with coaches.
- Do check in with student services and sign up whatever benefits they offer.
- Do sign up to the NCAA eligibility centre to check if you are eligible to play in a US college.
- Do get a map of the local campus or town and become familiar with your surroundings.
- Don't forget to email coach and let him know when you hope to arrive and give him time to arrange for somebody pick you up and help you settle providing you with a car to buy basic necessities to survive first week.

Chapter 7

What to expect during the four years in the USA

“Nothing is good or bad, but thinking makes it so” –William Shakespeare

I cannot repeat how enjoyable and rewarding the experience is, of attending college in America, on a sports scholarship. I had an amazing time throughout my four years. There were early morning practises (some days at 5am) and then you then classes before training in the afternoon (usually from 8am-1pm), training from 3pm-5pm before finally catching up with studies and some time with friends if possible each day. Everything is carried out as professionally as possible from by your academic counsellors, coaches and professors. The facilities are nothing short of amazing compared to anything you would be used to back home. Our changing rooms at Memphis contained a locker for each player, huge TV screen for matches and access to music to get you ready for training or matches. We had access to an indoor training facility at our base in South Campus, Memphis. This included a full indoor training football pitch, huge gym, training facility with underwater treadmill for rehabilitation and full physiotherapy tables for up to 12 athletes at one time. This also included a full-time head physiotherapist and a full team under him. We had access to a full-time strength and conditioning coach although we utilised the skills of our assistant coach Robbie Nicholson who was one of the best fitness coaches I ever worked under. We also had a full-time physio just for our team. All these little aspects really make a difference to a team and to be honest I was gutted when I returned to the Airtricity League as everything was as step down compared to America. Interestingly since then the finances around the league has improved and Dundalk FC, Cork FC and Shamrock Rovers FC are setting the bar high and the league is improving every year.

We took part in matches at the home stadium in front of our own fans and then away challenges on the road against some of our biggest foes. Nearly all of the campuses I visited were set in beautiful surroundings and the facilities at most colleges are top quality. The season involves training at the college gym, flying to matches and experiencing real American college life. You then get to tell friends all about your journey while at home on your holidays. You experience the wins and losses with all of your team mates on that journey through college. The ups and downs of successes and tough seasons. The challenge of bettering the previous year's record. There are many things to expect during the four years. Some things will go great and some things may not work the way you had intended.

Here is a list of some of them things.

Cost of flights:

The cost of your flights will depend on where you are based in the United States. From my experiences it was expected that I would take three different flights (two stops) to get from Atlanta (Georgia) back to Dublin. This can add to the cost. If you're smart and shop around you may be able to get cheaper student fares. Some coaches will tell you that you have a full

scholarship but this may not include flights. Check this out with your coach before you sign anything. There are many websites you can use to book flights.

Check out the following list:

1. www.expedia.com
2. www.skyscanner.ie
3. www.aerlingus.com
4. www.ryanair.com
5. www.clickandgo.ie
6. www.cheapflights.com

Food:

The way I ate in my first and ate in my second year were dramatically different. This is for a few reasons. In my first year I lived in the dorms. I only had a kettle and a mini fridge so pot noodles was one snack eaten often along with cereals and bread and fruit. Any chance I had I ate out but this didn't happen often as food was not included in my full scholarship. I did have friends who would shout me food on their scholarship card which was great. I also got treated to join some families when they came to visit team mates and went for dinner in the evenings. Food and water can be expensive but it is vital you eat well and hydrate yourself or else your football will suffer. In my second year I lived in an apartment and could cook all my meals. This helped both financially and physically. I became stronger by eating better meals more regularly. I found having that having an apartment helped me to settle a bit more in college. I had my own space and could relax more, as the dorms can be full on at times.

Rollercoaster- Full of ups and downs:

The four years is a real rollercoaster. You can expect lots of ups and downs throughout. From talking to people about the scholarship, it is really a dream being made a reality, but for you not to expect some ups and downs is foolish.

Up:

If the soccer is going well then life seems a lot more fun. Your training is great and the matches are enjoyable. Classes can be improved through your student services and the right attitude.

Down:

First and foremost if the team and classes are not going as expected then the coach will be breathing down your neck. Mark my words, both the team and classes are of equal importance but in the coach's eyes he wants to see you perform to the capability he expects and has paid good scholarship money for on the pitch.

Up:

You are living an independent life in a new country full of amazing opportunities and challenges. It is a great experience.

Down:

On top of this I lost my granny during my time in America and that was a real low helpless to your family when you are so far away. You most likely will miss weddings, christenings and funerals. Both the good and the bad.

If you move to college you must understand that life events will keep happening at home while you chase your dream in America. There most likely will be other international student athletes that you can share the ups and downs with which helps. I also made some great American friends at both my universities.

I got to visit some of their homes and enjoy real Southern cooking which was amazing. Thanksgiving is an amazing time in Southern States of America during November. Large family meals with all the different Southern food layered all over the table and you help yourself. It is an amazing feeling to share this cultural experience once a year in America.

Transfers:

Transfers can happen throughout the four years. Some are exciting if you are moving to a stronger programme. I have heard of student athletes having issues with coaches and leaving for this reason. Thankfully, in my case, I transferred to better myself from a soccer point of view. I went from NAIA to D1 and found the jump both exciting and daunting at the same time. Everything at D1 level was bigger than my first college. This being said my coach at the first college was not very happy at first about this transfer. We had a falling out but I think he could see I was trying to play at the highest level and we have remained in contact ever since. My transfer was Memphis's first Christmas transfer and it was a hectic Christmas trying to get documents scanned and sent back across but it was worth the stress in the end. Like anything else in life if you want it bad enough you will get the work done.

Transfer Pitfall Story:

Be very careful if you do transfer. I have heard from a friend who didn't finish her degree because most of her subjects from her first college did not transfer to her new college. Both her old coach and new coach knew of this vital information but did not tell the student-athlete. When the student-athlete entered her senior year, she found herself repeating the same subjects as her first college because those subjects had not transferred. Only then did she realise to her horror and she confronted the coach, about this. The coach was unsympathetic and who told her she needed to complete two and a half more years to graduate. This was a complete shock and she quit the programme and returned to Ireland as she only had one year's eligibility left at this stage and couldn't afford the thousands it would have cost to complete her education.

My advice on hearing this information is to seek guidance from your first college on what subjects transfer to the new college and set out a plan for graduation. Go to the registry offices and ask personally where your grades are at and what transfers if needed. I personally had to do summer school in my junior (third year) summer college session after transferring but combined that with a part-time job and summer soccer to keep progressing on the field.

I recently spoke to the ex-Thomas University Women's Coach Eric Faulkner and his biggest tip was to get everything about your scholarship in writing. He mentioned how the term "full scholarship" is completely misused all the time by coaches. Make sure you as the student know exactly what is covered so there are no surprises financially or otherwise in America. Ask the coach to be honest about what are the likely costs for you throughout each year. If they email you then keep a log of those emails as evidence for future scholarship discussions.

Work:

Work is so important to give you the money you need to survive in college. There are many different variables to consider though before you decide on what work you look for. Remember F1 visa holders cannot accept off-campus employment at any time during their first year of their studies. F1 students may accept on-campus employment in your university without seeking prior permission. I usually got some sort of coaching work from contacts my coach had at my first college. This helped a great deal financially plus it really did give something back to the community.

A variable to consider is do you actually have the time to take on a part-time job if you are so busy with college sports and your academic side of things. At Memphis our schedule was that busy on most weeks it was hard to even find time to work. If this is the case I would recommend planning work around your holidays. Summer and Christmas work should be able to fund a lot of your expenses during the year. If you are planning holiday work remember to look for it a couple of months before you get the holidays.

Senior Year:

Your senior year is both hectic and daunting as the comfort of a four-year full time institution is coming to an end. It can be a really confusing time if you do not know what your plans are for the future. Your senior project is full-on and you may have stepped away from training with your team full-time which is certainly a shock to the system.

I personally only ever wanted to continue playing soccer at the highest standard as possible. I could think of nothing else when I reflected on my options. One regret I had was going to a trial at DC United in the north of America in winter which cost me a lot of money and ended up being indoor soccer 5-a-side which didn't suit me as much as an outdoor full length match may have. My Memphis team-mate Andy Metcalf ended up signing for them and ended up doing really well scoring against Celtic in a match. In hindsight I should have checked what was involved although I did appreciate the effort my coach Richie at Memphis put into me getting that trial.

Ask the right questions of any situation that may arise and make the best decision with the information you are given. I didn't ask if the trial would be indoor and that may have saved me a lot of money although the experience did stand to me.

What is next if staying on in the USA after graduation?

There are four different options for when you are finished up your degree in the USA.

1. An elite few will have impressed enough to be offered paid work by a company

2. OPT (Optional Practical Training visa) [see below]
3. Finish up and return home
4. Travel around the world for new experiences

Any F1 student-athlete is entitled up to one year of (OPT) Optional Practical Training in their field of study. Authorisation for this type of practical training may be granted for a maximum of 12 months and starts once you have graduated or completed your course of study. There are other options on visas, but generally students who do decide to take the option on an extra year, are previous holders of an F1 visa.

OPT opportunities can sometimes lead to H1B working visa and ultimately a green card. Simply go and speak to the international students department of your university to get the necessary application forms to apply and for more information on any relevant visa options. They will inform you of the different practical training options available to you. Find out about these practical training options as soon as possible, in your first or second year, so you can adequately prepare for the future.

Transition of finishing your Sport:

Finishing up after four years of a full-time sports programme is another massive transition that is different in ways for every individual. One of my best mates who was a tennis player was relieved to be finishing up his tennis playing career and had no plans to continue playing at professional level. I just couldn't understand his opinion on finishing up. I thought he was nuts. I, on the other hand, was gutted to finish as I loved my time at Memphis. I always wanted to continue playing but didn't know where and no doors were opening up so naturally I returned home and trialled in Ireland. The transition is made easier if you have exciting plans for after you graduate. I would recommend you start thinking about this at the start of your Junior (third) year and would not just bury your head in the sand thinking graduation is a long way off.

Questions to ask yourself:

1. Do I want to play professional sports?
2. Would I like to coach in college sports?
3. Do I want to continue my studies and complete a masters?
4. Where would I like to live next three to five years?
5. What work would I love to do?

Chapter 8

Title IX: Gender Equality

What is Title IX?

The Education Amendments Act of 1972 states that *“no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance”*.

Who does Title IX apply to?

Title IX applies to all educational institutions both public and private that receives federal funds. Therefore all educational institutions must abide by Title IX rules and regulations.

How does it apply to athletics?

All athletic programmes are considered educational programmes and activities. All athletes participating must be provided with opportunities to participate in sports. From a sports point of view Title IX stipulates that athletes must receive scholarships in proportion to their participation in their sport.

Most importantly Title IX requires equal treatment of female and male student-athletes in the following areas.

1. Equipment and supplies
2. Scheduling of games and practice times
3. Travel and daily allowance
4. Access to tutoring
5. Coaching
6. Locker rooms and other facilities
7. Medical and training facilities or services
8. Housing and dining
9. Publicity and promotions
10. Support services
11. Recruitment of student-athletes

Although it applies to all aspects of the education system Title IX is talked most about in relation to athletics. Title IX is assessed through a total programme comparison. The entire men's programmes and women's programmes are compared and not just one sport from each of the men's and women's sports. While Title IX does not require equal dollars to be spent on both men's and women's sports it does require the same dollars to be spent in proportion to participation of scholarships. This simply means that if there is a football team participating at your college then you can be guaranteed the women's sports will have a higher number of scholarships in order to make equality regulations of Title IX. This is really good news for all the hard working female athletes in Europe.

No sport is excluded from Title IX. Equal dollars are not expected to be spent on each programme simply because there is a difference in the amount of money an ice hockey player will spend on padding and protective gear compared to a soccer player who only needs shin pads. There is no Title IX compliance officer at each institution but each member

of staff is required to know about it and has a shared responsibility in meetings its regulations.

It is recommended on the NCAA website that any athletes with a question regarding Title IX reach out to the following persons at your college:

1. Senior woman administrator
2. Director of athletics
3. Faculty athletics representative
4. Compliance co-ordinator
5. The legal council
6. Equal Employment Opportunities office

Chapter 9

Useful resources and tips in your search

Learn, compete and succeed - NCAA

Useful Websites:

The level of soccer you are looking at ideally is called Varsity Women's/ Men's Soccer. Investigate which universities and colleges offer Men's Soccer at Varsity level at the following websites:

www.ncaa.org (Division 1, Division 2 and Division 3)

www.naia.org (National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics)

www.njcaa.org (Junior Colleges)

These websites will allow you to search for each individual university programme. There is plenty of information for prospective student athletes on the NCAA website regarding college life, information on transfers and even information on after your college playing career has ended. This is a great link for staying in touch with job listings if you are intending to stay in the sport and coach.

www.ncaa.org/formerstudentathlete

I like the NCAA website because of its format. There is plenty of information on there for the student at different stages of their college journey.

1. Future Student
2. Current Student
3. Former Student

www.collegeboard.org

Provides information tips on the exams you take in preparation for colleges in America (SATs)

1. Dates of SATs
2. Fees expected to pay for tests
3. Registration details
4. Test Preparation

www.compassprep.com

Provides more services and free SAT tests for student athletes to try. They encourage you to take their free tests before even signing up for classes

www.eligibilitycenter.org

NCAA Eligibility Center

The Eligibility Center provides you and prospective colleges with information on whether or not you are eligible for a particular college.

www.playnaia.org

NAIA Eligibility Website

Find out do you qualify for one of the NAIA Colleges.

www.national-letter.org

National Letter of Intent on signing for a college team.

Remember each sport has different signing dates for when the student athlete must sign for the college.

www.prepscholar.com

All kinds of great information for students thinking of attending college in USA.

www.fullbright.ie

The website of Fulbright Commission provides a list of different scholarships opportunities for Irish students. There are many different options to choose from.

www.topdrawersoccer.com

This website gives you all the latest up-to-date information on college soccer in the United States. Conferences, results, rankings, news, scoreboards, statistics and schedules.

www.herosports.com

Gives the complete list of information regarding all American sports in general and in particular has information on college sports also.

<https://herosports.com/rankings/college-d1-mens-soccer> will give you a listing of current rankings in NCAA D1 men's soccer.

<https://herosports.com/rankings/college-d1-womens-soccer> will give you a listing of current rankings in NCAA D1 women's soccer.

www.collegesoccernews.com will give you all the up-to-date information on college soccer exclusively.

Important Terms to Note:

All America Award:

Awards for the most talented players throughout the country and in All Conferences. Ranked in 1st, 2nd and 3rd team.

Academic All-American Team:

Each College programme also recognises a single athlete in College Divisions who are referred to as Academic All-American on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd teams.

Academic All-Conference Teams:

Each College Conference also recognises a single athlete for in College Conferences who are recognised as 1st, 2nd or 3rd team Academic All-Conference teams.

All Region Awards:

An individual award handed out to players and coaches for efforts throughout the year. Conferences are matched in regions throughout America and an award is considered greater than conference-only awards.

Contact:

A contact is when the coach says more than hello during a face-to-face meeting with you or your parents at the college campus.

Contact Period:

During this period a college coach may have face-to-face contact with you or your parents, watch you compete, write or telephone you or your parents.

College Awards:

College coaches and players are recognised across both genders and all divisions. Eligibility is determined through College Services membership.

Dead Period:

A college coach may not have any contact at all with you or your parents on or off-campus during the dead period. On the other hand, the coach may write to you or your parents during this time.

Evaluation:

This happens when a college coach comes to look at you train or play.

Financial Aid:

This is any money you receive from a college or any other source, such as outside loans or grants. This aid can be based on athletic ability, financial needs, or academic achievement.

Five-year clock:

Once you play at a Division 1 college you have five calendar years to finish your four-year degree whether you red shirt (for injuries) or transfer colleges, do not attend college or attend part-time only.

Full Ride:

The scholarship most students want to receive is a full ride scholarship. This scholarship not only covers tuition and fees, but also books, room and board, supplies and even living expenses in some rare cases.

Full-time student:

Each college determines what a full-time student status means. Usually you are a full-time student if you are enrolled in 12 credit class hours in a term.

Hall of Fame:

A player or coach is recognised for their contribution to the institution they have represented by being inducted into the Hall of Fame.

International Student:

An International Student is any student who enrolled in a secondary school outside the United States, US Territories, or Canada.

Official Commitment:

Once you commit to a college, you sign a **National Letter of Intent** agreeing to attend that college for one academic year.

Official Visit:

An official visit is where the college pay for you and or your parents' meals and lodging and transportation to and from the college. Entertainment can also be included (home sports event). Before you can have an official visit you must provide the college with SAT scores, official transcripts and sign up with NCAA eligibility centre.

Red Shirt:

A college athlete who is withdrawn from university sporting events for a year to develop their skills and extend their period of playing eligibility by a further year at this level of competition. Also in use if the player is injured for majority of a year missing the competitive season.

United States- State Abbreviations

Below are the abbreviations for all of the different States in America. Become familiar with them for your search of different colleges.

AL- Alabama

AK- Alaska

AZ- Arizona

AR- Arkansas

CA- California

CO- Colorado

CT- Connecticut

DE- Delaware

DC- District of Columbia

FL- Florida

GA- Georgia

HI- Hawaii

ID- Idaho

IL- Illinois

IN- Indiana

IA- Iowa

KS- Kansas

KY- Kentucky

LA- Louisiana

ME- Maine

MO- Missouri

MT- Montana

NE- Nebraska

NV- Nevada

NH- New Hampshire

NJ- New Jersey

NM- New Mexico

NY- New York

NC- North Carolina

ND- North Dakota

OH- Ohio

OK- Oklahoma

OR- Oregon

PA- Pennsylvania

RI- Rhode Island

SC- South Carolina

SD- South Dakota

TN- Tennessee

TX- Texas

UT- Utah

MD- Maryland

MA- Massachusetts

MI- Michigan

MN- Minnesota

MS- Mississippi

VT- Vermont

VA- Virginia

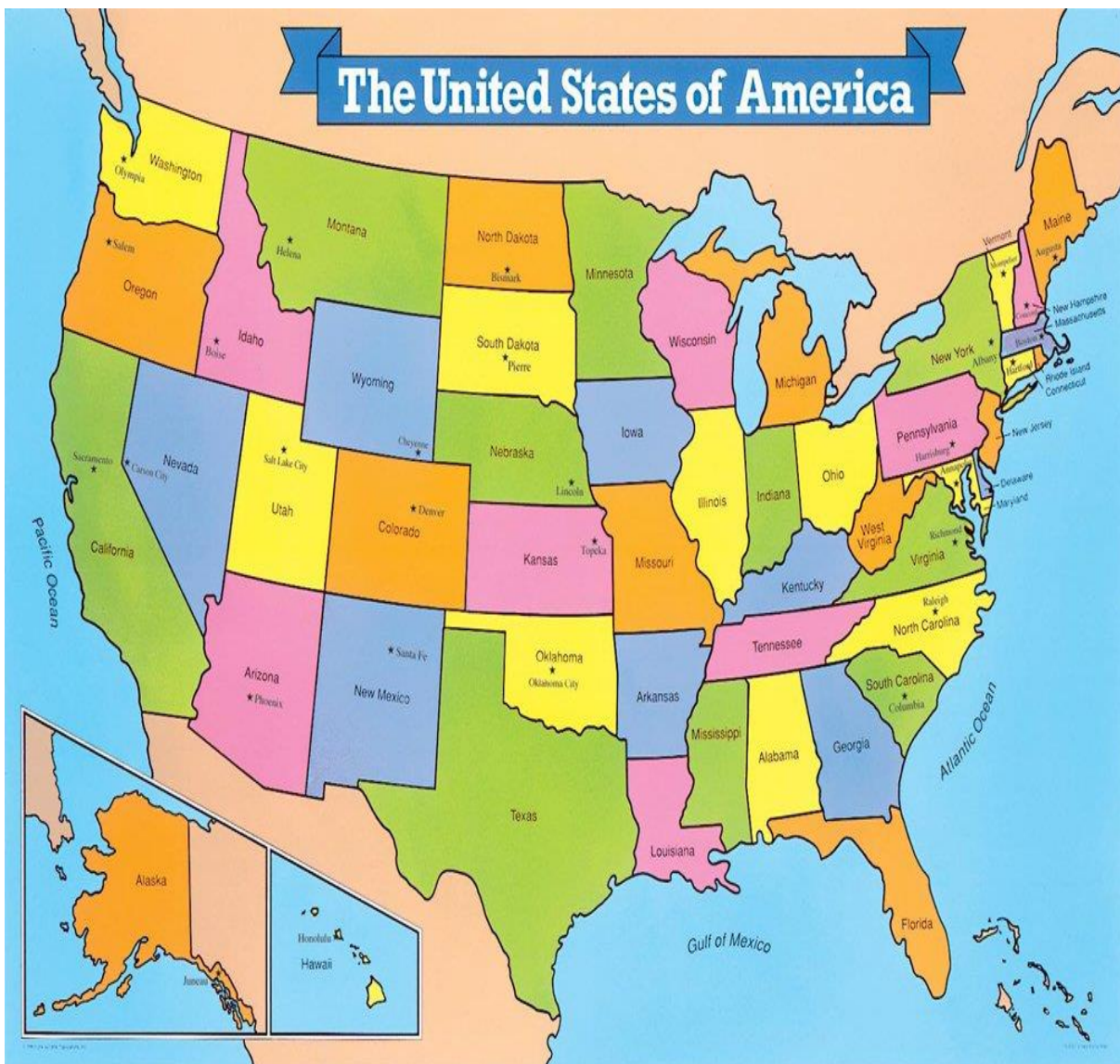
WA- Washington

WV- West Virginia

WI- Wisconsin

WY- Wyoming

Map of the United States:



List of SAT requirements for College in USA:

The following information is according to www.prepscholar.com. Each college has different requirements for standardised testing. Most colleges require the SAT or ACT. Here is the tip. Many colleges say they have no SAT score cut-off, but the truth is that there is a hidden SAT requirement. This is based on the college's average score. Remember the SAT is now scored out of 1600 and not the old 2400 scale. An average score of 1320 makes it moderately hard to get into this college. The 25th percentile NEW SAT score is 1230, and the 75th percentile NEW score is 1410. In other words, a 1230 on the NEW SAT places you below average and a 1410 will move you up to above average. There is a minimum requirement SAT score of course. This varies from college to college. Check with the International Student Office or the head coach themselves if you cannot find it on their website.

The new SAT changes (according to prep scholar) from the year 2016 are as follows:

- The SAT is now scored out of 1600.
- The Reading and Writing sections on the old SAT have been combined into a single section in the new SAT, with a maximum score of 800. Writing is now known as "Writing and Language."
- The Math section is still scored out of 800.
- The Essay is optional and has changed dramatically.
- Instead of five answer choices for each question, there will be only four. This doesn't necessarily make the test easier since the SAT will just remove the least likely answer.

Here is a list of the SAT minimum requirement for each Division:

Division 1:

For a list of Division 1 colleges search <https://blog.prepscholar.com/complete-list-of-division-1-colleges-by-state>.

Earn a combined SAT or ACT sum score that matches your core-course grade-point average and test score sliding scale (for example, a 2.400 core-course grade-point average needs an 860 SAT).

Division 2:

For a list of Division 2 colleges search <https://blog.prepscholar.com/the-complete-list-of-division-2-colleges-by-state>.

Graduate from High School Earn a 2.00 GPA or better in core courses. Score a combined (English and Math's) SAT result of 820.

Division 3:

There are no athletic scholarships available at Division 3 level, only academic. Division 3 still requires all the rules regarding amateurism. Interestingly there is no clearinghouse at this level. Recommendation is for students to have to contact the school directly regarding admission.

NAIA Division:

For a list of NAIA colleges search

<http://www.naia.org/ViewArticle.dbml?ATCLID=205322922>.

Achieve a minimum of 18 on the ACT or 860 on the SAT. Achieve a minimum overall high school GPA of 2.0 Graduate in the top half of your high school class. As always contact the office of Admission for any college you are talking to for advice before you even begin. Should you be in contact with a coach, they will advise you on first steps in the process.

NJCAA 2 year Division (Junior College):

For a list of NJCAA two-year colleges search

http://www.njcaa.org/member_colleges/college-directory.

NJCAA are only allowed four international players on their roster. Students are required to contact these schools directly to find the admission requirements. Athletes who reach their 21st birthday prior to August 1st will have one year of eligibility remaining. Students who reach his/her 22nd birthday prior to August 1 will have no eligibility, therefore should not apply.

Chapter 10

Coaches Expert Interview

The following interviews are conducted with four different head coaches who between them have a wealth of experience and knowledge in sending student athletes to American colleges and coaching those kids in America.

1. Jim Conroy has extensive experience of sending kids to America for years to complete their dream of completing a sports scholarship.
2. Eric Faulkner has 19 years of experience in coaching in the Women's College game.
3. Barry Farrell has completed a soccer scholarship and now coach's Men's Soccer team at NAIA William Carey University.
4. Mark Finnegan has also completed a tennis scholarship and has extensive experience coaching Division 1 and 2 College Tennis. Since completing this guide Mark has since set up "All Sports Recruitment" in Ireland to help those seeking scholarship opportunities in the USA.

As Head Coach in Colaiste Ide (during the period 1994-2012), Jim Conroy was instrumental in setting up transatlantic soccer trips (1997 onwards) for his students. He has overseen around 300 student athletes who have made the trip across to fulfil their dream in America. Jim was always available to his students when they needed advice, motivation or support despite the distance apart. I credit Jim with helping me personally secure a scholarship to Thomas University and appreciate all the hard work he put in during that year. This interview like the others is full of good information and tips for perspective students.

"Things turn out best for the people who make the best of the way things turn out". –Coach John Wooden

Interview 1: Coach Jim Conroy- Soccer Scholar Business

The first interview is with my old coach Jim. I have talked previously about what Jim has achieved over the years with Colaiste Ide and now Soccer Scholar and he provides some excellent advice in the answers to the following questions:

Cormac: Why should a kid choose America for a sports scholarship? What makes it different from Ireland?

Jim: I feel the very best opportunities are in America as every college has nine international scholarships to offer male and female players. To the best of my knowledge there are very few sports scholarships on offer here in Ireland.

Cormac: A teenager is looking for a scholarship in America. How do teenagers begin to think about playing sports in America? What is the process from your point of view?

Jim: There is little or no help out there to help students research for scholarships in any sports in America. For students needing help I would say word of mouth works best.

Cormac: Jim at Colaiste Ide I found the process of looking for a scholarship, learning about the process and actually finding a college really rushed over one year. In America kids are looking for a scholarship from the ages of 13/14. How young can a kid start looking for a scholarship in Ireland?

Jim: During the Colaiste Ide course we also felt the one-year course was not enough time for students to prepare for a scholarship to America. We actually canvassed for many years to have a second year added to the soccer course. On saying that some student athletes were ready to go after one year, but others would certainly have benefitted from an extra year. I personally feel the best age to start looking at the process involved is from Junior Certificate onwards.

Cormac: Jim you have 23 years of experience of overseeing kids attend colleges on sports scholarships at Colaiste Ide before the course closed in 2013. Do you want to share some of those success stories?

Jim: Yes Cormac there have been plenty of success stories over the 23 years of helping guide students through the process of obtaining and completing a scholarship. Here are a small number of those that jump to my mind. The following students are coaches in colleges throughout America - Richie Grant, Gerry Cleary, Paul Conway, Enda Crehan, Matty Torn, Alan McCann, Ger Coppinger, and Lynn Bradley. Those still playing soccer are Shaunie Williams who is now captain at Millwall F.C, Gary Deegan of Coventry F.C, Niall McCabe of Louisville F.C, and 2017 Airtricity League winner and F.A.I Cup double winner Stephen Beattie.

Outside of football success some of the success stories have been just as enjoyable to hear about. Aaron Donnelly launched his own novel, while Ciaran Fairman is completing a PhD in prostate cancer research. Ciaran has recently accepted a position as a postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Exercise Medicine Institute at Edith Cowan University in Perth, Australia. In this role, he will co-ordinate a trial in seven countries, looking at how high intensity exercise can affect disease progression, overall survival and other biomarkers of health in prostate cancer patients.

Johnathon Carroll is an expert in strength and conditioning training, while we have even had students launch music albums in Nashville. There are directors of football clubs most notably over the New York Cosmos and even a guy who runs a multi-million dollar tyre company. Plus, there are many more exciting success stories.

Cormac: [Jim you now run Soccer Scholar a private business after Colaiste Ide. Can you tell us about Soccer Scholar?](#)

Jim: When Colaiste Ide closed the soccer course in 2012 and I retired from Colaiste Ide, my son Ryan encouraged me to start up my own sports scholarship company called Soccer Scholar USA. It is based on the same ideas and principles as Colaiste Ide, the main aim is to help students gain soccer scholarships to colleges in USA. In its first two years we have overseen 12 students win scholarships and more offers have been made to them.

Cormac: [I think there is a false belief that only elite players can win a scholarship. I have personally heard that some very average players along with stronger players can make a real name for themselves in America during college and afterwards in work. Is there a level for all types of players?](#)

Jim: There is a college for every level of player and academic in America. If you want it badly enough the opportunity is there for you.

Cormac: [What is your advice for prospective students currently looking for a scholarship?](#)

Jim: Students looking to go on scholarship to America should know what to expect when they get there. What does the scholarship offer consist of? Does it cover everything from books, tuition, food and insurance?

Student athletes must be aware that all scholarships get renewed on a yearly basis therefore the student must meet academic and playing expectations. Research the college, where it's located and whether it is easy or not to get there. Finally find out what the accommodation is like and whether it is on campus or a private apartment.

Cormac: [What benefits do you believe result from preparing really well for attending college in America?](#)

Jim: The benefit of preparing well for a scholarship is that there will be no surprises when you get there. It is important that you prepare physically as you do not want to be playing

catch up on the fitness side of things. Great preparation for your SAT's is vital as you can earn extra scholarship from this. Start preparing for SAT right away.

Interview 2: Coach Eric Faulkner

Eric Faulkner was the head women's coach at Thomas University when I was a player there with the men's programme 2002-2003. He led Thomas University to their first appearance at Nationals earning Region Coach of the Year award. Eric then moved from NAIA to Division 2 with Armstrong University in 2005. Eric has a wealth of experience over 19 years and his overall record is (W) 172-(L) 54-(D) 23 at Armstrong. He led the team to NCAA Championship finals nine out of 12 times and reach Division 2 final four in 2011. His overall record is (W) 240-(L) 98-(D) 29 which is really impressive and Eric currently ranks in the top 20 in Division 2 most successful coaches and has just been inducted into the Armstrong University Hall of Fame. More importantly Eric has always recruited and appreciated what European sports-athletes bring to a programme, so therefore the information and tips he provides has the potential to be really valuable to students and parents alike.

"Today I will do what others won't, so tomorrow I can accomplish what others can't". –Jerry Rice

Cormac: You have recruited many European student-athletes throughout the years you coached college soccer. A European kid is looking for a scholarship. How should they look for a scholarship and what helps them stand out from the thousands applying?

Eric: I think the most important thing they should do before anything else is decide what is the right fit for them. Do they want to be in a large school environment or a smaller school? Do they want to be in a big major city or a smaller college town? Then what do they want to study and does that university have that major. I think personally it is best for contacts to be made directly from the potential student-athlete including a description of their academic and athletic background and why they want to come to the States.

Cormac: From your experience of coaching European students in college, how best can a student prepare for moving to America to play college sports?

Eric: I can't stress enough the importance of doing as well as possible academically. This will serve them well in life, long beyond football. I really think, if possible, the student should try to visit some universities in the States before making a decision. Too many internationals make decisions without ever seeing the school, town or even meeting the coach. You are about to spend four years of your life at the school, so if possible you need to make sure it's the right fit.

Cormac: You have had great success at college level. What are the best personal stories from those years and what success can you share to inspire perspective students?

Eric: I think the best stories are the ones where students come over and perhaps they are the first in their family to go to college and they truly take advantage of the opportunity and earn their degree. I have seen it go both ways where students come over just focused on

football and end up leaving without the degree. The degree can change your life and the priority in the end should be the degree.

Cormac: Why would a European choose to attend America on a scholarship? What can they look forward to?

Eric: I think the American University system can offer a great education and, in addition, many schools put a lot of resources into their athletic programmes. They quite possibly have great athletic facilities, top level playing surfaces and great medical attention to name a few areas. Also, it's a great chance to see another part of the world, make new friends from different cultures and those experiences will last a lifetime.

Cormac: Have you heard of student athletes using the stepping-stone method of going to a two-year Junior college first to qualify academically or develop physically for a four-year college? Do you recommend it as an option for athletes?

Eric: I think it can be a good option for those that might need to strengthen academically to take this route. They need to make sure after the two years that they will meet both academic and eligibility guidelines to continue on to a four-year institution. Just make sure that from a football standpoint that the level is high enough to be a challenge.

Cormac: Are all levels of sports players catered for in college in America? I personally have seen all levels of soccer player in America. I feel if a student-athlete is determined enough and has a great attitude then they can improve beyond their wildest imagination. What is your opinion on this?

Eric: I agree. The resources are there to take advantage of. You have to come in with the proper attitude and be willing to adjust.

Cormac: What is your advice for prospective students currently looking for a scholarship?

Eric: Have everything ready to go early. The decision-making process for the US based athlete is starting earlier and earlier and it is much more difficult to find a good fit the later you leave it. I suggest to start looking about two years out and start doing the research. Make sure your grades are in order and take the SAT/TOEFL exams as early as possible. This shows a potential coach that you are serious about attending school in the States.

Cormac: I feel student athletes don't realise how important academics are along with their sports? Can you expand on this?

Eric: There are great limitations on the amount of time you can spend doing your sport, especially at NCAA schools. The academic course load in college is rigorous and you need to stay on top of your studies. Time management is the key. The ability to meet the demands of both athletics and academics can be difficult, but not impossible. Make sure to use school resources to help you with your academics. Also, poor academics could lead to being ineligible to participate in your sport as well. This can lead to losing your scholarship.

Cormac: It is now easier than ever to make the stepping stone to semi-professional or professional level in America where the game is expanding at an alarming rate? What does it take for an athlete to make that grade?

Eric: If you are good enough someone will find you. Make sure to obtain game film of your performance. Also, there are many high-level leagues that you can play in during the summer that are allowed by the NCAA/NAIA etc. These are great ways to be seen by semi-professional and professional clubs.

Cormac: What are your best tips for prospective student athletes hoping to attend college in America on a scholarship?

Eric: The key is finding the right fit for you in terms of the size of the school, location and level of football being played. The most important advice is to get everything in writing. Most college coaches are honest people, but I am aware of international students getting stuck with a large bill to pay because they didn't understand the scholarship agreement. Bottom-line, have the college lay out any costs you may incur, before you agree to accept and attend that college.

Interview 3: Coach Barry Farrell (B.S.Ed., M.Ed.)

William Carey Head Coach (Soccer)

Barry Farrell is entering his third year (2018) as Head Coach of William Carey University. Originally from Dublin, Farrell studied at Colaiste Ide and then moved to the US where he played for William Carey from 2001 to 2004 and following graduation he became their assistant coach. Farrell was assistant coach during a very successful period in WCU history as they won their Conference three years in a row (2007-2009) and a Final 4 National appearance in 2011. Farrell was inducted into the WCU Wall of Fame in 2011 for his career contribution. Finally, Farrell became WCU head coach in 2016 and has had great success as head coach. In Farrell's first year as head coach his team won their Conference League and Tournament and amazingly in his second year as head coach his team went undefeated and were named NAIA #1 in the rankings for eight consecutive weeks in a row. Farrell has 17 years of experience on student-athlete life in USA and 13 years of experience as a coach.

Cormac: Barry you have recruited many European student-athletes throughout the years you coached college soccer at NAIA level. A European kid is looking for a scholarship. How should they look for a scholarship and what helps their email stand out from thousands applying to your programme?

Barry: An email that stands out from the rest is one that includes a highlight video of the student-athlete playing for his club team, with the possibility of a full game attached. A player-profile that includes name, age, position, current team, high school grades, SAT score, GPA, and your NAIA eligibility ID number.

Cormac: What, from your experience of coaching European students-athletes in college, is the best way a student can prepare for moving to America to play college sports?

Barry: A student athlete from Europe coming to America, needs to be extremely fit. The majority of head coaches would have a summer workout programme, that we would give out to incoming student athletes. The workout is intended to have you in the best possible physical condition for the upcoming season. Fitness is a major part of our college programme, and the college game that is played here in the America.

Cormac: You have had great success at college level. What are the best personal stories from those years and what success can you share to inspire prospective students?

Barry: In my first year as head coach, the team winning both the league and the cup was special. I will always remember that. This year, the team going undefeated for the entire regular season, and to be ranked as the #1 team in the nation for eight consecutive weeks was a great achievement for us.

Cormac: Why would a European choose to attend America on a scholarship? What can they look forward to?

Barry: Majority of Europeans come to America so they can play soccer at a high level and earn a degree at the same time. It is extremely difficult to do so in some European countries, and a scholarship in America gives these student athletes this opportunity. The facilities in America are top class, and you are treated like a real professional. You get to play with players from all over the world, some that go on and play at the highest level. When it is all said and done, you come away with a degree, something that you might have failed to do, if you had tried to stay in Europe.

Cormac: Have you heard of student athletes using the stepping stone method of going to a two-year Junior college first to qualify academically or develop physically for a four-year college? Do you recommend it as an option for athletes?

Barry: Yes, sometimes going to Junior College is a great option for the student athlete. I highly recommend it as an option. I love to recruit quality student athletes from Junior Colleges. They have experience already playing in America, and it is an easy transition into a four-year school.

Cormac: Are all playing levels of sports players catered for in college in America? I personally have seen all standard of soccer player in America. I feel if a student-athlete is determined enough and has a great attitude then they can improve beyond their wildest imagination. What is your opinion on this?

Barry: Yes, there are many playing levels from Junior College, NAIA, and NCAA Division 1-3. It is important that the student athletes know what division is best suited for or even the difference between levels. American universities will give you this great opportunity to improve as a student athlete, but also as a person in everyday life.

Cormac: What is your advice for prospective students currently looking for a scholarship? How can they get ahead of the competition?

Barry: Look at the college website. See if they have the degree that you are interested in studying. Work on completing your profile, register for the Eligibility centre, get your highlight video/game footage out to the university/colleges that you are interested in attending. All this will get you in direct communication with a college coach, and ahead of the competition.

Cormac: I feel student athletes don't realise how important academics are along with their sports? How important is a degree when the student finishes up?

Barry: It is important to balance both. It's called a student athlete for a reason. We do a great job at William Carey University to make sure the student athlete is aware of the importance beforehand. A degree is important, when you think of the amount of time and energy you put in over the four years doing both, you want to finish up the degree, as you will need it.

Cormac: There are more opportunities to make the stepping stone to semi-professional or professional level in America where the game is expanding at an alarming rate. What does it take for a soccer athlete to make that grade?

Barry: There are definitely more opportunities to make the jump to the next level. It doesn't happen overnight. What you do in college over the four years will have a major say in making the grade at the next level. It takes a lot of dedication and sacrifice for a soccer athlete during college to make that grade afterwards.

Cormac: Coach what are your best tips for prospective student athletes hoping to attend college in America on a scholarship?

Barry: Email only one coach at a time. (No mass emailing). Mention that you have done some research on the institution. Make sure you have an email address that is appropriate. Most coaches will check your social media accounts. Remember coaches are looking to invest thousands of dollars in you, so please make sure you don't have any bad behaviour on your social media. Check your emails on a daily basis. All are small details, but go a long way in securing a scholarship to America.

Interview 4: Mark Finnegan

All Sports Recruitment Business, Ireland

Cormac: You have recruited many European student athletes throughout the years you coached college tennis both Division 1 and 2. A European kid is looking for a scholarship. How should they look for a scholarship and what helps their email stand out from thousands applying to your programme?

Mark: The student should recruit somebody who is experienced in the process and understands exactly what is involved with getting to the different colleges and divisions in the USA (D1, D2, NAIA and Junior College). The student should write a very clear and concise email with your highlight video (edited if possible). The email should simply state facts of school results, teams represented. DO NOT send long-winded emails just listing accomplishments as the coach is interested in you as a person and will know from the teams you have played on as to the level you are capable of playing.

Cormac: What, from your experience of coaching European student athletes in college, is the best way a student can prepare for moving to America to play college sports?

Mark: To prepare to move to America seek out other people who have done the same as you previously or a business who can give you all the tips on preparing to go. Your fitness levels need to be far superior to anything you have ever experienced so that is one place to start and ask the college you are hoping to attend to post any information that may help you settle better.

Cormac: You have had great success at college level. What are the best personal stories from those years and what success can you share to inspire prospective students?

Mark: The best stories I can think of is when the team has won something that has never been achieved previously or for the first time in years. Making history is very special and celebrated far more than any other accomplishment.

Cormac: Why would a European choose to attend America on a scholarship? What can they look forward to?

Mark: You can look forward to sharing a lot of special moments with people who are sharing common goals and you can look forward to a balanced lifestyle in college where academics are as important as sports and you get to experience a social life outside of sports. College sports in America is something you won't regret because the facilities and level of competition are far superior to anywhere in college in Europe.

Cormac: Have you heard of student athletes using the stepping stone method of going to a two-year Junior college first to qualify academically or develop physically for a four-year college? Do you recommend it as an option for athletes?

Mark: If you are not academically or physically ready then going to a Junior College is a vital stepping stone to a four-year college. Then two years later if you have performed to a high

enough standard you will get offers to transfer. I highly recommend this option to anyone who needs time to better themselves physically, mentally or academically for the step up to a four-year college.

Cormac: Are all levels of sports players catered for in college in America? I personally have seen all levels of tennis player in America. I feel if a student athlete is determined enough and has a great attitude then they can improve beyond their wildest imagination. What is your opinion on this?

Mark: There are all different levels of standard in College Tennis in the States. If you have proved yourself of a high enough playing standard in your home country and can qualify academically then you will certainly get offers of colleges. It is important to get your foot in the college door so to speak and then graft and work hard to become a needed acquisition in a top college programme.

Cormac: What is your advice for prospective students currently looking for a scholarship?

Mark: My advice is simple. Don't complicate the system and therefore every single day do a little work on reaching out to coaches by email. Then every single day do a little bit of work on your tennis game to help prove your level to the coach. Do something every day to make that dream a reality. Keep in touch with coaches by telling them you are following the programme and eager to join their College program.

Cormac: I feel student athletes don't realise how important academics are along with their sports? How important is a degree when the student finishes up?

Mark: The degree is the most important aspect of going to college to play sports. Whether you try and play professional in your sport (which has a short life span), join a Graduate School, or go into coaching you cannot get by without the degree. It is vital to understand this. It opens up opportunities for business, Graduate School and obtaining any level of work.

Cormac: Is it now easier than ever to make the stepping stone to semi-professional or professional level in America where the game is expanding at an alarming rate? What does it take for a tennis athlete to make that grade?

Mark: The internet has made it easier than ever to stay in touch with what is happening at a professional level in each sport. College highlight videos allows a professional coach or agent to see the ability of each student athlete over the internet. The player has to be at a higher level than ten years ago as the overall level has become better. If the student athlete is understanding of the system and willing to work extremely hard then opportunities will arise. We at Auburn look for three main characteristics in a student. If the coaches can see they have character, have great communication skills and finally are willing to work hard then they are one step ahead of others in the race to make a living from the sport.

Cormac: What are your best tips for prospective student athletes hoping to attend college in America on a scholarship?

Mark: The best advice I could give is to find somebody you can trust that can help guide you to stay on top of the process. It is a long process of finding the college and sending off all paper work that may frustrate you when you don't hear back quickly enough about colleges or the application process. They will help make the process more simple and attainable. The golden rule is the more effort you put into the process the better opportunities that will arise. Keep working hard but also be smart on the process.

Interview 5: Gerry Cleary

Fort Hays State Head Coach (Soccer)

Gerry is entering his first year as head coach of the Fort Hays State soccer programme. He has just finished four years as assistant coach to Richie Grant of Bakersfield University, California. Before that Gerry had a very successful past as a head coach at NAIA Martin Methodist University. He is the only coach to win a National Championship at both men's (2013) and women's (2005 & 2007) Martin Methodist University (NAIA Championship level). His knowledge is such that he has published his coaching tips multiple times in World Soccer Magazine and World Class Coaching- the world's leading resource magazines for soccer coaches.

Cormac: You have recruited many European student athletes throughout the years you coached college soccer both Division 1 and 2. A European kid is looking for a scholarship. How should they look for a scholarship and what helps their email stand out from thousands applying to your programme?

Gerry: They should email the coach with transcripts and a highlights video. If they play at a high level it is advisable they have someone notable as a recommendation.

Cormac: What, from your experience of coaching European students-athletes in college, is the best way a student can prepare for moving to America to play college sports?

Gerry: Make sure they are physically and mentally fit. It doesn't matter what college they go to because the first year is going to be a big challenge adapting to the college system of combining academics and their sport.

Cormac: You have had great success at college level. What are the best personal stories from those years and what success can you share to inspire prospective students?

Gerry: Always put more into it so you can enjoy that at a later date. I have enjoyed the journey with each college I have coached but most importantly I am proud of what type of citizens they have become. It hasn't been that easy but I keep looking forward and constantly try to improve personally.

Cormac: Why would a European choose to attend America on a scholarship? What can they look forward to?

Gerry: To get a good education and a very good student athlete experience. They should look forward to every aspect of the four years as it is completely new to them. My advice would be to enjoy the journey as it is the best four years of your life.

Cormac: Have you heard of student athletes using the stepping stone method of going to a two-year Junior college first to qualify academically or develop physically for a four-year college? Do you recommend it as an option for athletes?

Gerry: I honestly don't have an opinion on the Junior College system but it is important to note four year colleges are not for everyone.

Cormac: Are all levels of sports players catered for in college in America? I personally have seen all levels of players in America. I feel if a student athlete is determined enough and has a great attitude then they can improve beyond their wildest imagination. What is your opinion on this?

Gerry: If you train properly every day you will improve. Train to be better than you were yesterday. Then see where it takes you.

Cormac: What is your advice for prospective students currently looking for a scholarship?

Gerry: It is simple. Do your research. Know the process and know all aspects of the school. It is vital to know about the coaches so don't send mass emails. Finally do your research on the local area of the college.

Cormac: I feel student athletes don't realise how important academics are along with their sports? How important is a degree when the student finishes up?

Gerry: Currently in America there is a strong push academically because most student athletes are first generation college students. Progress towards a degree is vital to stay eligible. Simply turn up to class and do your work. The rest takes care of itself. Don't overcomplicate it.

Cormac: Is it now easier than ever to make the stepping stone to semi-professional or professional level in America where the game is expanding at an alarming rate? What does it take for a soccer player to make that grade?

Gerry: Get word out about your upcoming graduation and find a good team. Work harder than you ever have and simply trust the process.

Cormac: What are your best tips for prospective student athletes hoping to attend college in America on a scholarship?

Gerry: Get ready for the best four years of your life. Work hard and see what happens.

Chapter 11

Success Stories from previous Scholarship Recipients

“The successful person has the habit of doing the things failures don’t like to do”. – E.M Gray

The quote above is from the essay written by E.M Gray on “The Common Denominator of Success”. He spent his life studying the different attributes of success hoping to find the one dominator that all successful people share. He found it wasn’t hard work, good luck or astute human relations, although all of those are quite important. The one factor that was most important was getting your priorities right. It is important to note this while going off to university. There is no point in having new records in your training when you are missing your 8am class. Both are very important.

I hate to break the bad news to you. There is actually no secret to being successful at anything in life. The people I have listed below have been committed to their goals and gone after those goals with massive determination and never quitting when an obstacle stood in their way. Playing college sports is an incredible opportunity and it can set you up for life in America or back in Europe. There are many different success stories from athletes who have attended colleges all over the United States since Colaiste Ide started sending prospective student athletes in 1997. I feel it is extremely important that these stories are shared so student athletes know the different options available to them after graduation if they work hard and persevere along the journey.

Some of the success stories did not attend Colaiste Ide and took their own route across. I am sure that anyone who has been successful will have faced their own obstacles and overcome those challenges. In my opinion the successful road is rarely straight-forward and I hope these stories inspire the next crop of European student athletes to attend college in the United States. These stories are also recorded to inspire you, the student-athlete, beyond your four-year stay at college. This is to open your mind up to the limitless possibilities beyond college in America.

The examples I use are of ordinary people who have gone on to great success after completing a sports scholarship in America. Please remember there are hundreds more who have achieved highly and work in jobs that would not have come about if they did not make the move to college in America. Dream big but take action on that dream and work hard every day towards that goal.

The following stories cover a multitude of areas. Everything from the male and female professional sports career, PhD doctoral cancer research, college coaching career, high school coaching career, strength & conditioning coach, attorney and entrepreneur. As you will discover, many can attribute their success to the great ground work prepared by Jim Conroy and Danny Crowley both in Ireland and the United States.

Some of the stories involve people who are still involved in sport through the professional game or coaching in America. Others have used their scholarship as a stepping-stone to bigger things outside of sport in their career. Others show how you can overcome a disability or experience disappointment in your scholarship but still remain positive and return to better yourself and return to America for a second chance.

My favourite quote on success comes from Coach John Wooden the most successful American college basketball coach of all time.

“Success is peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best you are capable of becoming”. - Coach John Wooden

Success Story

Stephen Beattie B.S.Ed. Professional Footballer (Chattanooga F.C)

“You must be passionate, you must dedicate yourself, and you must be relentless in the pursuit of your goals. If you do, you will be successful” -
Steve Garvey.

Former Colaiste Ide student Stephen Beattie is a shining example of a scholarship recipient who has not given up on his dream of a professional career in sports. His former coach at Northern Kentucky University, John Basalyga, describes Stephen in one word as “relentless”. Stephen attended Colaiste Ide in 2006/2007 season and followed with a move to NCAA Division 2 Northern Kentucky University the following year (2007) and he graduated in 2011. Stephen became captain of Northern Kentucky and in his sophomore year he was named the Ron Lenz National Player of the Year 2008 and the first-team NSCAA/ Adidas All-American Awardee. This was a huge achievement but there was better to come. In his senior year Stephen and Northern Kentucky won the National Title (2010). Over Stephen’s career, in which he was named All American three times, he broke all team records for appearances, with 77 goals scored and 33 assists completed in the process. In 2017 Stephen was inducted into the NKU Hall of Fame which is credit to both him and all the coaches who have had an impact on his career.

Stephen’s career highlights are:

- Youth player of Shelbourne FC
- Colaiste Ide Captain 2006
- Captain of Northern Kentucky University
- National Player of the year 2008
- Captain of National Title winning team Division 2 2010
- All American in three different years
- NKU Hall of Fame 2017
- PDL team of the year with Cincinnati Kings
- Eircom League winner with Cork FC
- FAI Cup winner Cork FC

This led to a dream move to the professional ranks in the 2011 supplemental draft (1round pick 13th overall) with Toronto FC. LA Galaxy were all set to take him with the 17th pick but unfortunately this didn’t work out due to the limit of International players on each squad. With this in mind he moved to the Puerto Rico Islanders of the North American Soccer

League due to issues with Toronto while the Islanders had Colin Clarke from Northern Ireland as their coach. This to him was his only ticket to the pro leagues at this stage.

Just 20 minutes into his first trial match Stephen tore his ACL (Anterior Cruciate Ligament) and he then returned to Northern Kentucky to rehab his knee and graduate in December 2011. He moved to Iceland with Tindastoll to kick-start his professional career and then on to the Eircom League where he has been always to the fore playing for Bohemians FC, Sligo Rovers FC and Cork City FC. All of Stephen's hard work paid off after he helped Cork to win the 2017 Eircom League title a year after winning the FAI Cup with the club. In my humble opinion Stephen is the most successful soccer player to come through the Colaiste Ide system. It seems his old head coach from Northern Kentucky University was right - he is relentless in pursuit of his goals. Well done Stephen!

Connect with Stephen at:

Twitter: [@steven5beattie](#)

Website: [www.chattanoogafc.com](#)

Instagram: [Steven5beats](#)

"Don't practice until you get it right, practice until you can't get it wrong".
- [Griezmann](#)

Success Story

Ciaran Fairman PhD Cancer Research

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine as children do. It's not just in some of us; it is in everyone. And as we let our own lights shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates other” -

Marianne Williamson

Ciaran is a former student of Colaiste Ide, Finglas, from the Class of 07/08. I had the pleasure of teaching Ciaran on the course and I distinctly remember him telling me he may not attend America on a scholarship due to issues over his self-belief in his soccer talents. Thankfully he did make the move. He was thinking about the scholarship from an aspect of sports but not the academic side of it. This is the thinking most athletes occupy while preparing for a scholarship. Please don't fall into this trap. Remember academics are extremely important.

Ciaran was right about his success on the soccer pitch. It was not the career he envisioned but during his time in the States life took an unwanted twist when his mother became unwell with breast cancer. Ciaran by his own admission had the switch flipped in his head when he listened to the treatments and struggles his mother had to endure throughout that second year of college. He knew his life's calling from the very moment he went to a cancer research conference in Denver, Colorado, that very summer. From then on he worked hard academically. After graduating from his soccer scholarship Ciaran attended Georgia Southern University and completed a Master's Degree. He is currently in his last year of a PhD in Ohio State University.

He has recently accepted a position as a postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Exercise Medicine Institute at Edith Cowan University in Perth, Australia. In this role, he will be helping coordinate a trial in seven countries, looking at how high intensity exercise can affect disease progression, overall survival and other biomarkers of health in prostate cancer patients. This is one of the largest trials of its kind in the world and the results from it will have a huge impact in the field of exercise oncology and will help push the field forward in terms of establishing exercise as a standard of care in cancer. What an achievement. The success doesn't end there with Ciaran. He has set up his own business website. You can reach him at www.reachbeyondcancer.com. Through Ciaran's website you can find information on all of his studies, connect with him for a fitness plan or arrange for him to do one-to-one guidance, day-long or weekend-long seminars. He has also set up a Gaelic Football team in Columbus while he completes his studies at Ohio State.

Topics discussed on his seminars are:

- Pathophysiology of the disease
- Treatment-related side effects
- Evidence-based information on exercise during and after treatment
- Site-specific training considerations
- Developing relationships/ referrals with local health providers

Connect with Ciaran at:

Website: www.reachbeyondcancer.com

Email: ciaranfairman@gmail.com

Twitter: [@CiaranFairman](https://twitter.com/CiaranFairman)

“You are an inspiration to those you know...a wonderful example of courage and perseverance. May the fullness of life be yours in the days ahead”. – Cancer Survivor unknown

Success Story

Lynn Bradley Private High School Coach

“Life is about the choices you make, if you don’t like your life, it’s time to make better choices”. – Lynn Bradley

Lynn Bradley is another former student and success story of Colaiste Ide (2006/2007). If other athletes in the success stories proved they were relentless in pursuit of their dream, then I would have to say Lynn tops them all. She is an example of grit and perseverance and followed her dream despite all she had to face, although as most of our successful examples in Chapter 10 will agree the road isn’t always straight and wide. Lynn took up the option of a full scholarship to Lindsey Wilson College (Kentucky) in August 2007 after completing Colaiste Ide. She decided by Christmas in her first year that the scholarship wasn’t working at Lindsey Wilson for a few different reasons, and returned home. She was only turned 18 and hadn’t researched how isolated the college actually was while she was late starting her freshman season as she was representing Ireland at the World Student Games in Thailand (2007). As a result, she wasn’t even considered for starting position in goals. This made for a very lonely and tough time for Lynn as she felt she had now made a mistake on choice of college because she wasn’t being given a fair chance. Lynn mentioned that she was unaware of other opportunities like transferring and that she only realised at a later date that it might have been a good option for her.

Lynn loved her time at Colaiste Ide, stating that the full-time environment of training with the boys really made her and the other ladies players very fit and sharper. She complimented Jim and Danny on how they ran the course stating the coaches told the students the reality of how it was and how hard you had to work to make the dream come true in America. While playing with Raheny United Lynn also played for her country.

Lynn’s highlights of playing for Ireland were as follows:

- U17 (2003-2005)
- U19 (2005-2008)
- U19 Player of the year (2008)
- Senior (2008-2010) [Emma Byrne understudy].

Unfortunately, the obstacles didn’t stop there for Lynn. In 2010 while with Ireland in Israel preparing to play them in a World Cup qualifier Lynn tore her ACL. It took two surgeries over two years for her to get her leg back to functioning and she found herself in a dark place deciding to quit the sport she loved and had lived for. She admittedly started to resent the sport she loved. At the time she was completing a FAS course and she struggled to watch her team-mates training everyday having fun as she struggled with her injury. Most athletes

go through this period of darkness if out injured. I experienced it personally while at Memphis coming back from injury and breaking down again. The whole rehab process has to start over. Just another obstacle to overcome in the life of a sports person. But the obstacles are the way.

While coming to the end of rehab for her second surgery Lynn got a phone call about a coaching opportunity on the West Coast of America. She packed her bags for 10 weeks of coaching kids and also more an opportunity to experience America from a different perspective. She fell in love with life as a coach and set about figuring how she could return to the States one day.

On returning to Ireland Lynn started a course at DCU which was Project Futsal and this course gave Lynn an opportunity to do her first three coaching badges, a refereeing badge, Futsal certificate and pan disability qualification. After completing her course Lynn signed up to an agency in America for coaching opportunities and, after interview, found herself back in America on a ten-month contract in Louisiana, knowing nobody, but chasing her dream has kept Lynn on track as 10 months has turned into 5½ years. She has just received great news of a job in a private high school in the States.

Connect with Lynn at the following:

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“In Life, as in football, you won’t go far unless you know where the goalposts are”. – Arnold H.

Success Story

David McKay B.S, M.S

Orlando City Strength & Conditioning Coach

"I feel an endless need to learn, to improve, to evolve- not only to please the coach and the fans- but also to feel satisfied with myself". – Cristiano Ronaldo

David's story starts all the way from Colaiste Ide in Finglas and goes right through college soccer at Belhaven University and all the way to professional MLS outfit Orlando City as the head strength and conditioning coach working with 2007 Ballon d'Or (World Player of the Year) winner Kaka. This is a hugely successful story. David completed a year at Colaiste Ide before embarking on a four-year sports science degree while competing for Belhaven on the soccer team.

David felt he was never going to make the grade as a professional soccer player so he chose Belhaven for their sports science degree on offer. He set about making his dream of working as a sports scientist come true.

David realised early, like most successful people, that the path to success isn't straight forward. He attended a small private Christian college right in the Bible belt (Deep South of America) so it was a massive shock to him. He felt that that area of the country was a whole different world, very religious and still had an element of segregation. Overall, he stated it was a great experience but when he first landed in the States there it was a massive adjustment period.

Firstly, David finished his degree but he felt he needed a higher qualification so he began working towards his dream of becoming a fitness coach to the professional game. Along with studying, David completed his qualifications in strength and conditioning and personal training. He stayed on at his college after finishing his degree and volunteered as fitness coach before his journey around America started in earnest. He made the move from Jackson to Orlando to pursue a Master's Degree at University of Central Florida.

In Orlando David gained more experience at a gym and with a local soccer club. At the same time, he applied for jobs at every single MLS team in the league. After graduation and one year of his masters completed, Sporting Kansas offered him an unpaid internship. There, he worked as intern assistant fitness coach which was volunteer-based work so as to get a foot in the door. This earned him a two-year contract with Kansas. Next, he became Head of Fitness with Orlando City FC and in 2017 he was made director of Fitness for Orlando City

working with such players as Kaka, Pedro Ribeiro, Julio Baptista, Johnathon Spector and Sean St Ledger.

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“When you want to succeed as bad as you want to breathe then you will be successful”. - Eric Thomas

Success Story

Kiaran McCormack B.S., M.S. Elite Obstacle Course Racer & Entrepreneur

“The only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven’t found it, keep looking. Don’t settle”. – **Steve Jobs**

Kiaran is another successful professional athlete and businessman who has passed through Colaiste Ide. Kiaran is originally from Ireland and now resides in Gray, Maine.

When living in Ireland prior to attending Colaiste Ide, Kiaran was a track athlete, and played soccer and Gaelic football. Kiaran completed Colaiste Ide in the 02/03 year and later that August he moved to Division 1 University of Vermont on a soccer scholarship. After two years at Vermont Kiaran transferred to Division 1 University of Maine. Kiaran graduated with a BS in Kinesiology and as the International Student of the Year for the college of education and human development. After graduation Kiaran continued to play soccer, began personal training and fostered his love for coaching. As previously mentioned, the road to success is rarely straight and narrow. With this in mind, Kiaran showed the initiative to move to Florida to further his soccer coaching career but a scheduling mishap meant he was transferred back to Maine where he eventually met and married his wife Deanna.

Kiaran continues to study and firmly believes that CPD Continuous Professional Development is a major asset to success in life.

Here is a list of some of Kiaran’s qualifications:

1. MS, Exercise Science
2. BSC, Kinesiology
3. ACSM, Certified Exercise Physiologist
4. NASM, Corrective Exercise Specialist
5. Kettlebell Certified Trainer
6. US Soccer C Licence Coach

Kiaran and his wife Deanna, own and operate TL2 Fitness which is an exercise, wellness and nutrition business, and is also the founder, owner and director of Mc-Academy soccer which provides many forms of soccer coaching from summer camps, clinics, to individual sessions. He has worked with countless young athletes who have gone on to play at the collegiate and professional level in the States.

Kiaran designs and implements, in person or through distance learning, total fitness programmes for individuals and groups. He specialises in weight loss management, and performance enhancement. He will tailor a programme that will motivate you to attain your fitness and/ or weight loss goals.

Kiaran and Deanna recently launched their online business ExistUp www.existup.com. Through ExistUp they will share videos, articles and products that they know can help you live to your fullest potential. Visit their website for more information on becoming your best version and “Don’t just live, ExistUp”.

Kiaran began Elite Obstacle Course Racing (OCR) after the dream of a career in professional soccer came to an end. He started cross-training to prevent injuries from soccer. Applying the knowledge he learned through his soccer education, he quickly fell in love with the sport and realised he was very good at it.

Kiaran competes primarily in the Reebok Spartan Race series. The Reebok Spartan Race is one of the top obstacles race organisations in the world that hosts races on all continents, and held their first race in Ireland in May 2018. Spartan Race has three main distances: sprint 3-5 miles with 20-23 obstacles, Super 8-10 miles with 25+ obstacles, and the Beast 13+ miles with 30+ obstacles. Together all of these races are known as the trifecta. They even have a kid’s course.

Kiaran explained that the lure of OCR racing is because it encompasses so many different types of fitness throughout a race: cardiovascular endurance, muscle endurance, along with agility, speed and skill. Training is also multi-faceted and never gets boring. If you would like more information about training, race tips or gear tips then contact Kiaran through any of the social media accounts below.

To Connect with Kiaran:

Instagram: [@kieranocr](https://www.instagram.com/kieranocr)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/kieranmccormackocr

Website: www.existup.com

Don't limit your challenges.

Challenge your limits

- **OCR RACING**

Success Story

Megan Campbell B.L.A Professional Soccer Player Manchester City Women's F.C

"The only person you are destined to become is the person you decide to be". – Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Megan Campbell is a professional soccer player at Manchester City Women's Football Club, the current FA Women's Super League champions. She also helped them win the Women's FA in 2017. Megan has previously played for St Francis (FAI Cup winner 2009) and Raheny United FC (2012 League and FAI Cup winner). This led to her representing Ireland U17s who finished runners up in the UEFA Women's 2010 European Championships and to the Quarter Finals of the 2010 FIFA Women's World Cup. Following this original success Megan was offered a scholarship to University of Connecticut but at the age of 17 she felt she was too young. She undertook a FAI-run course at Carlow IT for two years until she felt mature enough to consider the possibility of America once again.

On the strength of the hard work and success of the previous five years, Megan was offered a Sports Scholarship to Florida State University (FSU) in Tallahassee, the capital of Florida, where she majored in Social Science. On the FSU soccer pitch Megan excelled using her long throw as an extra threat to other colleges' defences. FSU play in the Atlantic Coast (ACC) Powerhouse Conference and Megan's talents helped FSU win the Atlantic Coast Conference in all three of her years there (2013, 2014 and 2015). FSU were winners of the 2014 National D1 title after the heartbreak of losing the same National Final the year previously. In Megan's three seasons in FSU she played over 60 matches and recorded an amazing 31 assists.

With all this success at FSU in Florida, it was thought Megan would have entered the professional draft in America after college. She was a noticeable absentee from the draft and instead opted to look and be closer to home around the European Leagues and this led to interest from Manchester City Women's team after they saw her highlights reel. After hearing about their interest in her, Megan had no hesitation in signing straight away in February 2016.

Upon signing for Man City, Megan found a harsh reality in niggling injuries from the start. After overcoming these obstacles she experienced huge success that very first season winning the League title and Women's FA Cup in front of a record breaking crowd of 35,000 people.

Connect with Meghan at:

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“I am building a fire and every day I train I add more fuel. At just the right moment I light the match”. – Mia Hamm

Success Story

Luke Keogh BACJ. Qualified Attorney

"You just can't beat the person who never gives up". -Babe Ruth

Luke Keogh is another product of Colaiste Ide where he was named Achiever of the Year (2009) and helped Ide to a runners-up place in the John Talley soccer classic in Memphis. Luke then moved to Saint Gregory's University where he starred as a two-sport athlete playing for the college soccer team and running track out of soccer season. Not only did he star in both sports, but Luke also produced great performances in the classroom. He was named a Capital One All-American Academic in his senior year, not once but twice for two different sports (2012). Luke majored in Criminal Justice during his four years while also anchoring the Cavaliers soccer defence.

With hard work and the right attitude Luke was the second ever athlete in Cavalier history to make first team Academic All American. According to the Cavaliers website in order to be selected, nominees must demonstrate success on the playing field and in the classroom, with both academic and athletic achievements taken into consideration. The student athlete must possess a minimum 3.30 cumulative GPA and be at least a sophomore in academic standing. Luke ran 800m, 1500m and 5,000m racing indoors and outdoors. He was on the Dean's Honor Roll and President's Honor Roll while at Saint Gregory's College and is a member of the National Honor Society.

Luke completed his major in criminal justice, all the while boasting a 3.97 grade-point average. In addition to being included twice on the Academic All-District Team, he was also two-time Dakromics-NAIA Scholar Athlete in 2012-13. This was an incredible achievement. Luke mentioned in an interview in his senior college year (2013) that he intended to go on to study for the bar exam and become an attorney. Luke graduated with his law degree from the University of Houston Law Center. He graduated in 2017 after passing the bar exam and is now a fully qualified attorney. After graduation Luke found work at a law firm called Shrader & Associates since August 2017. He is an asbestos litigator.

When asked what tip he would give any prospective student athletes from Europe he had this advice to share.

"Initially, when I realised I was going to the States, I became very anxious. I was homesick and nervous about being so far from home. Some of my friends felt the same way and ended up succumbing to their anxiety and went home early. I would encourage those prospective student-athletes of the future not to make that mistake. Once you get over the initial homesickness (and you will) you will love every minute of your experience. The US is an amazing country with many opportunities (both sport-related and otherwise). I would encourage each prospective student athlete to make sure they take advantage of those

opportunities. Work hard and you can literally accomplish anything you want in this country”.

Connect with Luke at:

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“Talent without working hard is nothing”. - Ronaldo

Success Story

Niall McCabe B.A.Comm. Professional Soccer Player Louisville F.C

“Hard work beats talent when talent doesn’t work hard”. –Tim Notke

Niall McCabe is a professional soccer player at Louisville FC in the USL (United Soccer League), a professional second tier league in America. Most MLS (Major League Soccer) teams play their reserve team in the USL. Niall’s dream of playing professional soccer started out in the youth leagues in Dublin. He started out with Cambridge Boys before moving on to Ashbourne United men’s team in Co. Meath. While playing with Ashbourne United, Niall heard about Colaiste Ide and completed the course in 2009/2010. Niall got recruited to Division 2 Young Harris College (YHC) by their coach Mark McKeever. He was instrumental in helping transform YHC record from two wins, nine losses and four draws (2010 season) to a record of 16 wins and two losses in his final year (2014). During those four years Niall experienced great success. He is second in all time goals (32) for the college and first in all time assists (31).

The list of success is as follows:

1. Peach Belt Conference Champion
2. Golden Boot Winner
3. All Conference First Team
4. National Player of the week

After graduation from YHC Niall’s coach, Mark, put great effort into helping Niall reach the professional ranks. Niall got a trial under the new Louisville FC coach James O’Connor and signed that very week. Since signing for Louisville FC, Niall has played in 68 professional games, scoring eight goals, while in 2017 Louisville FC won their first ever USL Cup. This journey has not been without its obstacles as Niall missed a chunk of the 2016 season with a serious hip injury that required surgery. With hard work at rehab and a relentless drive Niall has returned stronger than ever.

When asked about any tips for future prospective scholarship student athletes Niall had this to say.

“Give everything you have to the cause. Throw yourself into it 100% and you’ll be successful whether that is in the classroom or on the field of play. No in life hands you anything for free. You need to work hard and fight every day for everything if you want to make it to the top”.

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Success Story

Mark Finnegan (BSBA) Ex-College Tennis Coach Auburn University Current Owner of All Sports Recruitment, Ireland

“Athletic success is the result of knowing what to do, the willingness to do it and the drive to continually improve at it”. – Tim Grover

Mark Finnegan hails originally from Kill, Co. Kildare. He was an underage tennis star representing Ireland as a Junior Olympian before departing to Southern Georgia on a full Tennis scholarship. There he won the Southern Conference Freshman of the Year, All Conference and team MVP (Most Valuable Player) [2002]. He then transferred to Memphis University after a year and a half where he graduated with a degree in Finance in 2004. Mark has recently transferred to the Division 1 powerhouse University of Auburn from University of North Florida, where he was head coach of the men's programme for the past four seasons. Prior to his appointment at Auburn University Mark achieved great success in University of North Florida posting a 56-36 record while winning the Atlantic Sun tournament or regular season title in three of his four seasons and garnering the highest ITA team rankings in the programme's history. What a great achievement for a first-time head coach of a Division 1 College.

Mark coached ITA All-American Jack Findel-Hawkins, the first Division I All-American in UNF history and twice the Atlantic Sun Player of the Year, who advanced to the 2017 NCAA quarter-finals in singles and was a three-time NCAA singles qualifier. Findel-Hawkins was also a three-time NCAA doubles qualifier (with three separate partners, Yannick Zuern, Lasse Muscheites and Norbert Nemcsek), under Mark's guidance. In 2017, UNF went 19-1 in the doubles point, the highest doubles winning percentage in the nation.

Before his time at North Florida, Finnegan spent five years at Memphis, helping his alma mater become one of the top 20 teams in the nation. He was an assistant coach at Memphis for his first four years (2009-12) before being elevated to associate head coach prior to the 2013 season. Twice part of the C-USA coaching staff of the year, Finnegan was named ITA Regional Assistant Coach of the Year in 2012 and 2013 and also received votes for ITA National Assistant Coach of the Year in 2013.

In 2012, Memphis earned its first NCAA team bid, and in 2013, the Memphis Tigers advanced to the NCAA Round of 16. Rewards won by players under his coaching were Player of the Year (C-USA 2013), Outstanding Singles Player (C-USA Championship) and Outstanding Doubles Team (C-USA Championship).

Finnegan also assisted with the Memphis women's tennis team, helping the Tigers gain their first NCAA appearance in 2013 as well as a programme-high ranking of No. 22 in 2013. Individually, Courtney Collins ranked as high as No. 20 in the ITA singles rankings.

Mark now lives in Kildare with his wife Molly and their two sons.

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“Success is a journey not a destination. The doing is usually more important than the outcome”. - Arthur Ashe

Success Story

Richie Grant (BRLS, M.S.Comm.) Men's Division 1 College, Head Soccer Coach (CSU Bakersfield)

*"Leadership is unlocking people's potential to become better". – Bill
Bradley.*

Richie Grant or "coach" as I remember him at Memphis is another product of the Colaiste Ide system. After completing the course, Grant moved to Green Mountain College (Vermont) in 1990 and he graduated from Bloomsburg University with a Master's Degree in Communication. He is a three- time NAIA All-American defender. After graduating from Green Mountain College and having played one year in the professional league with Minnesota Thunder, Grant realised his passion was for coaching rather than playing professionally, and he became assistant coach at Bloomsburg University. After three years learning his trade, he then moved on to become head coach at NAIA Lambuth University, then at Memphis University and presently (2018) at Bakersfield University, California.

Teams managed:	Win	Lose	Draw
1. Bloomsburg University (assistant) 1992-1995			
2. Lambuth University 1995-1998	53	29	4
3. University of Memphis 1999-2013	135	116	22
4. Cal State Bakersfield 2014- currently	17	13	11
Overall record:	205	158	37

Grant's record at Lambuth was 53 (wins) 29 (losses) 4 (draws) over four years including winning back-to-back Mid-South Conference titles. After achieving success in the NAIA level the opportunity arose to move to the Division 1 level at University of Memphis. Richie's record at Memphis over 15 years was 135 (wins), 116 (loses) and 22 (draws). He is the highest achieving coach in Memphis soccer history. He won the 2004 C-USA Conference Coach of the Year for the second time (also 2000) and also led his 2004 team (I can proudly say I was part of that victorious team) to the 2004 Conference Championship League and Tournament wins along with an appearance at the National Tournament. In 19 years as a head coach Grant's record overall is 205 (wins) 158 (loses) and 37 (draws). Grant is among the top 50 active Division 1 coaches winning over 200 College matches in his career.

Grant has had success with many of his former players making professional leagues. Four different players advanced to Major League Soccer Leagues and many other players have had success at semi-professional level soccer in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Grant's current record (four years) at Bakersfield at time of writing is 17 (wins) 13 (loses) and 11 (draws). Another product of Colaiste Ide, Gerry Cleary, is Richie's assistant at Bakersfield.

Between both coaches experience, knowledge and drive it is only a matter of time before success comes Bakers.

To connect with Coach Grant:

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“Successful leaders look beyond their own field to discover new approaches, learn best practices and push the margins. Then they pass on what they have learned”. – James Kerr.

Success Story

Stephen Lunney (B.PhEd, M.B.A)

College Soccer Coach at Lipscomb

“Being a goalkeeper gives you quite a unique perspective on things. You are part of a team yet somehow separate; there are no grey areas, with success or failure being measured in real time and you have a physical job which you can only do well by paying attention to your mental well-being. A great goalkeeper has to have the keys to a great mindset. To be able to work well in the box, I believe you have to be able to think outside the box”. – Brad Friedel

Stephen Lunney is a native of Dublin and is a product of Colaiste Ide (2010/2011). Stephen moved to Tennessee four years ago to attend NAIA college at Martin Methodist in Pulaski, TN. Stephen was a four-year starting goalkeeper for the varsity men’s soccer team in which he started 75 out of 76 career matches. Stephen also served as the captain of the team during his junior and senior years. In 2013, Stephen captained the team to win their regular conference twice and the NAIA men’s soccer National Championship. Stephen has experienced great success both on and off the soccer field. He has set the bar extremely high for any future European student athletes and is a real credit to what one can achieve with relentless dedication.

Here are some of Stephen’s highlights:

1. Being named as the MVP (Most valuable Player) of the 2014 National Tournament.
2. Most Valuable Defensive Player of the 2014 tournament.
3. Stephen was a three-time Capital One Academic All-America College Division selection (2012-2014).
4. He was also selected as the Capital One Academic All-America College Division Men’s Soccer Player of the Year on two occasions (2013 & 2014).
5. At the end of his junior year he was selected as the Capital One Academic All-America College Division Player of the Year across all NAIA sports.
6. Stephen was also recognised by his conference, the Southern States Athletic Conference, by twice being named the Male Scholar-Athlete of the Year (2013 & 2014).
7. The 2013/14 Male Athlete of the Year.
8. Stephen was also selected as an NAIA All-American for his efforts during his senior campaign 2014.

Stephen graduated in May 2015 with a Bachelor of Science degree in human performance and Physical Education and has been described online as probably the most decorated

student-athlete in the Martin Methodist college history. While waiting to commence his master's degree Stephen played semi-professional soccer with Nashville FC.

Upon graduation Stephen took up the position of graduate assistant coach at Lipscomb University. He has continued his success there by completing a Master's of Business Administration degree and working with the team's goalkeepers. After his masters graduation Stephen was offered and accepted the position of full time assistant coach at Lipscomb University, helping across all areas of the programme and leading Lipscomb to the NCAA National Tournament in 2017. Stephen is also a USSF licensed coach and NSCAA GK Coaching Diploma.

Stephen is a shining example of striving to give back while in college. He was also heavily involved with projects outside of the classroom and fields of play as he served as one of two officers on the Inaugural SSAC Student Leadership Council. He also devoted countless hours toward the Red Hawks Champions of Character programme.

Connect with Stephen at:

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"Sports do not build character. They reveal it". - Coach John Wooden

Success Story

Maeve Redmond (BACJ)

Development Officer for New York Ladies GAA County Board

“Action opens doors, consistency keeps them open”. – Maeve Redmond

Maeve is a leader who adjusts the sails every time she encounters any obstacles that arise on her journey of success. I remember her from my Colaiste Ide class of 01/02. She was extremely talented, ambitious and an inspiration to many. Maeve had a few offers from colleges in America and with the guidance of Jim and Danny she chose Cumberland University in Tennessee. Maeve did recommend that when perusing a scholarship, understand that some coaches will mention full scholarships at the beginning of talks but the offer might only be 85% or 90% of a full scholarship. She mentioned how important it is to get everything in writing and take all offers with a pinch of salt until it is all in writing. Don't put all of your eggs in one basket by waiting on one enthusiastic coach.

Maeve has overcome many obstacles including homesickness, a change in coach who tried to cut her scholarship when tuition rose in cost (which she paid herself) even though she was an All American Academic, and most inspirationally overcoming the fact she has severe hearing loss from birth. She has never let this disability stop her on her journey to success and hopes that sharing this success story will inspire many more to follow the same path. For a long , Maeve tried to hide her disability due to people either judging her right away or her being bullied. Now she shares her story to inspire others. She starred for the university team even though she struggled to hear coaches shouting advice from the sideline or hearing team-mates shouts during matches. This never stopped her relentless drive for success. She graduated from Cumberland University in 2006 with a degree in Criminology and a minor in Psychology.

Maeve loves to share stories of her college matches. She was a team member when the college broke into the NAIA top 25 for the first time ever. She got to travel to some amazing programmes and colleges in many different States during her four years. She admits that despite the ups and downs of dealing with her new coach she would not change anything. On reflection as it made her stronger, having gone through the process. She loved how the classes at Cumberland were quite small so she really got to know the professors. This is something she recommends for students to research really well before making a decision on a college.

Some of Maeve's career highlights include:

1. Graduation from Cumberland with honours and also achieved Academic All American.
2. Inducted into both the Social Sciences and Criminal Justice Honors Societies.
3. Represented her Gaelic Club in Club All Ireland Final 2006 and won the Players Player of the Year.
4. Represented Dublin Junior Team on numerous occasions but also represented the Dublin Senior team in 2008 winning a Leinster Title.
5. Maeve won the Player of the Year award in her first year with the Fermanagh team based in New York.
6. She also represented New York in the All Ireland Junior Championship.
7. In 2016 Maeve was asked to coach the first Ladies All American born Gaelic Football Team to take part in the World GAA Games in which they made the final in Croke Pairc where they defeated a team from Canada.

After graduation Maeve like so many others returned to Ireland. Despite working for a large bank as a fraud investigator Maeve knew her heart was set on returning to the States one day. Eventually Maeve applied to the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York and completed her masters there while also playing Gaelic football full-time for New York. Despite not having any support after graduation this did not stop Maeve as she took a job as a Development Officer for the New York Ladies GAA County Board as she searches for her dream job. I am sure whatever Maeve ends up working at long term she will be successful as she is relentless.

Connect with Maeve at:

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“For anyone who is fortunate enough to be offered a soccer scholarship my advice would be to grab the opportunity with two hands. Make sure you have someone who can review the paperwork before you sign anything. As daunting as it may be to leave home and go abroad, I would say give it a go. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity that if I was able to do it all again I would”. - Maeve Redmond

Success Story

Barry Farrell Head Soccer Coach, William Carey University, NAIA

“Winning is not a sometime thing; it’s an all-time thing. You don’t win once in a while, you don’t do things right once in a while, you do them right all the time. Winning is habit. Unfortunately, so is losing”

– Vince Lombardi.

Barry Farrell is originally from Dublin. He attended Colaiste Ide College in 2000 and received a scholarship to William Carey University (WCU). He was extremely successful in his college career which resulted in his induction into the WCU Wall of Fame in 2011. As a men’s soccer player from 2001-2004, Barry earned All-Conference (Gulf Coast Athletic Conference), All Region (NAIA Region XIII), and All American (NAIA) honours at William Carey. During his collegiate career, the Crusaders qualified for the final four of the National Tournament (2001). Farrell was the leading scorer in his junior and senior years, combining for 26 goals and 13 assists. He was voted the team captain and Most Valuable player during his senior year.

Barry earned his Bachelor’s degree in Physical education from William Carey (2006), and recently earned his Master’s In Education from William Carey University (2017).

Some of Barry’s career highlights include:

- Team captain
- All Conference
- All Region
- All American
- Leading scorer in both Junior and senior seasons combining for 26 goals and 13 career assists.
- Voted most valuable team player at WCU in his senior year.
- Wall of fame 2011 inductee.

Barry is a leader for those hoping to follow his pathway from Europe to playing in college and then transitioning into coaching at the college level.

Barry was named Head Coach for William Carey University for the 2016 season. In the years as Head Coach there he holds a 34-5-3 overall record. In the 2017 season, William Carey University spent eight consecutive weeks as the # 1 ranked team in the nation.

Honors as Head Coach:

- 2016 SSAC League Champions
- 2016 SSAC Conference Champions
- 2016 SSAC Coach of the Year
- 2017 SSAC League Champions
- 2017 SSAC Coach of the Year
- 2017 NAIA Regional Coach of the Year
- 11 Players named SSAC First Team Honors
- 2 SSAC Player of the Year award winners
- 2 SSAC Defensive Player of the Year award winners
- 2 SSAC Newcomer Player of the Year award winners
- 1 SSAC Offensive Player of the Year award winner
- 1 SSAC Freshman Player of the Year award winner
- 9 SSAC Scholar Athletes of the Year award winners
- 9 SSAC All tournament award winners
- 5 SSAC All Freshman award winners
- 1 SSAC Tournament MVP award winner
- 1 SSAC Golden Gloves award winner
- 2 SSAC Men's Soccer Scholar Athlete of the Year award winners
- 1 SSAC Men's Scholar Athlete of the Year award winner
- 1 NAIA All-Tournament Team selection
- 8 NAIA All American Team Honors

Barry regularly recruits from Europe and has extensive contacts throughout the college system and divisions.

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"Each person holds so much power within themselves. Sometimes they just need a little nudge - direction, support, coaching". - Pete Carroll

Success Story

Johnathon Carroll (B.S.Ed.) Strength & Conditioning Coach & Published Author

“Don’t let other people’s opinions of you influence how you live your life and what you do with your life. Working to be the version of yourself, failing and learning from those failures is what always opens doors to the future. Those people who laugh at you failing are those who are too scared to even try and do what you are doing”. – Johnathon Carroll

Johnathon or Jonner as we called him at Thomas University hails from Navan, Co. Meath originally. He attended Colaiste Ide in 2000 and was recruited to Thomas University in 2001. I remember Jonner well from my time at Thomas University. The memory that sticks out most is when he transformed his fitness levels drastically throughout his second summer in Georgia. He remained there for the summer to train and condition himself for his upcoming season. We, as a team, couldn’t believe the fitness transformation and goes to show how driven Jonner was in pursuit of his goals. His commitment to remaining and training in the heat showed how much he was willing to sacrifice in order to be ready for the upcoming season. Jonner showed such determination that he was made captain of Thomas University in his Junior and Senior years and became an All-American in those two years.

Jonner now co-owns a gym “The Movement Lab” in Raleigh North Carolina. He has trained the general population and especially athletes seeking the next level in terms of their sporting careers. He enjoys training people who carry his methods and habits through when transitioning to a new phase of needing better fitness for sports. Jonner has resided in Boston since 2011 and found it as a home away from home, training every-day clients, athletes prepping for college or a professional team and even the Boston Wolfstones Gaelic team from South Boston. Jonner is a published author of the book “Earn and Keep a Soccer Scholarship in the USA” for anyone looking for tips on scholarships while in the US. His book is available on Amazon.

Some of Jonner’s highlights are:

- Captain of Thomas University Junior & Senior Year
- All American Junior & Senior Year
- Intern at World renowned Mike Boyle Strength & Conditioning Facility, Boston.
- Fitness Trainer of Boston Wolfstones in their Boston Championship 2015
- Trained Adam Choice National Championship winner with Clemson 2016/2018

- Trained Josh Choice (ex-Winthrop) current player at South Queensland FC in Australian A-League
- Trained Oliver White (ex-Harvard) now at Kingston City FC in Australia
- Trainer of NFL & NHL players while at Boyles gym, Boston.
- Gym co-owner- The Movement Lab, Raleigh, South Carolina.
- Published Author- “Earn and keep a Soccer Scholarship to the USA”.

Here is a list of Jonner’s qualifications:

- Certified Strength & Conditioning Specialist (CSCS) from the National Strength and Conditioning Association.
- Functional Movement Screen Professional
- StrongFirst Level One
- USA Weightlifting Level One
- Precision Nutrition Level One

Connect with Jonner on:

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“The truth is that most of the significant things in life aren’t stand-alone events, but rather the sum of all the moments when we chose to do things 1 percent better or 1 percent worse. Aggregating those marginal gains makes a difference. There is power in small improvements and slow gains”.

– James Clear

Success Story

Gerry Cleary (M.D.Ed.) Head Coach Fort Hays State NCAA II & Published Author (World Soccer Magazine)

“The difference between the impossible and the possible lies in a person’s determination”. – Tommy Lasorda

Gerry Cleary is a shining example of what an athlete can achieve when finishing Colaiste Ide and starting their journey to success in college and in the coaching ranks after college. Gerry is the new coach of Fort Hays State University men’s soccer team (January 2019). He is a product of the Colaiste Ide programme and has found success at any place he seems to have played soccer or coached as a player and head coach. Gerry is a perfect example for any athlete to follow and persist on their journey in the USA. With hard work, persistence and the ability to navigate the coaching ranks, Gerry proves that anything is possible.

Gerry has coached both men’s and women’s so his experience would be invaluable to both boys and girls looking for a scholarship. In fact, Gerry became the first coach ever in collegiate soccer to win national championships with both a women’s and men’s programme at the same college while he has named been National Coach of the Year three times (2 Women’s and 1 men’s). Gerry doesn’t rest on his success as he challenged himself by becoming assistant coach at California State University Bakersfield (D1) shortly after his National Championship with the men’s team at Martin Methodist (NAIA) in 2013. He has used that stint as a stepping stone and to gain vital experience in NCAA level before returning as a head coach at Fort Hays University (D2).

Some of Gerry’s career highlights are:

- Two-time Mid- South Player of the Year (Lambuth University).
- Three-time All American & four-time All Mid-South award as a player (Lambuth University).
- Three-time Conference winner with Lambuth (Mid-South Conference).
- Assistant Coach at California State University Bakersfield NCAA D1.
- Head Soccer Coach and Associate Athletic Director at Martin Methodist College. (Career Record at MMC: 177-42-14).
- National Championship 2005, 2007, and 2013.
- Assistant coach at Christian Brothers University, won the NCAA Division II National Championship in 2002. Overall record (in three seasons) with Bucs was 72-5-2. (2000-2002).

- 2013 National Coach of the Year
- 2012 Conference Coach of the Year
- 2009 Coaching Training Session was published in “World Class Coaching” journal.
- 2009 TranSouth Conference Coach of the Year (2005-10)
- 2008 Inducted into Lambuth University Sports Hall of Fame.
- 2008 Inducted into Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame. As “Amateur Team of the Year.
- 2008 Coaching Training Session was published in “World Class Coaching” journal.
- 2007 NSCAA National Coach of the Year.
- 2007 NSCAA Mid-Atlantic Regional Coach of the Year.
- 2007 Region XI Coach of the Year.
- 2007 Inducted into Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame. As “Amateur Team of the Year.
- 2005 NSCAA National Coach of the Year
- 2005 Mid-Atlantic & Region XI Coach of the Year.

Here is a list of Gerry’s qualifications:

- USSF B Licensed Coach (2011)
- NSCAA Advanced National Diploma (2008)
- NSCAA National Diploma (2002)
- FAI Coaching Licence (1995)
- 2000-2002 Master’s Degree in Education, Christian Brothers University
- 1995-1999 B.S. in Physical Education with Health Endorsement, Lambuth University
- 1994-1995 Association of Football and Career and Life Development, Colaiste Ide, Ireland.
- LBGT: Diversity and Inclusion Diploma (2018).

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“The principle is competing against yourself. It’s about self- improvement, about being better than you were the day before”. – Steve Young
