

How do you go about getting a scholarship to play college football?  
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OK, so you're a high school senior and you want to play college football and you are looking for a football scholarship! With national signing day just more than two months away, there is plenty of time to do something about it. And you can do it on your own, without paying thousands of dollars to recruiting services.

All it takes is a little bit of hard work, a lot of determination and about \$50. There are numerous stories of seniors who landed last-minute scholarship offers after taking some initiative. Consider:

St. Louis Rams safety Corey Chavous had only one offer (Wofford) two months before signing day during his senior year at Silver Bluff (S.C.) High. Chavous mailed out 10 highlight tapes and got 10 offers. He signed with Vanderbilt and is finishing his 10th year in the NFL.

Auburn wide receiver Robert Dunn didn't mail out highlight tapes until late December of his senior year at Laney High of Augusta. He held off signing with South Carolina State on signing day and ended up with offers from Auburn and Nebraska a week later.

North Gwinnett quarterback Mike Tamburo committed to Boise State after Tamburo's coach mailed out highlight tapes of the team's seniors to 450 colleges on Sept. 1.

With that in mind, here are four easy steps to put yourself in the best position to be considered for an athletic scholarship:

#### 1. Produce a highlight film

It always has been about — and always will be about — the film. Nothing, including glorified letters, personalized Web sites or phone calls from family friends or boosters, means as much as film.

Film gives scouts the best opportunity to evaluate. The best type of film is a highlight tape, which will consist of the top 25-35 plays combined from junior and senior years. Why not more? Most scouts will decide whether you're good enough for their program after watching only a few minutes, and if so, then they likely will request an entire game film [but not always].

Computer programs with basic editing software cost less than \$25, and a lot of people are skilled at editing.

Quick tip: Make sure to put the best plays at the front of the tape. Scouts go through hundreds of tapes a day, and time is short.

#### 2. Preparing the package

After preparing the tape, the next step is completing the rest of the package, which should include unofficial copies of high school transcripts and SAT/ACT scores, which you can send to college once you take the exam.

Also include a simple page of "quick facts," which shows contact information, such as your mailing address, cellphone, and e-mail address. It also can highlight football-related items, including height and weight, 40-yard dash times, positions played, individual statistics, and athletic and academic honors. Jersey number and position should be taped to the DVD in large block letters.

Quick tip: When mailing packages to colleges, save 50 percent in postage costs by requesting the "book rate."

#### 3. Picking the colleges

This is the part of the marketing process where most mistakes are made. Unknown prospects sometimes mail tapes directly to schools like USC, Georgia or Notre Dame. You should at least have a few offer from smaller colleges (Div. II, I-AA) before targeting the "big boys."

While there is nothing wrong with big dreams, there is a method to the recruiting madness: Start off with the smaller schools and build leverage from there.

For each 10 tapes you send out, five should go to schools you think you are too good to play for; three should go to schools you think you could play for, and two should go to schools you dream of playing for.

If you get an offer from Shorter College, then West Georgia or Morehouse may be willing to look at your film, and then Georgia Southern and Georgia State, and so forth.

Quick tip: Target colleges from surrounding states (North Carolina, Tennessee, South Carolina and Kentucky) that traditionally recruit the state very hard. Florida colleges may be a waste of time because they tend to stay in-state with recruiting due to the tremendous amount of local prospects

#### 4. Closing the deal

While the most important thing is the highlight tape, No. 2 is following up with colleges about 10-14 days after mailing the packages.

College coaches have hundreds of DVDs on their desks, with many more waiting to be opened.

So think of it like applying for a job: To get noticed, you need to be persistent but polite with phone calls or e-mails.

Quick tip: E-mail addresses and work phones for specific college coaches and football offices can be looked up by clicking [here](#).

Note: When you get to particular school's Web Site, search under "Athletics" and not "Football", looking for a "Staff Directory" or "Administration." Here is an example with the University of South Carolina

#### FIVE QUESTIONS

1. To which person on the football staff do I send my tape? Either the recruiting coordinator or the position coach of the position you feel you have the best chance of playing in college.

2. What if the college coach never answers when I call? Most don't, therefore leave a voice mail. If they are interested in you, they will return your call or e-mail you, providing you sent your contact information with the package.

3. Which is the better way of contacting coaches, e-mails or phone calls? Depends on the coach, therefore try both until you figure it out.

4. What if there is no way I can make a highlight tape? Then send out a copy of your best game.

5. What if I'm a junior or sophomore? What should I be doing? If you're a junior, sign up to take the ACT/SAT as many times as possible for the remainder of this school year. If you qualify early, you will dramatically increase your chances for a scholarship offer. You need to make sure you're taking the proper classes to meet NCAA college entrance requirements. If you're a junior or sophomore, focus on academics before a highlight tape. And if you do decide to mail out a tape, have it ready to ship around Feb. 1, when colleges can concentrate 100-percent on next year's recruiting class.