

Going it alone not a bad approach

Students and their parents can often do as much as recruiting services

By Roger Cleaveland
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WATERBURY

As a two-sport collegiate athlete and later a college baseball coach, Wayne

Mazzoni learned one important fact about the recruiting process: it's flawed. Especially from a player's perspective.

He learned that the hard way, eventually paying his own way to Gettysburg (Pa.) College where he played both football and baseball as a walk-on. Mazzoni learned a lot more about the

recruiting process as an assistant coach at Nova Southeastern University and Fairfield University, and later as the head baseball coach at Teikyo Post University, his current job.

Mazzoni used this knowledge to work several years as a consultant for high school players and their parents. He also wrote a book and has

given more than 300 seminars on the recruiting process.

With his credentials intact, according to

Mazzoni what is a promising high school athlete to do if he wants to earn a college athletic scholarship? Homework. Lots and lots of homework.

Chasing a scholarship

While there are hundreds of athletic scholarship recruiting services advertising that they will do all the work for a fee, Mazzoni said it is more prudent for an athlete's family to do the work.

Please turn to 9C, SERVICE

SERVICE: Much of work can be done alone

Continued from 1C

"I honestly do feel with the right information, people don't need to hire anyone, and they will probably end up with a better situation," Mazzoni said. "Honestly, who cares more about a kid than his parents?"

He said that as a general rule, players do need to be marketed, but he said the parents tend to be more diligent about getting statistics to coaches, contacting them and providing them with video tapes if requested.

As a rule, Mazzoni said there are four steps to the process of obtaining a college athletic scholarship on your own, or at the very least finding a place to play after high school even if it isn't on scholarship.

■ As early as possible, determine

the type of school (size, academic offerings, location) a student-athlete desires. This can be accomplished by researching schools on the Internet and visiting state schools of varying size and atmosphere. Using those attributes, come up with a list of 10 to 15 schools.

■ Very realistically determine the level of play (NCAA Division I, II, III, NIAA or junior college) for which an athlete's abilities are best suited. Reaching too high will more often than not leave you frustrated and void of opportunities.

■ Let the coaches at the schools you selected know as much about you as possible. Send them a letter of introduction, a resume, press clippings and possibly even a videotape to get onto their recruiting radar

screens.

■ Wait for feedback from the coaches to see what they think and see if anyone is interested in you. Do they think you can play at their level? Do they need someone at your position? How many scholarships or roster spots do they have available?

"In a perfect world, the coaches will follow up and call you," Mazzoni said. "But it is like applying for a job. You can follow up and ask them for an honest opinion. Once you get that feedback, you will know if you should start looking at another school or pursue a particular opportunity more aggressively."

(Mazzoni's book "Athletic Recruiting & Scholarship Guide is \$19.95 and is published by Mazz Marketing, Inc.).



Teikyo Post University baseball coach Wayne Mazzoni, an expert on college sports recruiting, advises athletes and their families against contracting with a recruiting service.