

# ***Enjoyment! Not College Future***

By Dave de Hart

I play soccer because I love the game. I play because I enjoy the competition. I play soccer because I like being part of a team and making new friends. I play for the physical activity. I play soccer because it's ***FUN!*** These and many other great reasons are why kids play youth soccer and these reasons are some of the true values of playing youth sports.

Unfortunately, sometimes these values seem to be forgotten and are taking a back seat to the misguided concept and pressure that our kids are playing soccer for that mystic college athletic scholarship. I have recently experienced far too many parents and kids concerned about their future higher education being tied to their performance on the youth soccer field.

Let me remind everyone of a few facts and numbers.

- For every ***100*** high school athletes, there is one full athletic scholarship available. This includes football and basketball.
- More than 60 percent of all NCAA athletes receive ***NO*** athletic scholarship aid. This includes Division III, which does not give out athletic aid.
- The average NCAA athlete on scholarship gets, per year, about \$12,000 ***LESS*** than the value of a full scholarship.

Here is one more fact. The best youth soccer player is not going to college nor play college soccer without the institutional required High School GPA and test scores. The true reality is that the time spent in the classroom, doing homework, studying and reading and writing are far more essential to a young athletes' college future than even one minute of soccer training.

In my short time back involved with youth soccer after 13 years of college coaching, I have been shocked by the distress and concern over college soccer. Way too many parents and players are concerned that coaches' decisions in regards to training, positioning and playing time or whether or not a particular match is won or lost are critical to "my son or daughter getting a college scholarship." This just isn't the case.

The fact is that college coaches attend very few youth or high school soccer matches. The budget dollars and time are just not available. Because of these restraints coaches rely on contact from the student-athlete, recommendations and tryouts. They have little concern as to what position (save goalkeeper) a child plays, but are more concerned with "can this kid just play". We'll worry about *where* later. Regarding wins and losses, what possible concern is that of a college coach? Coaches are there to watch individual players. They rarely see an entire match and almost never could tell you what the score is or was.

Here are some realities and guarantees. ***All college coaches will ask about a prospects high school grades and test scores.*** It is the players' responsibility to contact, or respond to college coaches. It is also their responsibility to play well, at all times, not just for college coaches. ***And, far more young athletes will receive academic scholarships than will receive athletic scholarships.***

Creating the opportunity to go college is hard work and is no one's responsibility but yours. Take accountability for this outstanding task and do the work to reach your goals. Understand that playing soccer in college is a bonus and don't lose the true value of youth athletics. Play because you simply love to, not because you have too. Your college future is not depending on it.

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