

12 recruiting red flags, according to college coaches across the country

By Doug Samuels - March 14, 2017

Recruiting is an ultra-competitive deal among coaches to find the best players, with high character, good grades and test scores, that also “fit” the culture of their team, their roster, and campus.

As recruiting continues to evolve, coaches and staffs have developed a keen sense toward behaviors and other things that serve as red flags during the recruiting process that relate to whether a student-athlete is a good fit for your program or not. Those red flags vary greatly from staff to staff, and coach to coach, but there are a number of red flags that are pretty consistent across the board.

Now a red flag doesn't necessarily mean that a coach stops recruiting a kid (even though that's very possible in a lot of these cases), but it is a cause for concern and provides a reason to tap the brakes a bit and investigate further.

I reached out to a number of college coaches the past few days, from the small college level up coaches at the Power Five level, to talk about their biggest recruiting red flags.

Here's what they shared:

1 – Prospects who have middle-men / trainers / handlers that want to be involved in the decisions of the recruiting process with the kid

Coaches at every level of football shared this concern, and it's clearly becoming a bigger and bigger trend. Having to deal with a middle-man of some form doesn't allow the coaches to get to know the prospect like they need to, and a lot of times that middle-man is trying to vicariously through the prospect and feeds off the attention and it's a relationship that will continue through their days on campus and something coaches will have to continue to deal with the next 4-5 years.

2 – Prospects that treat their parents, their family, or women poorly

This is one that I've heard a number of times over the past few years. The type of kid that is going to disrespect their parents or family is going to have a really hard time following the rules that the team has in place, and if he can't respect the people who gave birth to him, what makes you think he's going to respect the coaches and others on campus?

“I stopped recruiting a kid who was disrespectful to his mom. Can't respect your family, won't respect the team.” – FBS coach

3 – Prospects that don't have their priorities straight

A number of coaches shared how some recruits are more concerned with the brand of their uniform, or how they look and how good the facilities are way more than they are about whether the school carries their major, or their options after graduating. This also stretches to Division III commits who asked coaches to send them a National Letter of Intent on the morning

of signing day so that they could put it on their Twitter, SnapChat or Instagram which is becoming increasingly common.

I also think it's worth noting that some coaches take a peek at what kind of accounts prospects follow on social media, so if they're following a ton of Instagram models, or accounts like WorldStar, or 30 second fights, and very few football / coach / college accounts, that can be viewed as a red flag as well.

4 – Prospects that don't love football

Guys that are just lukewarm to the idea of playing college football are going to be shocked by the commitment it takes at the next level. If they don't love it in high school, then college ball, and juggling film study, and class, and homework, and study table, and everything else that comes along with playing at the next level is not for them. Nowadays there are many prospects that like the attention of recruiting more than they love the game itself and everything that comes with it.

Along with football, the prospect should also love and respect the weight room. Guys who skip off season workouts are cheat reps in the weight room aren't the type of guys college coaches want to invest time, and scholarships in.

"When you hear people say that the kid doesn't currently love the weight room, that's a red flag to me." – D-III coach

5 – Prospects with overbearing and over-involved parents

Over the last few years, I've heard this viewpoint more and more as well. Some coaches will flat out drop a prospect for their parents behavior, and for others it will certainly serve as cause for concern moving forward. Either way, it's something that is being evaluated in prospect nowadays, and if all is even except the behavior of the parents, there are a lot of programs that will choose to go the path of the least amount of headaches.

"I have a hard time with parents who want to play agents on visits. I'm aware it's not the kids fault, but you worry about that parent for four years." – D-III coach

"The one that drives us nuts is when kids and parents trash their coaches or teammates as to why they may have not been successful, or why they're looking at a school like us. Because they didn't get the opportunity they deserved because they got screwed." D-III coach

6 – Prospects overly concerned with how many other guys are being recruited at their position and how many guys are on the depth chart currently

If a player is worried about this, chances are good he more looking to walk into a situation where he doesn't have to compete that hard for a starting job and is looking for an easier road than having to battle daily for a job.

"Guys that think this way don't understand that competition breeds success." – D-III coach

7 – When coaches can't get in touch with the high school coach to ask about the kid

This is another one that may be out of the prospect's control to a certain degree, but for college coaches, the most important stamp of approval comes from the high school coach who has watched the kid develop over the last several seasons. Urban Meyer made waves when he said it last year, "I don't care what you do at camps. I want to hear your high school coach say 'Take him.'"

8 – When a prospect doesn't fit in with players on campus

I remember as a college coach, I encouraged players to visit as many college campuses as possible because being there with players, and faculty, and other students is the only way to get the gut feeling in the pit of their stomach where they can say to themselves, "Yes, I can see myself being here the next 4-5 years." If a prospect comes to campus and doesn't get along with your current guys for the short time he's on campus, that should be a red flag.

"We immediately talk to our host players and ask how the players fit in and will they buy into our culture and are they a good fit." – D-II coach

9 – When the prospect is unprepared

A number of college coaches told me that when a player is struggling to follow simple directions that have been laid out to fill out an application online, or to register for the ACT, SAT, or the NCAA Clearinghouse, that's a sign of things to come.

"The recruiting process is so competitive, and so many good players are out there that the players, parents, coaches, and school administration need to be prepared." – D-II coach

"A kid that drags his feet on setting a visit date, and he lives just an hour away." – D-III coach

"We drop kids that don't follow through with paperwork quickly. Kid's that can't 'figure it out.'" – D-III coach

10 – Kids that want to talk scholarship right off the bat

This is another one I heard from coaches at every level, from Division III all the way up to Power Five. If they're wondering in the first conversation, or early on in the process what coaches are coming to the table with money wise, chances are pretty good they're not in it for the love of the game, and they clearly don't understand, or care about, the recruiting process and how evaluations work.

"If he doesn't have an offer from you and when you hit him up to get to know him and talk he asks in the first 5 minutes if you want to offer him." – FBS coach

11 – How they act, and treat others on their recruiting visit to campus

How prospects interact with players and coaches is important, but a few coaches shared that how they interact with faculty, staff, secretaries, tour guides, and the lunch ladies was just as important to them.

"Had a kid we were interested in. He came in on a visit, made a mess in the cafeteria, didn't bus his plates or tray, and that was the last straw for us." – D-III coach

12 – Indecisive prospects

Prospects that send mixed signals can lead to red flags for coaches in a variety of ways.

“A kid that is ‘interested’ but won’t drive to see your campus or facilities, but he’s visited five other schools in your conference that are equally as far for him.” – FBS coach

“Have a kid that can’t settle on a date to visit. Lives an hour away. Told him our dates...kept telling me he’d visit on dates we weren’t doing visits.” D-III coach

High school coaches, and parents should be sure to share this with their players, because it’s all coming straight from the mouths of college coaches.

In order to play college football, and be successful at the next level, prospects have to understand that they are constantly being evaluated because college coaches are considering investing their time away from family on them, and some programs are considering offering scholarship money on top of that as well. They want to invest their time, money, and effort on kids that deserve that opportunity, not the guys who are going to squander it away.

Coaches also shared the following red flags worth sharing: *“Kids that have never had to compete for a starting job,” “prospect who calls you by your first name,” “prospects that comes to campus smelling like marijuana,” “when he only brings his girlfriend on his recruiting visit,” and “a kid that has transferred multiple times.”*