
A View of the Inadequacies Present in the Enlisting Process of Lacrosse

More NCAA Regulation: Economic Inefficiencies in Lacrosse Recruiting

Division I College athletes have amazing athletic careers to play at the level they are today. They are among the best in the country at their respective sports. But the journeys that they have gone through to get to where they are may vary differently depending on what sport they play. The recruiting process that is a yearly phenomenon is not without significant criticism from all sides. An interesting aspect of this phenomenon is that it varies immensely sport by sport, and the results of this lack of uniformity can have significant impact on the students, who the process affects in terms of academics, how they advance as a player, and the pressure to succeed they experience at different points in their high school careers. Two sports that operate on almost polar ends of the spectrum are lacrosse and football. In lacrosse, there are fewer rules that coaches must adhere to in recruiting. Football has significantly more stringent rules for communication between coaches and recruits, and the result of this difference creates a much more economically efficient recruiting system than lacrosse, with its weaker rules. This being said, the NCAA has the control over this system, and would be best off increasing the rules for lacrosse and all other sports to make recruiting a better process for all parties involved.

Though college lacrosse and college football are dissimilar in terms of revenues, attendance, and many other popularity factors, they are at their core a collegiate sport governed by NCAA rules. Both have similar goals for national success and making a name for the university. Success in these areas will allow them to build their legacies and to increase their already substantial salaries. Recruiting is an essential step in building and sustaining a successful college athletics program. As stated in Magnusen, Mondello, Kim and Ferris, successful recruiting over a period of time, *ceteris paribus*, can lead to a sustained competitive advantage over other programs (688). For this reason, it is essential that college coaches maximize their use of the scholarships and the time that they spend on recruiting that they have in order that they bring in the best recruiting class possible.

Recruiting objectives are the same for football, lacrosse, and any other college sport. But the processes for selecting the best recruits are very different for football and lacrosse. In football, most players normally wait until at least after their junior year to commit to schools or sign National Letters of Intent. But often the best players wait until the end of the recruiting process, National Signing Day, to commit to a school. This delay in selecting a school can signal their

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

[GET HELP](#)

talent and allow them to see if they can be offered more scholarships or better offers (Bricker & Hanson, 972-981). In lacrosse, the process operates in almost the polar opposite manner. Instead of waiting until the last possible day, it has been increasingly common in the past few years for the perceived best young players to make verbal commitments to schools before they have reached their junior year. Sometimes this commitment occurs before they have played a single high school game (Preston).

These processes are clearly very different, which begs the question as to what leads to this significant difference in recruiting cultures. Between the two sports, there are not many clear differences. They are both team sports played with specialized positions, and though they are in different seasons that should not be expected to have significant impact. Lacrosse players do tend to play club lacrosse during the summer, while football players only play full-contact in the high school season, though this difference will be argued not to be something that affects the recruiting process but rather occurs as a result of it. The only discernable difference is the NCAA rules which govern the recruiting process. In football, coaches are not allowed to officially contact players until their senior year. In lacrosse, and almost every other sport besides basketball, the rules are much looser. Coaches are allowed far more contact with the players before their senior year, given it is initiated by the player (NCAA Recruiting Chart). The NCAA fails to publicize why, though it can be speculated that it has to do with money. Enforcing a stricter set of rules is more costly for the NCAA and they may not want to spend this money on a non-revenue generating sport.

As with any type of recruitment process, the Division 1 NCAA Lacrosse path is not without significant information asymmetries. An information asymmetry is where one side has more information about something than the other. These asymmetries can benefit some while harm others. They tend to benefit the less skilled players who are able to fool the recruiters and are harmful to those who are skilled who may struggle to show the recruiters their skill. These asymmetries are notable in the recruiting process where coaches and recruiters are unable to tell the true skill and potential of possible recruits. The importance of successful recruiting is very clear, and as a result of this, coaches must be willing to exert significant amounts of time and money to finding and acquiring the best recruits available.

The recruiting process for college athletes can often be modeled as a signaling game. The player has insider information that the college teams do not have. There are the “good types” who are among the most talented and hardworking in their graduating year, making them destined for success, and there are also the “bad types” who are not among the best, but may try to achieve the statistics and make themselves appear as among the best in order that they receive the benefit of a college education for full or partial scholarship. Sports recruiting is an imperfect version of signaling, however, as no player or coach can be positive that they will be successful, due to injuries, team clashes, loss of desire, or many other factors. This is only

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

GET HELP

furthered when the players being recruited so far removed from when they will actually begin playing their college sport. These different processes go about economic signaling in different ways, indirectly as a result of the different natures of the revenues that the sports create at the collegiate level (The Equity in Athletics...).

The way that players signal is partially as a result of when they want to be recruited if they consider themselves a top recruit. The top football recruits will wait until the last day that they can to maximize the number of scholarship offers they receive and to ensure that they know all they can about the school, as well as other players that may be attending in their class. They may wait to build media attention around their decision to attend a certain school to try to influence their playing time and their future professional prospects. The player's waiting to accept any offers they may have signals their ability as they are willing to allow coaches to look further into their talents. The "bad types" would be afraid they will not stand up to this extra scrutiny, and as time goes on, they will be willing to accept any offers they may have rather than one of a top school (Bricker & Hanson 972-981).

In lacrosse, the process is very different. The weak communication rules lead to an arms race where, because the coaches have access to the players at such a young age, they continue to try to lure greatest talent to their teams with scholarship offers at increasingly young ages. It is not optimal for these young, immature players having to make a life decision before they can even drive and buy themselves an ice cream, but is also bad for the coaches and teams as they are taking quite the gamble on players that far from when they will be actually playing for the college team. John's Hopkins coach Dave Petramala seems to say it best:

"Something needs to change. And I will tell you we are as big a culprit of it as anybody, In order to remain relevant and successful at the elite level of Division I lacrosse, we've had to do the things we need to do to be successful and get those players. But at some point, we need to step back and say this is not what's best for these kids. This is not what's best for our program, deciding what a ninth or 10th-grader is going to be like seven or eight years from now when he's a senior in college." (Preston).

While even the coaches do not want to be recruiting in the way that they currently recruit, it is indication that the current system is flawed. It is a problem that leads to inefficiencies and less than optimal outcomes for all parties involved (Detweiler).

To model where the problem is and where it can be solved, an extensive form game of perfect information has been created. See Appendix a for the diagram of game, along with necessary notations and definitions.

This game has many variables and not many concrete numbers. This is because for a single

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

GET HELP

specific player, it is impossible to tell whether they will be successful in their career as a college player or not. There is another variable, risk, which is different for each player depending on the time left and their characteristics as a player. When the NCAA does allow the recruiting, the better team still normally has the first chance at top prospects. Though a team realizes that working on getting a commitment from a young player is more risky, they will do so if they believe that the risk is worth the possible probability that they will end up a successful college player. This can be found via backwards induction, assuming the lesser team (UMBC) believes that getting a commitment from a young player is worth the risk. They would do so assuming they would otherwise get the player who is considered the lower player.

The model explains why under the current set of rules this early recruiting happens. The effect that this has on players is significant, and the costs incurred to be a part of this recruiting model, both quantifiable and unquantifiable are significant. Because this is the case, players must play and market themselves in such a way that they create the strongest signals as to their talent early on and before the schools have exhausted scholarships and moved on to the next, younger recruiting class.

What can be found through this game is that the optimal choice that allows the teams to maximize their payoff by minimizing risk is for the NCAA to enact rules governing the contact and commitments of prospective players. This would be more beneficial to all parties as they are allowed to have a greater amount of knowledge about recruits before offering them a scholarship or a spot on the team. The only party that may ever benefit from this current model is the lesser schools who may see players fall through the cracks or benefit from the schools who do not want to extend offers to players that early and incur that much risk.

The football recruiting model is pretty simple, especially at a young age. All a player is expected to do is put up quantifiable numbers, both on and off the field that can be databased and collected for later purposes (gobigrecruiting.com). Lacrosse coaches may seek out the players, but expect them to want to be sought out and put forth significant effort to make sure that is so. Because most college lacrosse and high school lacrosse seasons coincide, it is often the summers that prove crucial for potential athletes. Because of the lack of resources such as rivals.com that the coaches have access to, they rely on others to perform costly initial analyses of players. Camps such as Jake Reed's Nike Blue Chip and Showtime Lacrosse National Recruiting Spotlight. These camps are exclusive invite-only camps where camp administrators try to determine the best players in the country to assemble alongside top college coaches for scrimmages and drills. Admission to these camps along with travel and hotels can easily exceed \$1000 (Feil). But it doesn't stop there. Many players need highlight videos to gain admission to these camps, and professionally made videos can run easily into the hundreds, much more likely to catch the attention of those they need to from coaches and the camp employees. Football players too must make videos, but they are not needed until a little later in high school

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

GET HELP

when coaches will really be looking for players (NCSAsports.org).

In addition to prospect camps, the top lacrosse players should play on summer club teams, especially when they play their high-school in non-hotbed areas. These are local all-star teams that travel across the region and across the nation to play in tournaments against strong competition. These are tournaments where coaches get the opportunity to see the players play with teams they are more familiar with and may as a result have a better sense of their true talents as a player. These club teams are extremely time-consuming as well as costly: they can easily exceed \$5,000 for the summer between travel, dues, equipment, and coaching (Feil). These teams can give coaches a better idea of the talent of the player, but still is somewhat far off from. For all of these signals, committed players must continue to play in the offseason at this level to show the coaches who they have committed to that they are maintaining the skills necessary for success at the next level. These are a lot of things that lacrosse hopefuls must do to impress college coaches, but it is still very different than football recruiting (So... You Want...).

Football recruits do not have offseason contact football, but still must signal their skill to coaches. They do have the benefit of not having to do as much to impress coaches early in their high school career rather than publish accredited objective athletic statistics such as 40 yard dash time, vertical jump height, 20 yard shuffle time, and power throw distance. Websites such as rivals.com will compile these statistics and provide them for coaches as well as dedicated fans (Bricker & Hanson 975). As they get older they should upload highlight videos, similar to lacrosse players, yet they save money in the years when they are not necessary for football players. Instead of playing for club teams and camps over the summer, coaches often watch their high school games as they come of age. This is a much more efficient method as the players can be seen playing in the setting they are most familiar with, with their own school-mates and coaches they know well. It is very possible for a football player with the necessary talents to acquire a scholarship spending little to no money, and lacrosse players are far from having that opportunity. It is to an extent fuelled by the revenues generated by the sports, but the altering of communication rules by the NCAA could reverse the process and save the players time, money, and stress as young high school athletes (gobigre recruiting.com).

Because of the looser rules in recruiting for lacrosse, the coaches are able to learn more about recruits at a younger age, and are also able to act on this earlier by securing a verbal commitment. Football coaches do not have direct access to the players until late in their high school careers, and as a result of that, the action of the recruiting for top players does not happen until later in high school. Though the football coaches are not allowed to contact players until they are seniors, coaches have often been following the players throughout their high school careers. Being able to follow a player and track their progress as they adapt to a team and later establish themselves as a leader can give a much greater insight into the player and their character, all of which are important in predicting their success at the next level.

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

GET HELP

Lacrosse coaches who are looking to get the upper hand in recruiting will look at players at a young age, and if they are believed to be worthy, they may be offered the opportunity to engage in a verbal commitment for a scholarship through conversations with the player's parents. They do so to prevent other coaches from having a crack at the player and so that they don't miss out. The players feel undue pressure to accept these offers if they are from a reputable school because these offers can come and go at the blink of an eye (Corwin). Players must wrestle with going to the college that may be best academically or professionally with those that offer them scholarships. Sometimes the looming scholarship entices them to accept before they may have the opportunity to be offered a scholarship at the school they may truly want to go to, and that may be best for their future. It is economically inefficient, but the schools prey on the fear that a scholarship may be gone to get players to accept (Dumond, Lynch, & Platania 67-72).

When a coach offers a recruit a position at such a young age, the coach is engaging in a risky behavior. The player has a long time to grow and develop both as a player and as a person. It can be difficult to predict what kind of person and player they will be when you do so four years in advance. Beyond the information asymmetries that exist in the process in general, this element of risk for injury creates a substantial inefficiency. When a scholarship is offered, even if it is a verbal commitment, it is rarely retracted because of the negative publicity it would create. This holds true in the case of injuries as well. Anytime the value of the limited number of scholarships are not used optimally, it creates an inefficiency (Corwin).

This process of early recruiting may or may not be good economically for the players, as it may benefit some who may not deserve a scholarship who do get one and may hurt the players who do deserve a scholarship by senior year but are shut out of top institutions who may have already given away all scholarships. What the current process does though is put undue pressure on young players to perform well at the few events that coaches will be able to see them at before scholarships are offered. They are forced to try to determine what type of college they want to attend when they have barely experienced high school life.

The current system is broken. When coaches are allowed to have such access to players at young ages, the coaches are forced to engage in the process based on their beliefs that the reward is worth the risk. For players, the situation is not ideal, but the opportunity for a college scholarship, with a worth sometimes in excess of \$200,000, is too much to pass up, even if they may be far from figuring out their lives and what they may want to do with their lives post-lacrosse and if it is not their ideal school. To make the system economically better for all, the NCAA needs to step in and mandate the sport of lacrosse in a similar way that football is.

Limiting the access that coaches have to players would ensure that the commitments in lacrosse happen towards the end of their high school careers rather than before they have even started. The coaches of the top schools will still have the best product to sell the top players,

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

GET HELP

and will in the end still attract those top players. They will not have to worry about not having scholarships available to star late bloomers such as Tewaaraton-winner Rob Pannell, and will end up with a greater sense of security that the players that they recruited are the players that will be playing for them. This system benefits the players as well. There is no longer the extreme pressure to perform at such a young age, when others may be more mentally or physically mature than you. Players will be able to have a greater sense of self when deciding on a school as they are more likely to know what interests them as a junior or senior in high school rather than as a freshman.

The NCAA is a multi-billion dollar economic machine that aims for student athlete success “on the field, in the classroom and in life” (NCAA.com). The communication rules that the NCAA currently enforces in recruiting for sports other than basketball and football are inefficient and far from optimal for both the student and the member organizations, and are detrimental to the students. This current set of recruiting rules directly contradicts the NCAA’s mission. By strengthening communication requirements to make them on par with the football rules across all NCAA-sanctioned DI sports, the NCAA can more accurately carry out their mission and work more to serve the livelihood of the students and member schools.

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

[GET HELP](#)