

The recruitment process for any player can be brutal, exhausting, and at times, hopeless. You do anything and everything to get your name out there to college coaches, whether it's showcases or profiles on sites or filling out questionnaires on a team's website. For me, I did all of the above. I was in contact with coaches I liked but the school didn't fit, coaches I didn't like but the program had high ranking, and there was a school who had a fantastic coach and the school included everything I needed. What athletes need to understand is that what division you compete in doesn't define your value or skillset. I've seen some of the best pitchers go to JUCO schools, and some of the not so best ones, walk on to Division I fields. I made the choice of going to a Division III school in Maine. It had everything I wanted; a small campus, access to batting cages and a weight room, a supportive coach, and a family-like team. Now that I have talked about the great school I committed to, I'll tell you something about a school that was interested in me, but not developing me as a player.

It should be known that just because you start playing college softball, doesn't mean you're done developing as a player. You can still learn more, becoming stronger, adjust to different positions you are put in. For example, a college coach came to one of my tournaments and told me that I should give up trying to work on becoming a slapper, and just focus on tuning up my right side hitting. The reason behind me learning how to slap was that I'm already a small ball player, any opportunity I have to bunt, or push bunt I'll take it. I'm on the quicker side of running so I love to use that to my advantage. The coach also told me I wouldn't have a strong enough arm to play shortstop (my primary) so he would more than likely put me at second base. Again I am the kind of player that has extreme gratitude for playing time in general, which explains the fact that I am a utility. But when a coach tells you flat out you aren't strong enough to play the position you believe you have the most success at, it's a little heartbreaking and kind of a turn off. This school that the coach is from, is a great program, very known for getting his players to the Division I level. (It's a JUCO). Why tell a player you can't play them there, when you could say that you are willing to work with them so they get stronger so they can play that position.

This little conversation with this coach put me down a little, I started to doubt myself until another coach started coming into contact with me. Wonderful coach, very honest but at the same time wanted to work and develop me as a catcher. Don't get me wrong, I don't mind catching, it's just definitely one of my weaker positions. I was willing to work on it, and my dad (travel ball coach) was also willing to help. The campus was great with fantastic facilities, but it was a little out of our price range for tuition. It also didn't feel like a school I would click with. I kept in contact with her and several other coaches when I realized I had received a message from UMPI on one of my recruitment sites. Without hesitation I texted my future coach regarding the program. As I talked with her I learned more about the environment on the team and campus, and also realized that she had the coaching philosophy I was looking for. I will admit I didn't realize how far away the school was from home, but the distance didn't really matter. My heart was set on going to this school. It was a no brainer when Coach asked if I'd like to commit. It was a quick and eager yes. I've been here for a little over 3 months now, and I can say for certainty I don't regret my decision.

So my advice to players in the recruitment process is be patient, don't look at the top schools in a state or the country, look at the schools that will fit like puzzle pieces. Find a coach that's willing to work with you develop you. My advice to coaches who are helping players become recruited, just encourage them, don't let them lose hope. There are schools out there who will be the perfect match. As for college coaches, just know you are still a coach, your job is to coach them and encourage them to accomplish the skills and goals they set for themselves. Don't tell them what they can't do, but tell them what they could do.