

COLLEGE COACH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The coach wants me to make an "official visit." From what I understand the NCAA only allows 3 official visits per prospective athlete. I do not want my visit to count as an official visit. What constitutes an official visit, and how do I avoid making mine one? If I stay with a student/soccer player, does it become an official visit? How do I make this apparent to the coach?

Very good question and one that many recruits would never think about. You are right on the ball with this, you are allowed three official visits, but you can make as many un-official visits as you would like. But, one thing about an **official** visit is they are basically taking care of almost everything for you. I don't know for sure, but I want to say they would pay for meals, lodging, etc. on an official visit. If it is an **un-official** visit, I'm pretty sure they can't pay for meals, lodging, or anything else... So it would be on you and your family as for your meals, where you were to stay the night, etc. As for you staying with a player, I think that is a great idea, but once again, I'm not for sure on how that would work with an official visit vs. an un-official on what they can let you do with that... I'm sure they are on top of all those rules, so just ask... But asking them if you can make it an un-official is fine and I doubt it would offend them. Like I said, it is a lot less paper work for them. I like your idea best though, spend as much time there and with players you will be playing with as possible. And as far as how you make this apparent to the coach, just ask him. Just say, would it be okay if my visit is un-official and me and my parents (or just you – however you are planning on going up) just make the trip without it being an official visit. I doubt they will think twice... And then that way if something is not good or what you are looking for you still have three official visits left... That is actually a good idea... Then you would just have to ask if you can still spend the night with a few players or how that works. I'm not for sure on that.

What are things that I should specifically be looking for during my 2-day visit (i.e. class size, curriculum, extracurricular, etc.)? Can I look into certain clubs, educational programs, etc. during my visit, or would it be the same to simply research it online? What should I know about the soccer program and academics of the college before I make my visit?

One thing I would stress on your visit is to keep eyes and ears open at all times... I wouldn't worry as much about trying to get around to every club/program/etc. during your visit as much as you spend a lot of time listening and watching the people taking you around and especially just keep an eye on everything with the coach and players... This is when you will get a GOOD or BAD vibe with the players and coaches. When you are with the coaches on campus listen to how they talk about everything. See what is important to them. Be sure to do research on the roster. Are they successful? How many FR, SO, JR, SR? Who gets playing time?... But see if you can get a vibe of how the coaches respect their players and vice versa. You don't want your coach taking you around saying something about how they can't stand player A and player B and that they will be glad when they are gone. Because you have to remember, in a year or two that could be you they are talking about. So keep an eye on how the respect factor works with coaches towards players and players towards their coaches.

Don't feel like you have to know everything about the school and soccer program before you go. This is your time to ask questions and really learn about things while on campus. Ask them about their in-season, off-season and winters and summers and just see what their routines are like. Make them be specific to really let you know what you are getting into – good or bad – about what you will be doing each month of the school year – and during the summer – so you know this is everything you are wanting. The last thing you want to do is find out once you get

there that there is no spring workouts or winter conditioning and that is something you were really wanting.... Or the other way around. Maybe they wake up at 5:30 a.m. each morning from December through April and that is something you don't want either. When recruits don't ask these questions is when they get to a place, hate it and then transfer back home or to another school they were looking at. I have known people who have gone to 4-5 schools in 4-5 years.

Really take time with the players and **ask them a ton of questions**. Everything from how do you like the coach now? How was the coach when he was recruiting you? How was your playing time from what you thought it was going to be? Ask them which coach coaches what positions or how much the head coach is involved in the everyday process and how much the assistant coach does... Ask them how many underclassmen are at YOUR position... The coach might tell you one thing and then you can check it against what the players tell you. The players don't have any reason to lie about anything. If you are a good player they are going to want you to join them... But if the coach tells you there are only 2 midfielders (or whatever position) returning and you ask Tommy Smith who is a sophomore going to be a junior next year and he tells you, oh man, we are loaded at that position with six guys coming back... You then need to ask the coach, "Hey, by the way, I talked to a couple of the players (I wouldn't tell him who – don't put that player in a tough spot with the coach) and they said you guys have six midfielders returning?... Just see what his explanation is to why the numbers were different from what he told you. The last thing you need is to make a commitment to a program that doesn't have plans for you.

The academics – in my eyes – is an easier deal to learn and find out about. They are going to treat you just like any of their other students on campus. You can dig in and find out all that you need to know about the academics at any time during the recruiting process. You don't need to go through any of the coaches, or anything else if you don't want to. They might have a person that deals with academics for their specific program (soccer) but you might also see if that athletics academic person can get you in touch with some professors or advisors on campus as well... You might check and see if there is an athletic person who can get you connected with some of the academic people so you have an easier way to communicate and less hoops to jump through. But actually speaking to academic people and people with clubs and on-campus activities that isn't as necessary as you getting that time and one-on-one attention with the coaches and players on your brief visit to campus.

But don't get me wrong, you need to make sure and speak to the right people and ask the appropriate questions about academics just like you do with athletics. But a lot of that can be done over the phone as well, and **looked up on the Internet** where you can't exactly get a good feel for a teammate over the phone. What I'm trying to say is **this two-day window is essential for you making a soccer decision about coaches, facilities, teammates, etc.** **Even seeing the dorms, campus, those kinds of things are what this visit is most important about.** It would have to work just right for you to be able to see and meet with people in your academic field during your brief visit. And also remember, these coaches give tours and talk about the academic side of things each time they have a recruit on campus. So they will be answering a ton of questions before you can ask them because they are used to answering what recruits want to know... Also, don't be afraid to ask some of the players what seems to be different from what they thought when they were coming out of high school... You have to remember, all of those players were in your shoes at one time or another. And all of them were thinking and wondering the same thing you were... Ask them, what is one bit of advice you would give me? See what they say... It never hurts to ask questions... This is a huge decision...

As my first college coach once told me... This is one of the three biggest decisions you will ever make in your lifetime... he was right... Here is what he told me:

The three biggest decisions you will make in your lifetime:

1. Where you will go to school.
2. Who you will marry.
3. What you are going to do for a living.

He was exactly right... Three of the biggest decisions you will ever make, and here is #1 for you.

Now about the house visit:

How do I, and my parents, bring up the idea of scholarship money during the house visit and how should we verbally approach the coach about it? What cues should I be looking for, and what questions should I be asking to get more money out of him? At what point does a scholarship offer become set in stone? I am currently communicating with just the assistant coach because the head coach isn't technologically inclined, so how serious can I take a scholarship offer from just the assistant head coach if he is the only one making the house visit? Should I ask to see if the head coach can come down, or leave that up to their discretion?

Good inquires about the house visit. First of all, this is a great situation for you. **NO ONE IN AMERICA schedules a house visit unless they are coming to offer you a scholarship.** If you told me that a coach from any school came and made a house visit and left without offering you a scholarship I WOULD BE SHOCKED. That is your time to sit back and basically let the coach make his sales pitch to you. That is what he is coming to do, sell you on their soccer. You sit back and just keep in your mind the other schools you are thinking about, the other schools that have offered you scholarship money, the other school's you have interest in you and your opportunities to play at those schools... But basically you need to be prepared for him to make a presentation to you as to why YOU should attend and play soccer at his school. So don't even worry about how or when you or your parents should ask about scholarship money. They will talk about that during their presentation. Another thing and this is more from the coach's side of things. **Discuss any and all questions that you and your mom and dad have before hand, and YOU MAKE SURE and ask these questions when the coach is there.** No coach wants mom or dad asking the questions for their son or daughter because they aren't there recruiting mom and dad; they are recruiting a young man or woman. They want to know that you can be an adult and come to them with questions down the road, so just start now with YOU asking questions on the house visit. If your mom or dad start asking questions they are going to be thinking, are these going to be problem parents and NO COLLEGE COACH deals with parents... period. If you aren't getting to play and your mom and dad are calling your college coach you are going to be the one who suffers. So just some friendly advice, you and your parents talk about what questions YOU ALL HAVE and then you can present them to the coach when he comes to visit. This will make you look very, very mature and he will appreciate it. Every coach knows the parents play a role, but the student-athlete needs to play the leading role and the parents need to be far in the distance.

I wouldn't expect to be trying to get more money out of them. If they have done their homework – have seen you play, talked to your coaches, and coaches who have seen you play that they trust – they know how badly they want you in their program and they also know the depth/lack of depth they have at your position.

But back to what I was saying. If they have done their homework they know in their heads that you are worth coming into their program. If they offer a certain percentage, I'm guessing that is going to be their offer. Now, things can get interesting. I don't know what other offers you have or what other programs you are interested in. So if you have other schools you are interested in and you don't just jump at their offer, they might tell you that offer is on the table for two weeks, one month, two months or until they tell you otherwise. But once they give you a time frame and you go past that time frame that offer can be taken away. So be careful that you don't play hardball and then end up turning them away when that is the school you really want to go to but you were just trying to get a little more money out of them. Usually an offer will be fair and the school and player have a good understanding of how the scholarship offer works. Usually a coach will make the offer, tell the recruit he wants them to think about it, talk it over with their parents and then let them know in a certain amount of time or as soon as they know either way.

The more they want you the more time they will give you. If they tell you they need an answer back in two days, they are probably looking at it as: *if we get him great, if not, we will move on to the next guy in line...* If they tell you just take your time and think about it and get back to them with whatever questions you have and that there is no immediate time frame, then they want you pretty bad.

It is also good you are getting this started now. Because if this was May, they wouldn't let you sit there and think too long about it. They would need to know quick as they would then need to go find someone else quick if you said you weren't interested. But to answer your question about when does a scholarship become set in stone... It becomes set in stone once he makes the offer, but can be taken off the table as quickly as they give you a time frame they need an answer by.

Don't be concerned with communicating only with the assistant coach. Many, many, many programs – by far the majority of collegiate sports – there are “recruiting coordinators” who are hired to sign players and to help the head coach. Now, a head coach might have a final say if he has seen the two players that the school only has one scholarship for, but primarily the top assistant coach is the main recruiting person. Now, that doesn't mean you shouldn't get to know and spend time with the head coach. I'm guessing the recruiting coordinator – assistant coach – will make the house visit and then you will spend A LOT of time with the head coach on your visit. That is usually when the head coach seals the deal with the recruit, on the visit. Now, if the assistant coach is doing all of the work during the recruiting process, the home visit and then you make the visit to campus and still don't see the head coach, then there is a problem somewhere... because then what can happen is the assistant coach who is doing ALL OF THE WORK on recruiting, coaching, etc., leaves for another job (higher level assistant job or for a head coaching position) you signed a letter of intent to play for that program, not that assistant coach. So that is why it isn't a big deal if the assistant coach does a lot of the leg work while recruiting you, but you need to have a good feel, good relationship with the head coach as well. That is essential when it is all said and done.

But don't worry if just the assistant coach makes the visit, and yes, take that offer as if the head coach was the one making it to you. That is a BIG part of that assistant coaches job is

recruiting... And don't think that he hasn't given the head coach every last detail about you as they made the decision together on making the amount of scholarship offer to you. So just because he isn't sitting in your living room don't feel that the head coach isn't directly involved, because he is. As soon as that assistant leaves your house he will be making a phone call to the head coach letting him know how it all went and what his feelings are from the visit.

How should I discuss academic scholarships? Is that something that I should or should not discuss with the soccer coach? What is the best source for finding this information out?

DEFINITELY address the academic scholarship situation with the coach. This is a golden opportunity for them if they can find a student-athlete who is a good player and also will be able to receive academic money which could help get your total scholarship money to a full-ride... Also, don't make a mistake that many recruits will make by looking at athletic money differently than academic money. You have to realize, if you are getting a 100% total scholarship to attend school and have a good opportunity to play on the soccer team it shouldn't matter if 85% of the money is academic and only 15% of the money is from soccer... That doesn't matter... And to be honest, those coaches need to worry about their "PROGRAM" first, and one way of doing that is to get the best players possible and if they can get one and use a lot of scholarship funds for academics, that leaves them more soccer scholarship money to give to other players (who don't qualify academically for scholarship money) to make their team better... Now, I'm not saying for a second that you should be ok with a 35% academic scholarship and nothing from soccer because the coaches are basically saying, well there is 35% there for you...

That would be a good deal if you have NO other schools interested in you and you want to give soccer a try and know that is where you are going anyway... That is when that works just fine. But you have options, and that isn't the case.... What I'm saying, is if you can get almost a full-ride with your academic, then soccer can just top it off or make whatever percentage work to where you don't have to worry about anything, if that is the case. But definitely talk with them about your grades (I'm sure they know already) and how and what academic scholarships are available.

My point is, if your grades/academics can get you a 60% scholarship then it wouldn't make sense for soccer to make an offer over 40%, because they would basically just be leaving academic money on the table. Do you see what I mean? Let me know if you have questions on this one because this is key with how good of a student you are... I didn't have academic options coming out of high school, but if I would have that could have given me a lot more money and less to pay on the bottom line.

Do we prepare a meal for the coach? I understand that I should dress appropriately, but does that mean business casual, nice shirt and jeans, etc.? What sort of activities should we engage in during the house visit? Only discussion?

It would be a good idea to ask the coach how much time he has available on the visit and if he would like to eat dinner. This can go either way to be honest. If a coach is squeezing in the visit and can just get there for an hour, it is much more important to just sit and talk and offer something to drink... If he says I have all the time in the world, dinner would be a nice touch and a chance to have some general conversation to help break the ice once he arrives and then you guys can talk scholarship and specifics after dinner. During dinner see if you can just talk more about how your season went, how the season went, maybe talk about what plans you and your family have for the Holiday's and ask the coach about his family or maybe where he is from, or

whatever... Save the business talk for when you guys can sit down and he can really lay out his presentation and mom and dad aren't reaching in front of the coach for the mashed potatoes. □

Definitely don't get more dressed up than the coach... You don't want him to feel under dressed. I would definitely go with a nice collar shirt with a nice pair of jeans and some dress shoes... No holes in the jeans, by the way.

That makes you look good and it doesn't make you too over dressed. The last thing you want is the coach walking in with a wind-suit on and feeling like he went to the White House and needs to go pick up a sports coat before dinner... That way if you have on a nice shirt and jeans and he does walk in with a wind-suit he won't feel out of place... And then on your visit, I would just ask the coach what would be best for you to wear. I would bet the same type of outfit would be perfect... But I also don't want to tell you that and then you go there and all of their recruits are expected to wear khaki pants or something like that. He will know what their typical recruit wears on a visit.

The only other thing I can tell you – and this is coming from someone who used to do this as a coach – as soon as you get an offer that you know you are not interested in, please do all involved a favor and just make the call to the coach that offered you the scholarship and let them know it is just not the right fit for you. That way they can move on and offer that scholarship to someone else who is interested and both you and them can move forward... The biggest problem coaches have with recruits is making an offer and then the kids just sits on it and never calls back but also never says they aren't interested... because then that scholarship money is tied up until they tell the recruit they only have XX more days to consider... So that is my #1 bit of advice for once an offer is made.

Now that doesn't mean once the coach offers you that you tell him YES before he walks out of the door... You should take some time (1-2 weeks if needed), make your visit, ask questions, make sure you and your parents have a good vibe, good feel about everything and then let them know your decision.