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MPS College Recruiting Process

Dear Player and parent,

As you prepare to have your college meetings with MPS staff, I wanted to give you some general hints that will be helpful as you work through the college process. There is a wealth of information out there and we want you to be as prepared as possible so that you can make the right decision for you. We have created a liaison officer position for both the boys and girls program. Peter Bradley will oversee the boys and Mark McDevitt will oversee the girls. Along with your Head Coaches, the liaison officers will help assist players and parents through the entire college process.

1. Academics v Soccer!

It is important for our players to understand that they are making an academic decision. Grades need to be maintained as they are the most vital component in the college selection process. Improving your grades in junior and senior years is an excellent indicator to a college that you are a serious student and someone that they want at their institution for 4 years. Think about what areas you enjoy and start to formulate some idea on what major you would like to study. Look at what colleges offer these majors and investigate what it would take to get into those schools. Always try to have a range of schools that interest you – some reach, some middle ground and some that you feel would be readily attainable.

2. Knowledge is Power!

The PLAYER is accountable for the college process and not the PARENT or COACH. The players in the club who have had the most success and the easiest process in their college selection have been the ones who have been self-motivated and aggressive in staying on top of things. There is a huge amount of information available on colleges and what they offer and players should be researching schools online to be as informed as possible on the colleges they are interested in. Find out as much as you can about a school. Get a feel for local schools at the D1, D2 and D3 level by visiting them – seeing a campus will give you a good frame of reference when you come to make some of your final decisions. Go and watch these teams play in the fall

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and see if you think you can play at their level. I'm sure that a lot of you will already have done this. Speak to people who are currently at the school you are interested in or alumni from there. There may have been past MPS players who went to some of the schools you are interested in who we can connect you with.

3. Variable factors!

Your decision on the college you want to attend is a very personal one and will involve you taking several factors into consideration. These factors may be weighted differently depending on your own personality and preferences. You are about to make an important life decision and it is vital that you give it due diligence. Think about the things that are important to you and make a check list. As you go through the process see what colleges have checks in the right box and these will obviously move up your list. Some of the more general factors are:

- a) **Choice of major** – you do not need to know what you want to major in or even what type of field might interest you, but if you are thinking that you might want to go into nursing, for example, you need to make sure that they have the appropriate pre-professional program for you.
- b) **Grades and test scores needed to get in** – There are many different types of colleges and universities out there and there is surely one for you. As you begin to think about schools consider the grades needed to get in and the types of tests (SAT's, ACT's and SAT II subject tests) that you will need in order to be admitted.
- c) **Size of school** – There are over 3,000 colleges and universities in the US and they come in all sizes. Go and visit a few of different sizes and see what feels best for you.
- d) **Location of school** – urban or rural or suburban- again there is great choice out there.
- e) **Location of school within the US** – do you want to stay in NE or do you want to look further away?
- f) **Financial** – Paying for college is often the largest single expense that a family will undertake. There are very few purely soccer scholarships out there and even the best players in the country rarely get four years of

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tuition, room and board paid for in an athletic scholarship. There are, however, enormous resources for financial aid and the colleges themselves will assist you with that process. There are also many resources of non-soccer financial aid that are available.

g) Soccer Program

4. The Soccer Program!

Soccer is a very important component in your life and there are several factors that you will need to take into consideration when you are looking at schools from a soccer perspective. Try to avoid any preconceived notion of playing at a certain level (some players will say I have to play D1 but understand that there is a huge range of levels at the D1 level and there are some D2 and D3's who would beat some D1's).

Please remember that being a good soccer player alone will not guarantee you admission to a college. It is the admissions office who admits students to the college – not the soccer coach. The soccer coach may have the ability to advocate or “tip” for you in the admissions process but only if the player is strong enough academically.

Another litmus test that our student-athletes should use is something I have heard called the “broken leg test”. Basically think of the worst case scenario of picking up a major injury that would prevent you from being able to play soccer, and then decide if the college is still the right one for you.

Try to pick the right fit for you. The major factors will be:

- a) The coaching staff – remember that head coaches can change so try not to make this the most important factor.
- b) Strength of team – you need to look closely at the make-up of the team and see where they need help or where they will be graduating players. This will help you know what the coach will be looking for when it comes to your recruiting class.
- c) Strength of schedule – look at the conference they will be playing in. See the level of competition you are likely to face and ascertain if that is going to be challenge enough for you.
- d) Soccer program – find out what the training looks like year round and not just in the fall season. What does the winter and spring season look like?

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Do they have a GK coach? What level of support do they have from other groups – SAQ, strength and conditioning.

- e) Playing time – you need to define for yourself what you expect as playing time before you make your final decision. How would you cope with not getting a lot of playing time as a freshman if you decide to go to a top D1? Does being in a top level training environment mean more to you than playing time initially?
- f) Soccer v Academics – are you prepared for the soccer commitment v academic commitment if you go to a top school? The best soccer programs, whether they are D1, D2 or D3 will demand commitment. Being able to balance your studies and your academics is obviously a vital part of your future success at college. Soccer can be a fantastic release from your workload and will also be your major social outlet. You need to know what to expect before you make your final decision.

5. How to contact a college coach?

I have found over the years that this tends to be the most difficult and daunting task for players and it really doesn't have to be. Players become very timid about taking this responsibility on and as a result they limit their options. Players must accept total responsibility for this part of the process from start to finish. You are selling yourself and you must remember that you are in competition with players from all over the country. You must be SMART, AGGRESSIVE and PERSISTENT in your approach.

You are really looking to establish 2 things:

- a) Credibility – are you a good enough candidate for that particular college academically and athletically? Coaches will want to know that you are a talented soccer player. Playing in a serious club will automatically give you credence but they will want more. I will discuss player exposure a little later.
- b) Desire – just as important for a college coach is to know that you have a real interest in their program. Your research needs to be thorough, your contact with the coach professional and you need to be persistent. They want to know that you really want to be in their program. They are going to have to work with you for 4 years so your personality is going to matter to them a great deal.

The timeline for contacting colleges is also pretty simple. Start now! You are allowed to contact college coaches whenever you like – you can write an email,

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send them a letter or call them. There are NCAA rules about coaches being able to contact you – effectively they cannot call or meet with a junior off campus until after July 1st. They are allowed to email you. They CAN answer the phone if YOU call them. You can take an unofficial visit at any time to a college campus and you are allowed to meet with the coaching staff if they are there. This is a good way to show your interest particularly in local programs that you can get to easily.

The Introduction:

Remember that you are in competition with other players for your college spot. Make a great first impression. If you are sending a letter or email, make sure that it is accurate, well written and professional. Get your facts right – spelling the coach's last name wrong is a surefire way of seeing your letter go straight in the trash can. Be informed about the program – see how they did last fall. Ask questions and appear knowledgeable and interested. Making a good first impression can go a long way. If you are visiting a coach on campus, make sure that you are doing the talking. If your parent is leading the process, I can GUARANTEE you that the coach will not be as interested in you if you were doing the talking. They are interested in you and not your parents.

If you are calling, be prepared. Write some notes down on paper – it will help you lead the conversation. Sell yourself – let the coach know that you have a personality.

Never ask a coach to call you back – tell them that you will try again if you need to leave a message.

The follow-up:

As part of the initial cover letter, make sure that you include your Graduation year. This is quite often forgotten and is a vital piece of info for college coaches so they know what recruiting class you are in for them. Make sure that your player profile is clean and accurate and up to date. Make sure that the coach knows that you are part of MPS and who your coach is. Make sure that you send the coach an update on your game schedule as soon as it is released. Include the tournaments that you will be attending. Send the coach as much info as you can for these types of things – get them game fields and times. Try to get their cell phone number so that you can inform them of any last minute changes at a tournament (they will be very appreciative of this). Some players worry about too much contact. I would much rather that all MPS players were in too much contact than too little. This will show a coach that you have a very real interest in their program.

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The closure:

As you whittle down your initial list, you will get closer to making the final decision. It is very important for us as a club that you are always very professional in all your dealings with a coach. Remember that there may be another player from the club interested in your college choice at some later stage and I want all college coaches to feel that MPS players are smart, thorough and professional. If you have decided that you are no longer interested in a program, let the coach know. Send a brief, polite email thanking them for all their efforts but let them know that you are no longer considering that school.

If you are having trouble getting a clear answer from a college, be persistent. Always get final closure from a school before moving on. There can be a myriad of reasons why a coach has not gotten back to you. Do not immediately accept that this is a rejection. Always get closure.

If you are thorough in your preparation and make good decisions, you will hopefully have some choices to make at the end of the process. A serious misconception is that the college coaches will come to you. They won't. You need to work hard to ensure that you are on as many college coach radar screens as possible so that you will hopefully create some selection for yourself at the end. You are allowed 5 official visits. This can be the best way for you to be sure that you have made the right college decision as you will get to see the school inside and out.

THE MPS PROCESS:

1. You will be meeting with your U17 coach in the coming weeks. Your coach will expect you to come prepared with some ideas and an initial list of colleges that are of interest to you. This list should be broad-based – I think somewhere between 15-25 is an appropriate start point. As you work through the process you will whittle this down to 3-5.

MPS is now also able to offer the opportunity for players to explore the opportunity to attend college in Europe via Global Premier Soccer. You can talk directly to your Head Coach if you are interested in pursuing this option more fully.

2. Once you have this list filtered down to 3-5, MPS will put in a direct call to the college coaches on your list. This call will be primarily from your coach, but the liaison officers will be involved in this process where appropriate. Please remember that your coach will provide an honest and accurate assessment of your

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play and personality. It is important for the credibility of the program that we retain our integrity whilst still pushing our players to the maximum.

3. Exposure:

- MPS Showcase - The MPS showcase event is a tremendous avenue for MPS players to gain exposure to all the local college coaches. This is for our players only and is a great environment to generate interest locally in college programs. We also have the MPS Thanksgiving Showcase event and the MPS Showcase at the Needham Memorial Day Tournament.
- Other tournaments – your parent manager should have sent you the competitive calendar for your tournaments already. Your league game schedule will be sent out shortly. Make sure to keep your college coaches informed of your schedule.
- Profile – make sure that it is as current as possible. Profiles will be placed directly on the MPS website. We will be sending out a model profile for you to use as a template.
- DVD's – some people like to get a DVD done as an extra element for exposure. It can be a helpful addition at times, but if you are thorough in your approach it should not be necessary. If you decide to do one, it needs to be professionally done and clear otherwise it will go straight in the college coach's trash can. MPS will be looking to add this service in the near future.
- MPS alumni – we have a huge wealth of players who have graduated through the college process or are currently still at college. This is another terrific resource for our current juniors to use to get an inside feel for a specific college program.

I hope that this information will be helpful to you all as you move through the college selection process. There are always questions to be asked and as a part of MPS, you are in the best possible environment to get help in answering these questions and in making the right college decision. Good luck and I will include some useful websites below that will help.

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Useful websites:

www.masspremiersoccer.com

www.ncaa.org

www.thesportsource.com

www.varsityedge.com

www.collegesoccer.com

www.soccerbuzz.com – women's college soccer.

www.soccernewengland.com

www.gotcollegesports.com

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