

10/9/10

What a Ride!

Over the past four months, my wife and I have enjoyed/stressed out over/survived/successfully navigated the wonderful journey called recruiting. Our oldest daughter, Aidan, just began her senior year at Roanoke Catholic. She began playing volleyball at a summer camp following her sixth grade year of school. Since that time, she has played both high school and club volleyball for Roanoke Catholic and Roanoke Juniors respectively.

Being Aidan's parents (with a little bias of course), we thought she was a good player but certainly did not think she had extraordinary abilities. We had watched her play over the past few years against players from across the country whom we absolutely knew would be playing volleyball in college, many of them at Division 1 programs. Based on those observations, we thought Aidan might have the opportunity to be one of those players playing at the next level, perhaps at a Division III school or a lower level Division II school—not that we really knew what playing at the different Divisions really meant. We were told she “might” be able to play in college by a couple of club coaches and parents of college players. However, she was definitely not the type of player being identified and pursued by college coaches. Truth be told, we had absolutely no idea about her chances to play in college and other than her playing with her team at a few national and regional tournaments, and did not plan on any special efforts toward her playing volleyball in college.

Last spring, we were introduced by a mutual friend to Ron Clary. In first talking to Ron, he talked about his experience with college financial planning and with helping athletes navigate the college recruiting process. In his friendly, low key manner, he suggested to us that Aidan's height and strong academics might open more college volleyball doors than we had considered possible. We spent a few hours with him initially, during which he laid out the plan we would need to implement if Aidan was going to become known to college coaches. From that point on, we worked hand in hand with Ron—the early important elements of the process included a player profile and a very basic workout video to share with college coaches across the country.

We were not ready for the response. We targeted both Catholic schools and Non-catholic Schools, with the player profile adjusted a little depending on which type of school was being contacted. Since we had fairly low expectations, we cast a fairly wide net geographically—in hindsight, that was one of our mistakes. When nearly 90 coaches e-mailed Aidan expressing interest in her, we were completely overwhelmed. At that point, we leaned on Ron to help us determine the best approach to use in dealing with such a large group of schools and coaches.

E-mails led to phone calls, phone calls led to initial campus visits and the visits led to additional meetings and discussions with coaches. When coaches began to discuss various scholarship offers, we were completely out of our comfort zone—again we leaned on Ron. Ultimately, Aidan made a verbal commitment to attend school and play volleyball for Coach Campbell at Lafayette College in Pennsylvania—a Division 1 school in the Patriot League. We couldn't be more proud of Aidan and the wonderful way she conducted herself throughout the entire process. We also can't thank Ron Clary enough for his help, guidance, incredible hard work—and handholding—throughout the past four months. The scariest thing for us is knowing that had we not had the good fortune to be introduced to him; Aidan's volleyball would be over after her senior year in high school. Instead, she will be playing Division 1 volleyball at an incredible school. What a ride!

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