

RECRUITING SERVICES JVRA EDITORIAL



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Each month, we feature editorials from JVRA Advisory Board Members on relevant topics in the global volleyball community. Laura Kasey provides clarification on communications regarding PSA's from recruiting services with Division I coaches, as well as keen perspective on this trend.

This has been an eventful year to say the least. I will not minimize the challenges that families, businesses, schools, *well everyone*, is facing with the COVID-19 pandemic. Nor will I undercut the importance of the conversations going on regarding social justice. It is a time of uncertainty, and with that comes fear. Unfortunately, there is a pretty big market for trafficking in fear. From toilet paper stockpiling to empty disinfectant wipes aisles, some things make sense, others, not so much. The incertitude around recruiting, due to canceled tournaments and the extensions of the NCAA dead period, adds a layer of stress on recruits and their families. I hope to provide a little clarity around the process and the rules as they relate to recruiting services, in an effort to help families make the best decision for their child and budget.

I've shared some NCAA rules regarding recruiting services on social media, and was surprised at the response. Some recruiting services who advertise that they are in compliance with NCAA rules, took issue with both the Minnesota and **Big 10 compliance conclusions that recruiting services are not allowed to provide oral reports or electronic messages about potential student-athletes (PSAs) per Bylaw 13.14.3.2.** *But that's exactly what the bylaw says. Translation: recruiting services cannot talk to college coaches about you specifically, they cannot text, they can only send standardized, consistent information to all subscribers/programs. Even after June 15th of your sophomore year.*

I have noticed an uptick in two things that compelled me to address this rule and these issues. 1) I've seen an increase of recruiting service seminars and messaging hitting the volleyball publication airwaves. 2) I've received a number of emails from PSAs with no coach contact information, rather their "recruiting assistant" contact information - *the person that I cannot contact about a specific PSA.*

Regarding the first point, I have to say I'm disappointed in the direction the message and methods some have taken. *It seems to have gone from "I can provide advice and share your information" to "you need me to create a marketing plan and be your advocate because college coaches aren't recruiting in person and/or your club coaches aren't helping you enough".* Once these salespeople tell people what to be afraid of, they offer a simple solution (that only they have) for the low cost of _____. In one instance that was relayed to me, a service was charging FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS. \$5000!!! Shameless. They better drive you to college and clean your dorm weekly for that price.

Regarding the second point, I am only able to speak to the PSA's coach (before June 15th of their sophomore year) and receive an evaluation from them on the PSA. I may not give them my evaluation of the PSA, or tell them that the PSA is #___ on our list, or pass any veiled messages to them. After June 15th of their sophomore year, I can speak with them, their parents, and their coach. But I still cannot have an evaluative conversation about them with a recruiting service.

There is also another rule that weighs in here. ***Bylaw 13.10.2.1 prohibits coaches from commenting on their recruitment other than to confirm that they are recruiting the PSA.*** So I cannot talk to ANY third party about my recruitment of the PSA - boosters, the media, a guy walking down the street, or a recruiting service. ***(That includes, in 13.10.2.1.1, prohibiting college coaches from rating PSA's for all those "top 50" or whatever recruiting lists. There are no permissible "college coaches panels" to weigh in on those lists.)***

I do feel there is value in recruiting services. There are many former athletes and coaches that work for them, who have experience and contact lists that can benefit families who prefer to outsource some of the groundwork. I get it, some people would rather hire professionals in areas they may have little time or experience. If I could hire a housekeeper, I sure would! However let's not conflate how complicated recruiting is with say, paying an accountant to do your taxes. It's a conversation with an adult. Not dealing with IRS code. You could argue that the NCAA rules would require a professional (or entire department of them) to understand. That burden falls on us though, the college coaches, and we do have a staff of professionals that translate the rules for us.

Research and communication are also very valuable skills the PSA should be developing. If they spent an hour of the day looking up schools and sending a couple emails, instead of scrolling social media, they gain tools that will benefit them as a student, athlete and future employee (or employer).

As I've said often: if you can take the time to study universities/programs, video a match or practice (clip highlights and include a whole set), post it on YouTube and send a personal email to a coach with that link, that's all you need to reach us. ***I have never held an email from a recruiting service with higher regard than an email directly from an athlete.*** It's quite the opposite. Like most of my colleagues in coaching, I do my best to respond to all emails from recruits of a permissible age. It's not easy, and when the volume is high, an email can get missed here and there. But we certainly make the effort.

Some college coaches use recruiting service information more than others. There are many levels of play, NAIA, Junior College, DI/DII/DIII. Each provide unique and valuable experiences. But not all college recruiting budgets are the same. We gather recruiting information via in-person recruiting, email and phone calls. Some utilize recruiting services more because they have fewer opportunities to travel to see PSAs in person. Plus, to recruit internationally, recruiting services are often essential for gathering video and information.

In Summary,

Here are the fundamental issues that I have with how some services have been taking advantage of parents and PSA's fear during this time:

1) They tell you a story of scarcity (there aren't that many roster spots or scholarships out there) and of comparison (if you haven't received X number of calls by this date, you are behind) and tell you they are the solution to that problem for X number of dollars.

2) They imply that they are the conduit to college coaches. They have our ear, etc when the reality is that we cannot have a specific conversation about you with them, ever.

Here are some NCAA permissible roles a recruiting service may provide that may have value to you and to college coaches:

1) They can send us the PSA's information (name, data, video) at any time via email. We watch video links, and we tag their name in our system if we'd like to see them live and/or if we intend to contact them once it is permissible. (Same as if we received this information directly from the PSA.)

2) They can ask us about our level of play, the types of athletes we like to recruit, our academic requirements, anything in general to learn more about us, so as to share that information with interested athletes.

3) Once the PSA is a junior, we can use the contact information they've provided to contact THEM or their coach.

These times are defining, but not in what we don't know, or can't do. Rather they are defining in the skills we are developing to stay in the moment, enjoy the present, be active in helping where we can and be agile and flexible to adapt where we go next. If we as parents (yes I'm on that train now) can be in control of ourselves and our responses to adversity, we will ease our children's anxiety, and teach them lifelong skills.

I'm saying don't panic about this recruiting slow-down. PSA's can use the time to enjoy family more, get better at their skills and develop a few plans. I'm a big advocate for Plans A-E. There are so many college options, including JuCo, gap years, and college club teams.

My message to PSA's - hang in there, and maybe do a couple pull-ups while you are hanging there, to get a little stronger. Because we will all hit the ground running again. Changed. And change is good.

THANK YOU to Laura Kasey for clarification and candor. The JVRA's mission is to provide educational resources to club personnel and high school coaches while collaborating with the college coaching community to promote integrity and further the recruiting process for prospective student-athletes at all levels.