In this day and age, recruitment ensues all around us. It is pretty amazing. The talent coming out of our State of Texas is high end. Great athletes met with players starting earlier and earlier is a tremendous thing and has helped push Texans to the next level. It was just a matter of time.

Just looking at the magazine from two years ago, the shift comes through loud and clear. In that edition (2014), there were 20 committed seniors and only 4 committed juniors. Now, for the 2016 issue, the commits number 39 in the senior class (2016s), 20 in the junior class (2017s), 12 in the sophomore class (2018s), and 3 in the freshman class (2019s). Totally unbelievable but true!

While many consider recruitment as a process, we regard it more like an equation with a myriad of variables. A process leads one to believe that, as long as they do everything in the process, their result is somewhat fixed or guaranteed. Recruitment, however, is riddled with variables, and how these variables interact and play out differs for each and every player. Regardless, though, in order to obtain a favorable result from the equation, the importance of understanding the variables cannot be understated.

As we discuss this healthy list of variables below, please, understand that they work on a sliding scale based on controllability:

1) Certain pieces are outside of your control and truly variable. They are rooted in the concept of variability and require preparedness.

2) Certain variables you can control to an extent, but these specific variables allow for success as a result of development. **The key concept here is development.**

3) Finally, there are a group of factors that you can definitely control. You should understand all the factors and angles, but this is truly where you should initially focus. **The root of this concept is effort.**

The figure below demonstrates what we believe are many of the factors. Certainly, more may exist, but this start is solid. We will start by breaking these down on the side of the controllables and moving towards those that vary the most.

**CONTROLLABLES**

One of the keys to this grouping (the controllables) is the effort you (the recruited player) are willing to put forth, to demonstrate. **You have the power!**

**Managing Expectations:**

This aspect of the process is really important. Everyone wants to play at the highest level, but sometimes that is simply just not in the cards. Dream big, work hard, but, also, be honest with yourself. Parents, you also need to be honest with your player’s abilities. They want to do the best job possible, but there are limitations. There is a suitable result for every player; you just have to make it work. Create your list of colleges. Include several categories - reach, 50/50, and safety schools. If you have managed your expectations appropriately, you should be able to find an acceptable option on your list!

**Grades / Academics / Testing Preparedness:**

The first barrier to entry in terms of recruitment is your grades. If you do not have them, you cannot get into a great institution. It is as simple as that! Good grades are crucial, as is the way in which you prepare to get them. You **have to** work hard. Some kids gifted in the classroom, while others, on the field. Work ethic, however, can really help remedy a lot of issues. If you put time into your studies, good things **will** happen. If you are really struggling, approaching your teachers to get extra help after school goes a long way. If they see you working hard, they will help. You can control your output in this category.

**Training!**

At this point, training options in the State, all across the State, abound. If you want to improve, you can work at it. One of the coolest things about lacrosse at this point in time involves seeing the great players coming from all the different programs. You may ask, “How did that kid get so good?” Chances are he is a “lax rat” and works really, **really** hard at it. Players watch YouTube videos, find creative outlets to improve, and seek out good coaching. Look online! You will find plenty of camps and opportunities to improve. Then, take what you have learned and practice. Seek it out and take advantage!

**Proactivity:**

Proactivity is crucial when talking about recruitment. You can learn a lot about what it takes to get recruited from a variety of sources. Once you have that knowledge, you **must** create a plan and look to execute it. As we stated, this section is based on effort, and proactivity is a variable for this concept. How you can be proactive? Create your recruiting profiles; create your videos; train hard; get your info out; and reach out to college coaches. Please remember that a fine line exists between **Proactivity** and **Being Annoying.** Proactivity is also tied to managing expectations. For example, if you are emailing Virginia every week of your senior year, you may be a wee off base.

**Recruiting Profile:**

Anyone can create one of these. Lots of services may be found, and some of them are fairly cost-effective. Get your info out there. Make sure, though, that it is current and thorough, even if it is a .pdf. Send it out, or put at the beginning of your highlight film, or put it on your website. The possibilities are endless. Get yours together. It is a great, first step!

**Highlight Film:**

At this point, highlight film is mandatory. One, they can help get your foot in the front door; and, two, they allow you to keep consistent communication with coaches. As a player, you must create content for yourself. You must accrue film, and you must keep it current. At this point, you should update all the time at the end of every season (which includes Fall Select, Spring Regular Season, Summer Select, and any individual events a player may attend). In this age of social media, your ability to promote yourself and your highlight film is unprecedented. If it is awesome, you **will** get traction.

**Attending Individual Events & Prospect Camps:**

While not every camp is open to the public, most are. With a recommendation in hand, you are good to go! Obtain your recommendations, and of course, make sure you are going to compete at a spot that aligns with your expectations. Never shy from testing your limits, though! Do take the opportunity to get outside your comfort zone as that really helps you figure out your capabilities.

Prospect Camps allow you to figure out where you stack up in a school’s eyes relatively quickly. Prospect camps DO NOT require recommendations as NCAA camps must accept everyone. If you play great while attending, the school’s coaches could get really excited about you as a prospect. However, if you do not hear anything, be proactive and follow up. If you do not hear anything again, it is probably not going to work out, but, at least, you know where you stand. Ultimately, you can attend as many of these as your resources will allow, but attending at least a few of them is pretty important.

**CONTROLLABLE TO AN EXTENT**

In this section, we will discuss a variety of factors that can be developed. These are items that are within your area of control up to a certain extent. The importance lies in continuing your development in each and every area!

**Individual Player Skill:**

In the previous section, we discussed training as a function of effort. Individual player skill is a function of effort but, also, of continued development. Once you become a quality player, your development can get stagnant. A player can become complacent. If he hears, over and over again, how great he is, a player may become hard-headed. Room for improvement **ALWAYS** exists, and you must find ways to layer on skills. Find a way to improve. Consider box lacrosse, an environment that is tremendous for developing skill sets that field players might not already possess. Get outside your comfort zone in order to grow!

**Continued Athletic Development:**

There are different levels of athleticism that you can be blessed with. Regardless, you can continue your athletic development and make strides no matter where you start. Where you start is variable and outside of your control, but what you do moving forward is up to you. Players with average feet **can** improve by finding a jump rope. Kids who are kind of slow **can** become more explosive. You cannot control how tall you are or will be, but you can control how you develop your athletic abilities moving forward.

**Select Teams:**

At this point, if you want to play select lacrosse, you probably can as long as you have the requisite resources. Numerous options exist at all ends of the spectrum. To some extent, you can control who you play for. Managing expectations here is important, as well, as programs are getting more and more competitive. In all likelihood, you can train with teams and work your way onto a roster. You can develop your position within a program by being loyal and working hard at the events that they provide. Without a doubt, select teams are certainly a part of the recruiting process. They give you access to quality tournaments and the opportunity to gain visibility. Some select teams have a tremendous track record, and the importance of doing your homework and exercising due diligence to figure out exactly what you are looking for and what you get cannot be minimized.

**Connections & Relationships:**

Just like anything in life, connections can definitely help. You can either go through the front door in an effort to get to the top, or you can take the secret entrance. Again, these can be developed and procured through your high school programs, select teams, private instructors, and the relationships that you create by yourself. Relationships are created, established, and maintained by communicating! Players must work on their ability to communicate through the emails that they send to coaches and through the phone calls that they make.

A player’s ability to communicate will help him establish relationships to coaches. Although talking on the phone with coaches is not easy, players really must take every advantage to improve upon this skill. It is a skill that can be developed by repetition and practice. Establishing relationships with assistant coaches is also important. With the considerable movement in the coaching ranks every summer, you just never know where a coach will end up. You can establish a great relationship with an D3 assistant; he likes your game; and, then, he becomes an assistant at a D1 program! These things can definitely happen, and it will be up to you to develop them.

**VARIABLE**

In our equation, certain variables are, without a doubt, outside of your control and require acknowledgement. They include:

**The Naturally Gifted Athlete:**

Sometimes, you just win the lottery! You are a 6’2” freshman, you can run like a deer, and you are super coordinated. Congratulations, you are a unicorn! As such, lacrosse will likely go well for you as long as you do work on continued development. Do NOT get complacent, as that can become a bad habit for the rest of your life. Stories about athletes who peak early abound. They dominate in high school and go on to college only to fade away because they started to feel really good about themselves.

If you happen to be naturally gifted, congrats, but, with great power, comes great responsibility!

**Passing the Sight Test:**

First of all, what is the sight test? Well, simply put, do you look the part? Are you big, fast, and strong? Are you dynamic, explosive, and skilled? You never know exactly what a college coach is looking for, or if they are even looking at you. BUT, if you are as prepared as possible in those regards, you are putting yourself in a position to succeed. You can have every recommendation in the world, but, at some point, you will have to perform right in front of a coach. He may like what he sees, and he might even want to see you again. There is so much variability in this factor as you could have all eyes on you and just not have the game you were looking for. The ball just did not bounce your way! Then, the next game, you play great. You cannot control that. Just keep working at it, though, and good things **will** happen!

**Strength of your High School Program:**

Where you attend high school and where you live may also be outside of your control. You live in a certain school district, you have a program, and that is where you have to play. What you can do is take advantage of whatever circumstances you are given. Make the best of it! Help build your program to its fullest potential. You do have that power! Players have matriculated from a variety of different level programs. IF you work on all the other components of the equation, you WILL be able to make something happen. It IS possible. The only way you can change your program option is if you have the means to either attend another school, namely, private, or move to a different district. As your parents have the final say with both of those possibilities, they are still, essentially, variable.

**Taking Advantage of Opportunities:**

Some people say that luck is “when preparation meets opportunity.” Preparedness IS the key. As a player, you will have a variety of opportunities throughout your playing career. Some of them will occur during your regular season. How did you play in the playoffs? How did you play in the big games? Big time players make big plays in big games. It is called competitive excellence, and the best tend to do well, time and time again. These opportunities will also arise at individual events and at select tournaments. It does not all ride on just one opportunity but on a bunch of them. That being said, if it is your final look by a coaching staff, it might all be on that look. Take advantage of each and every opportunity that presents itself! SEIZE THE MOMENT!

**Individual Accolades:**

It always helps to pick up accolades - All State, All American, All Tournament Team, mentioned by a recruiting social media site at an exclusive individual event. Again, you do not know who is watching and when. You could have a 5-goal game, but the evaluator was there the game before. It happens. Put yourself in a position to succeed time and time again. Be prepared and, eventually, good things will come from it. Every once in a while, you do run into a great group of players when battling for an award. If you do not get the exact award you are looking for, go ahead, and use it as fuel for the fire.

**Acceptance into the Top Individual Events:**

Right now, certain individual events exist that do help with the process. As we discussed earlier, the number of events to pick from abounds. However, getting into the top ones is not always easy. Figure out what it takes to get into them, and work at it. You may have to leverage connections, submit requests for attendance, or attend prequalifying camps. If you are prepared and have the requisite skill level, you will get into some of these. But not getting into the tip top events does not mean that you will not get recruited. That is not the only place they look, so KEEP GRINDING!

Overwhelmed? Do not be! While there is a lot of information and lots of variables, that means that there are numerous, different paths for you to take in getting to the next level. Remember, put forth effort and control the controllables. That’s on you! Second, develop yourself in a variety of different ways. Take that same amount of effort you put into controlling the controllables and apply it to developing all these different possibilities! Finally, make sure you execute. Take advantage of your opportunities, and good things will happen. You know the equation, and you know the variables. Now, you just need to align them in your favor. The next level is attainable if you have a plan. So, go on, make your plan!