**Finding the Right Fit**

In this section of the Texas Lacrosse Magazine, our intended goal is to highlight players who have or are living the proverbial “dream”. The number of Texas players who have matriculated to play on the NCAA level is astounding. In addition, the sheer number of players from the Great State who are currently competing in college all over the country cannot be emphasized enough. While we only have the D1, D2, and D3 lists, the largest concentration of Texas lacrosse players are likely competing at the MCLA level and should be recognized for their efforts.

While the Lacrosse Recruits gentlemen explain the steps to recruitment, we will cover is how to find the right fit and the importance of finishing the commitment. As Lacrosse Recruits point out, taking a realistic approach is paramount, and something we agree with whole-heartedly. Our view of the post, high school lacrosse discussion revolves around several key points:

1. Managing your expectations;
2. Know how hard the work is; and
3. The Necessity to finish.

We cannot emphasize enough how crucial it is to have a realistic approach, to manage your expectations, and to be honest with yourself! And, finally, you do need to be able to play lacrosse exceptionally well!

“Overall, in Texas, there is a D1 or bust mindset.” After talking with a variety of coaches nationally, we have heard this several times. Remember, the first rule of recruitment is managing expectations. Few players will go D1. To make the D1 ranks, you have to be GREAT as the sheer number of players competing for D1 spots grows annually. The chance also exists that, although you might just be a good enough player, the process may not work out. Opportunity definitely plays into the equation, so…take advantage of your opportunities!

Early on, you must ask yourself, “Do I want to play at the lacrosse at the next level, or do I only want to play Division 1?” To do so, the plusses and minuses of each situation need to be assessed. Not an easy task!

**Understanding the Texan**

In Texas, some players obviously want that big school feel of a Big 12 or SEC type campus. The D1 programs that offer both the big school feel and a D1 lacrosse program are few and far between, so, again, you must manage expectations. Are you going to chase the dream to a smaller D1 campus? If so, D3 schools are actually fairly comparable for the most part and also highly competitive.

Figure out if you are the type of player who would not mind a different experience and the opportunity to play high-level lacrosse! The opportunities out there do exist.

**Hard Work**

Regardless of what level you play, the work will be hard. At the current time as in the past, choosing to be a D1 athlete in college is one of the hardest routes you can take. It involves competition against the best at all times. If you can handle what it entails, however, you can likely handle any challenges that life may bring you.

EVERYONE says that they want to be a collegiate athlete, but few realize the amount of time and dedication it requires until they join the program. Players who compete in high level football programs come closest to understanding, but nothing compares to actually being there.

Let’s put it this way: The feeling that you get your senior (or junior or maybe even sophomore) year when you get to tell every person in your school that you are going D1 is awesome. The polar opposite, however, is what you feel at 6:00 in the morning in sub-freezing temperatures as a freshman for the fourth week of Fall Ball practice in a row. At that point, very few people care how “cool” it is, and you are actually living it. Great if you can handle it! But you better figure out if you have the constitution to actually handle it first. DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

**Finishing**

Not everyone is a fit for D1 lacrosse, something many find out later in the game usually at the end of their freshman or sophomore year in college. Players get tired of being tired, have a disdain for the cold weather, and long for the “epic” college experience that they hear about from their best friends elsewhere.

No mincing words here! This is a scared-straight type approach that really forces one to consider the magnitude of deciding to commit to a four-year program. We are flat out proud of all the players who have even gone for one year to play at a high level! The importance of more players finishing the journey, though, cannot be understated as it is crucial for the next group of players in terms of recruiting. Understand that you do carry a weight on your shoulders. You are a flag bearer for our State. Understand that the warm, fuzzy, loving feeling of recruitment at some point will be accompanied by the complete opposite feeling. How bad you want to do this? Do you want to do this if you never touch the field for one year, for two years? Do you want to do this if you realize that it is tougher than you expected?

While we definitely have D1 caliber talent consistently matriculating, a tremendous accomplishment, many of our Texas players could also play at the D2/D3 levels. At those levels, players will undoubtedly contribute earlier and make greater impacts especially on the offensive side of the ball. D2/D3 coaches yearn for the athleticism that resides within the borders of the Great State.

At the D3 level, options abound from the athletically focused to the academically based. Players and their families in this State need to better understand that truly great D3 opportunities abound which players should consider if their goal is to play competitive lacrosse for a great institution at the next level. Listed below are only some options:

Midwest: Dickinson, Kenyon, Wittenberg, Ohio Wesleyan, Denison

East Coast: Southern, Sewanee, Lynchburg, Hampden-Sydney, Roanoke, Washington College

Academically focused: NESCAC – Middlebury, Connecticut College, Tufts, Wesleyan, Bowdoin, Bates, Hamilton, Amherst, Trinity, Williams, Colby

Athletically focused: Salisbury, Stevenson, Gettysburg, Cortland State, RIT

All of these are worthwhile schools with great campuses where you can learn, study, and compete at a high level. Even more important, you will be playing at the next level and, most likely, earlier on.

**Not Just Club – the MCLA**

If a big campus feel is what you want and, while you love lacrosse, the D1 rigors may just be too much, the MCLA beckons as an option. At the end of the day, most high school players from Texas will ultimately play MCLA. Trevor Tierney recently stated that the Colorado Buffalos reality may be better than the D1 dream. A fascinating statement coming from him, to say the least! Trevor eats, breaths, and sleeps lacrosse. For much of his time, it has been around D1 lacrosse both at Princeton and Denver. The great opportunity that is the MCLA cannot be understated, and some programs definitely put forth the effort to do it not just the right way but with a fully committed effort.

At this point, the level of talent in Texas, MCLA universities bears mentioning. University of Texas is stacked with Texas High School Lacrosse League champions and US Lacrosse All Americans, SMU brings in quality players from all over the nation, and Texas State has a coach in place that is dedicated, experienced, and with a resume that is second to none.

At the end of the day, the possibilities abound. Just engaging in this discussion indicates that you are a quality player, so congrats! Now, where do you fit in, how committed are you, and will you finish what you start? These are the tough questions you must answer if the next level is really your dream. Know that if you do decide to embark on this life-changing experience, you will love it, hate it, learn from it, grow with it, and, ultimately, appreciate it as one of the last true TEAMS that you will ever be a part of. Live the dream. It is tough but most assuredly worth it!