

January 5, 2011

Congrats to all the girls receiving a scholarship this year. You will be challenged in the classroom and on the ball field. Your schools will give you the opportunity to develop leadership skills. You should seize those opportunities.

You will be required to attend class and maintain a full-time student course load.

You will be required to participate in fitness activities that far exceed anything experienced in rep ball.

You will awake early in the morning and go to bed late at night.

You will be required to attend team-based study halls (referred to as study tables in school).

You will have group bp between classes, you may run, swim, lift or practice after classes.

There will be pressure for you to maintain excellent grades, but as an NCAA athlete, you will be given extensive resources to assist you in that effort. You may have on-demand tutors if you're struggling, please use them if needed. Your coach, academic advisor and athletic director will be briefed on your academic progress throughout the semester. Please do not cut classes, you and your teammates may pay a physical price for that indiscretion. Depending on your conference, you may have the opportunity to be recognized academically as "all conference" or even "academic All-American".

When you arrive at school, you may be assigned a student mentor. If so, this individual will assist you in acclimating to the demands required of you as a student athlete. Once you are an upperclassman, you too may have the opportunity to mentor incoming athletes - seize this opportunity. You will be subject to drug testing and you will have to live by and represent yourself in a manner that is different than the general student population. That said, your athletic department may bring in recognized motivational speakers for you and other student athletes to learn from. You should understand that spring break is for party goers, you will be playing extensively during that week - in places like Carolina's, Florida, Arizona or California. Your school may give you a little downtime to take in the beach, go to Disneyland or tour a local historical spot. Bring a camera.

As if academics and ball isn't enough, you and your teammates may be doing work for Big Brothers/ Big Sisters, Habitat for Humanity or you may be visiting old age homes and you will likely assist with clinics sponsored by your university. Most likely, you will learn how to deploy and store the largest tarp you've ever seen.

You may be introduced to someone that goes by the title of "Strength and Conditioning Coach". No matter how cute he is, you'll hate him! No matter how much you lift, he wants more. You may be challenged for playing time for the first time in your life. If you don't know what "walk-out music" is, you will.

Your rep team has 12-15 players, your collegiate team may have 20+. At times, you will look at the general student population in envy. You may be studying on a plane or bus for the first time in your life. You could be on the road completing your conference schedule the weekend before writing finals in May. Purchase a book light. If you complete your four years, attain your degree and do so with playing your sport, you will have mastered time management skills. You may have a different perspective of the United States after living there for four years. You should feel a sense of accomplishment.

Depending on your deal, you may be saving your parents 10's of thousands of dollars a year compared to the costs of going to school in Canada. Over 100,000 girls play competitive high-school ball in the states, only a few thousand land scholarships each year. NCAA athletes are admired in school. Enjoy that recognition.

On the downside, you may need two cellphones and two numbers (one for the US and one for Canada)- don't sign a 3yr cell agreement with Rogers/ Bell etc. before you leave. Regardless of whether or not you're attending school on a partial or full scholarship or you plan to maintain academic and athletic scholarships, congratulations! You will be pushed hard, but helped along the way.

You will live an experience that fewer than 1 in 300 Canadian students have access to.