

# RECRUITING REALITIES

## AKRON BEACON JOURNAL

National Expert Hits on Recruiting Realities by Darnell Mayberry

He was funny, sarcastic and interactive. Most important, Jack Renkens was blunt during his Recruiting Realities Tour, which stopped in the Akron area last week.

In case you missed it, here's a summary of Renkens' hour-long session:

Renkens, a former high school and college coach and athletic director, spoke at Wadsworth High last Tuesday night, Tallmadge High on Wednesday and Stow High on Thursday night. Fewer than 60 families attended the first two sessions, while nearly 300 listened at Stow.

Parents took notes. Student-athletes hung on every word, hoping to learn better ways of receiving athletic scholarship. Stow coaches inside the school's auditorium nodded in agreement. "This talk will ground a parent," said Dave Close, Stow's boys basketball coach. Grounding because Renkens wasn't afraid to look a parent squarely in the eyes and say that their child wasn't good enough to play anything at Ohio State.

His credibility for such audacity?

Renkens played basketball at the University of Wisconsin at River Falls. He began coaching high school basketball in Wisconsin, winning four state championships in five years before leaving for jobs in Arizona and later Chicago. He then took a coaching job at Colby Community College in Kansas and later at Assumption College in Massachusetts, where he led the Division II school to six conference titles and four NCAA Tournament appearances in 10 years.

He started speaking across the country in part because of the recruiting adversity he faced at lesser-known schools, but mostly because he saw a need when parents asked his advice as he watched his children compete. Renkens' presentation was informative and much needed. He talked about the unrealistic student-athlete and parent. Twenty letters a week is a moderate recruit, 300 per week is a legitimate Division I recruit, Renkens said.

"Colleges recruit the world," Renkens said. "One in 100 will get a fully funded college education. That's the reality." He talked about the nation's thousands of other schools that ESPN doesn't show. The Division II, III and NAIA programs. The schools that can't afford national recruiting and sometimes struggle to fill rosters.

Stow resident and parent Annette Alboreo was most intrigued by that topic. She took notes while sitting to the left of her son, Drew, a junior wrestler at Stow who said he wants to attend Penn State. Annette sheepishly conceded that Drew falls into the "moderately recruited" category. "I think he'll be more open to letters that will come from all kinds of colleges rather than just looking at big-name schools," Annette Alboreo said.

Close, now in his 18th year as Stow's basketball coach, said according to the odds, all athletes should explore more options. "In 17 years, we've won about 80 percent of our games, and I've had one young man get a Division I scholarship right out of high school," Close said.

Renkens also talked about the NCAA Clearinghouse, which regulates initial eligibility for Division I and II student-athletes. But the best part was his "angry parent" bit. You know, the parents who call coaches every name but the one their parents gave them because they're not happy with their kid's playing time. The parents who call newspapers to harass reporters for omitting their child's name from the story on the school's game. "My advice -- keep your mouth shut and let your kids play," Renkens said. "College coaches don't recruit from the local newspaper."

## **THE DETROIT NEWS**

### Star Gets Taste of Scholarship Reality

At least 50 colleges continue to contact 17-year-old senior Alyse White because of her all-conference sprinting ability on Livonia Churchill's track team. The colleges include Division I schools University of Detroit, Central Michigan University and Eastern Michigan University. But a full-ride scholarship isn't guaranteed. That's why White, after a dose of Recruiting Reality last week, vowed to actively pursue other colleges to find the right situation.

White was one of several high school athletes that attended "Recruiting Realities," a Nov. 3 seminar at Northville High School that educated athletes and parents about recruiting. The free seminar conducted by national speaker Jack Renkens, a former Division II college basketball coach, provided tips on how players and parents can pursue the right college. Since only 0.8 percent of all high school athletes receive Division I athletic scholarships, it's crucial for an athlete to be realistic about their future, Renkens said.

Division I college coaches can't contact high school athletes until their junior season, the most telling year of an athlete's ability and level of exposure. Renkens suggests that junior athletes lacking letters from Division I colleges consider Division II, NAIA and junior college schools. "If you're a junior and haven't had at least 100 letters sent to you at this point, then forget about it," Renkens said. "If you're not getting FedExed you're not going to that dream Division I school. "Several smaller schools that don't get much sports coverage in newspapers can also be strong options for a quality education and athletic experience, Renkens said.

"If you're willing to go outside your home state, you can really find some options, because every college wants to be represented by players from a variety of states," Renkens said. "Smaller schools are need based. They show how much they need you."

## **LOS ANGELES TIMES**

### Helping Athletes Pick the Right College

BURBANK HIGH -- In Jack Renkens' promotional material, he claims he isn't selling anything. However, when it comes to high school athletes and their families navigating the sometimes scary world of college recruiting, Renkens might be selling something that is hard to come by -- piece of mind.

Renkens will be holding his Realities of College Recruiting informational and emotional seminar at 7:30 tonight at the Burbank High gym. The event is open to all high school students and adults. "This guy is really great, and he puts on a very good show," Burbank co-Athletic Director Helen Quayle said. "He really has a lot of important information for any students who wants to play sports in college, and their parents. "We heard Jack at an athletic directors' conference last spring and he was just great."

Renkens, who has spent 20 years as a successful high school and college coach, teacher and administrator, has held similar presentations throughout the United States. In the 90-minute event, he addresses all aspects of what student-athletes and their parents need to know about the opportunities of playing on the collegiate level. Through the use of stories and anecdotes, sprinkled in with a wealth of information, Renkens said he uses humor to help get his point across. "Some people might think that I just stand at a podium the whole time and talk," Renkens said. "But it's nothing like that. I like to make the presentations fun, as well as informative. It is anything but boring."

Some other things athletes and parents will learn in the presentation:

- \* Who is responsible to initiate the recruiting process, research schools and market the student-athlete.
- \* What avenues are available for student-athletes who want to participate at the college level and are not being recruiting.
- \* Where college programs obtain student-athlete names and addresses for their initial recruiting pool.
- \* When student-athletes need to become a member of a recruiting pool.
- \* How to obtain a copy of the NCAA, National Assn. of Intercollegiate Athletics, and National Junior College Athletic Assn. guides for the college bound student-athlete free of charge.
- \* Why there are so many opportunities to participate in a collegiate athletic program and student-athletes don't know about them.

Individuals will also learn how to research schools that meet their academic and athletic interests, and how to get in their recruiting pools. Renkens said one of the biggest portions of his presentation is trying to dispel many of the myths surrounding college recruiting. "A lot of the athletes only know about the big colleges like UCLA and USC," Renkens said. "But what they might not realize is there are so many other colleges out there where they can go and find a place to play. "Many of the kids think only of the so-called Division I schools. But what they may not realize is that only about 1% of all high school athletes get a scholarship to play at a Division I school. There are so many other colleges out there that many of the athletes may have never heard of, but are great places to play and get an education."

For Renkens, he said probably the most important thing individuals can learn from his presentation is how to empower themselves in the recruiting process. He advocates not leaving the process solely in the hands of high school coaches and athletic directors, people who might not have the time to devote to every recruit. "Many times, high school coaches do everything they can in their power to help an athlete find a college," Renkens said. "But many just don't have the national recruiting knowledge to do it all. Also, high schools just don't have the resources to put in the time needed for the recruiting process."

## **MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE**

Recruiting Guru Makes Interesting Points by John Millea

Jack Renkens was speaking to about 100 people Monday night in the Simley High School gym. His 80-minute presentation on college recruiting offered sound advice to parents and athletes. I kept thinking, "Where have I seen this guy before?" Then it hit me. Renkens is an athletic version of the circuit riding peddlers who hawk mops at the state fair. He has a spiel, a script, and he takes it all over the country from his base in Arizona. He deals in information instead of mops, but gives most of it away for free. No admission is charged to hear him speak; at Simley his \$995 fee was paid by Acceleration Minnesota, a sports training firm.

Renkens, a former high school and college coach and administrator, also sells a recruiting handbook. It costs \$20, includes much of the material covered in his seminar and comes with a money-back guarantee. His message boils down to this: Families must be in charge of the recruiting process. Don't sit back and wait for things to happen. Know the ropes. He stresses that only 0.8 percent of high school athletes receive Division I scholarships. Some of his arguments are eye-openers.

He says walk-on athletes are being used, AAU, Junior Olympic and club sports don't translate into scholarships, and college camps don't raise a player's profile and are simply a revenue stream for college coaches. Renkens says when he was the men's basketball coach and athletic director at Division II Assumption College in Massachusetts, his salary was \$50,000 and he earned an extra \$70,000 from summer camps.

He says families are making giant mistakes if they limit themselves to colleges that carry big names or are within a specific geographic area. And he disapproves of athletes' families making college visits on their own. He argues if the college is serious about your child, they will pay for you to visit. "Get involved with as many programs as possible so you put yourself in a position where you're running the show," he said after the

Simley appearance, his first in Minnesota. "I've had 20 parents come up to me tonight and say, 'We took a trip and we stopped at Kansas State, Iowa State, Colorado and met the coaches.' I'm going, 'For what?'

"People tell me, 'Three hours, that's the maximum we want to drive,' What about a three-hour flight? What's the difference?"

Renkens says high school coaches are the most trustworthy people around, and they will do all they can to help their athletes get scholarships. Nearly 3,000 invitations to the Simley event were sent to coaches and athletic directors in the area. Oddly, only two coaches attended. "These people care," Renkens said of the two, who coach gymnastics. Renkens also had been scheduled to give a presentation Sunday afternoon at Minnetonka High School. That one was called off. There were some scheduling conflicts, according to Minnetonka athletic director John Hedstrom.

But he also said he was bothered by some of the information he read in a brochure about Renkens and his company ([www.recruitingrealities.com](http://www.recruitingrealities.com)). For example, Renkens urges families to be fully up to speed on recruiting by the time their child is in ninth grade, and says students are not legitimate Division I prospects if they have not heard from 200 or 300 colleges by their sophomore year. "That's just too early," Hedstrom said. "Look at Kris Humphries [the Hopkins senior who will play basketball at Duke next season]. He was unknown as a ninth-grader and things have worked out pretty well for him." Hedstrom also said Minnesota coaches and athletic directors already are in place to help their athletes in the college process, and some are wary of an unknown person offering advice.

All good points. But I doubt anyone who heard Renkens speak -- they came from Buffalo, Elk River, Prior Lake, Monticello, Shakopee, White Bear Lake, etc. -- went away unimpressed.

## **THE SUN-SAN BERNARDINO**

### Reality Sets in for Players, Parents

We hear it repeatedly from high school athletes: "I'd just like to get a college scholarship and have my education paid for." We ask star athletes or Athletes of the Week or Players of the Year where they would like to attend college and they mindlessly rattle off major universities like USC, UCLA, Stanford, Florida State and Notre Dame. And, yet, for every high school student like Redlands East Valley softball player Carissa Jaquish, who actually did sign with Notre Dame recently, there is a county full of aspiring scholarship winners who never will get any closer to the Golden Dome than a telecast of the Fighting Irish on their TV sets.

But now . . .It's Recruiting Realities to the rescue. Five years ago, a former high school and college coach named Jack Renkens recognized that high school athletes and their families are mostly in the dark when it comes to the realities of obtaining college scholarships. Parents who haven't bothered to save for college educations or don't have the means, have sometimes put all their chips on the ability of their sons or daughters to catch the eye of the colleges, who usually are not looking in their direction. The result has been pressure on athletes to perform, pressure on coaches to feature the athletes in their attacks and even pressure on the media to heap praise on these sons and daughters who often are not deserving of extra attention.

Renkens separates fact from fiction. He will do it for free for interested area athletic directors, coaches, parents, teachers, athletes anyone at all with 75-minute presentations Monday in the theatre at Fontana High School. He will be at La Sierra High School in Riverside on Tuesday and at Paloma Valley HS in Menifee on Wednesday. All presentations are at 7:30 p.m.

"It's going to be an informative talk on all of the ins and outs of recruiting,' Pacific AD Chuck Pettersen said. Said Renkens, who tours the country spreading his message: "Eight percent of the kids across the nation get scholarships to Division I schools. That's one in a hundred. A lot of those kids are from schools like De La

Salle or Long Beach Poly. Many schools are lucky if they have one or two kids get D1 scholarships over a four or five-year period.'

There are so many variables: athletic ability, grades, SAT scores, size and quickness, character, coach's input, etc. Prep athletes who make all all-league or even All-CIF should not assume they magically will be whisked off to Penn State or Michigan or even Fresno State on a fun-filled recruiting trip. Said Renkens: "I coached at Assumption College in Worcester, Mass. "It's a Division II college and, in my 10 years, we got kids from 42 states and two foreign countries. But one state we never got anyone from was California. We tell kids we'd pay for their visit and had a scholarship worth \$120,000 for them. But they'd ask how cold it was there. They say they wanted to go somewhere closer to the ocean.' What too many prep athletes don't understand, especially those who are underclassmen, is that receiving any sort of scholarship is a long shot. If their lack of good grades doesn't get them, some other deficiency will. Only the elite athletes who are on the ball academically move to the next level.

Any parent of a prep athlete with a child who fancies himself or herself as a potential college scholarship recipient should attend one of these presentations. It will be infinitely more valuable than an extra session of batting practice, weightlifting or free-throw shooting.

### **DAILY PRESS, Escanaba, Mi**

#### Recruiting Seminar Set to Assist Area Athletes

Noted recruiting expert Jack Renkens of Recruiting Realities will be the featured speaker. "We want to make clear the realities of playing sports in college," said Escanaba High School softball manager Russ Bluse. "I believe there are some athletes in our area who can play at that level. "We've been fortunate the last couple of years to place several kids at that level, but that is not the object of our program," Bluse said.

The reality of recruiting is not understood by many athletes and parents, but colleges start communicating with prospective recruits as early as their freshman year of high school — and even sooner in some cases. Only 17 percent of all collegiate opportunities are at the Division I level, according to Renkens. Less than one percent of Division I athletes receive full athletic scholarships. Well less than one percent of high school athletes ever become professional athletes.

### **THE TELEGRAPH - Alton, IL**

#### Soccer Showcase Set to Aid Recruiting Process

Gordon Moore Park in Alton will be a college soccer recruiter's mecca this weekend. The annual Southern Illinois Soccer League Showcase will take place Saturday and Sunday at the Moore Park soccer complex. More than 200 high school seniors and juniors, as well as some junior college sophomores, will each play a pair of games and take part in an extensive seminar detailing the college recruiting process.

"We're really happy with the number of players we've got signed up," SISL official Dick Disher of Alton said. "We filled out the number of boys and girls teams we wanted. "We sent out postcards to all the applicants who were accepted and placed them on teams." Eight boys teams and five girls teams will play games Saturday and Sunday at Moore Park. "It's a great way for college coaches to see a number of players at one time," Disher said. "We've had real good response in the past."

More than 40 colleges have indicated they will have coaches or representatives at the Showcase. "The way the fields are arranged at Gordon Moore Park allows them to see everybody they want to in a short period of time," Disher said.

Some of the colleges represented will include Eastern Illinois University, SIU Edwardsville, Quincy University, Lewis and Clark Community College, Creighton University, Benedictine University, Southwestern Illinois College, Truman State University, Murray State University, Valparaiso University, Missouri-Rolla, Blackburn College, Washington University, University of Southern Indiana, Parkland College and Missouri Baptist.

The teams were put together by SISL officials according to positions played by the athletes and by age to get a representative cross-section. Teams will be coached by area SISL and other club coaches. The event, which cost each player a \$45 entry fee, has been approved by the Illinois High School Association and is in compliance with IHSA regulations.

A highlight of the weekend will be a seminar Saturday conducted by college recruiting expert Jack Renkens, author of "Jack Renken's Recruiting Realities," a handbook for prospective college athletes. "We're real lucky to be able to have this seminar," Disher said. "It's a realistic look at how these players can take part in getting a college soccer scholarship.

"(Renkens) takes them through the process step by step and answers their questions. It's a 'must' for any player who wants to get a scholarship."