

## Recruiting: A Decision That Goes Beyond Four Years -- September 28, 2011

Feature by Chelsea Howard

UNIVERSITY PARK, Pennsylvania, September 28. SWIMMERS who continue their career into the collegiate level have to make a decision that not only determines where they end up for the next four years, but more importantly, where they end up after they have a degree.

"When I made my decision, I saw it as a decision that sets up my future and what I can do after my swimming career. If I had chosen the other school I was looking at, the majors I could choose from would be limited. I might have ended up majoring in something I really didn't like and eventually having a job I didn't enjoy," Caroline Carlisle, a freshman from Rutgers, said.

Thinking about how a 17 or 18 year-old is expected to make such a life-changing decision always perplexes me. How often is a teenager asked to decide where they want to live or whom they want to swim for? Growing up, that decision was always made for me.

Most high school students are more concerned with what movie they're going to see on Friday night. High school recruits, however, are thinking beyond having fun on the weekend and into developing the rest of their lives. The amount of what you have to consider is endless. What seems like one big decision turns out to be an accumulation of smaller ones.

First and foremost comes finding the best combination of athletics and academics. If the academics aren't up to par, good luck finding a job. Not to mention the fact some majors aren't offered at all the universities. Conversely, if you decide on a school purely for academics, would you reach your full athletic potential?

Then comes the type of program the recruit is looking for. Some people enjoy training with the opposite gender and so having a combined men and women's team is important. Others prefer training with the same gender. Some need a distance-oriented program, while others wouldn't survive.

Let's not forget about the weather. We wake up day after day accustomed to a certain climate. Imagine waking up to 2 feet of snow after waking up to the pretty Florida sunshine for 17 years. Is that a change you want to make? The weather may not seem important to you at first, but since you will be there for quite some time, you'll certainly want to consider it.

And then there's the whole distance from home factor. Do you want to be close to home? Or is a three-hour flight okay with you?

Taking in all the factors and applying them to your personality is not an easy task for anyone.

"I feel like I'm under pressure to make sure I'm choosing the school that fits me best. I have to be sure I take everything into consideration," Austin Snyder, a high school recruit, said.

Ruling out the pros and cons of every program and university opens a realm of maturity within the athlete to find out what fits them best and what they want beyond their swimming career.

"It was very hard for me to make my college decision, but I had to keep my future in mind because there is a life after swimming. I knew that I wanted to be in the medical field. Which meant I would have to choose a school that had a strong student-athlete advisory program to help me stay on track," Anna Ratanacharoensiri, a sophomore from George Mason, said.

Although it's hard to grasp as a high school senior, making a commitment and sticking to it is the first decision that truly impacts your future. If I had chosen to stay in North Carolina, I wouldn't have had the opportunity to grow and learn from everyone I am around daily. My resume wouldn't be handed out to job recruiters and it probably wouldn't be as developed. There's no guarantee my GPA or even my major would be the same.

Not to add any more pressure to an exciting phase of your life or anything, but you just have to remember one road has a completely different ending than the other. When it comes to recruiting and deciding which route you're going to take, as cliché as it sounds, you've got to just stick with your gut.

[Darius Rucker](#) says it best in one of his songs, "It's crazy to think that one little thing could have changed all of it."

It amazes me to think that if I had picked my second choice, I wouldn't be living in the happiest of valleys, I wouldn't have studied under any of the same professors, I wouldn't have met any of my coaches or teammates, I wouldn't have traveled to any of the universities I've been to, and I wouldn't have experienced anything like the dryland circuits we pride ourselves on here at Penn State - which is exactly why I wouldn't change a thing.