

Higher Scores in the Classroom Count as Much as Lower Scores on the Course

BY RICH BRAZEAU

"I can get into that school; it doesn't matter what my grades are!" — Me, 2003

"Wow, I wish I weren't paying student loan debt at the age of 31!" — Me, 2017

In my travels each year, I often speak with parents and players about what coaches are looking for when recruiting a player. We go over the typical things, such as fundamentals, attitude, club speed and scores. Then I drop the hammer about grades — they matter A LOT!

THE VITAL COMPONENT

When I was coaching, there were always about six to 12 players per graduation class that we were actively recruiting at any given time. These players typically had similar golf abilities, albeit different strengths and weaknesses. So what was often the deciding factor that tilted the scales when we were ready to make an offer? It was who had the best grades!

What a lot of **people don't know** is that many schools will allow you to pair **academic and athletic scholarships**. And how do you get an academic scholarship? You do it by getting **great marks in school** and on your SAT or ACT!

That may seem counter-intuitive. After all, wouldn't you want the best players, period? Actually, if you can't handle the academic rigors of a particular school, along with balancing golf, social and family responsibilities, it doesn't matter how good of a player you are. If a player is stressed about school and worried about a biology test on Monday while putting for a par on Sunday, he or she will likely bogey both!

HIGHER STANDARDS REQUIRE HIGHER GRADES

Many of my clients today are high achievers in the classroom and have aspirations to play golf in the Ivy League, Patriot League or New England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC). Remember that there are no athletic scholarships available in Ivy League or Division III; typically, only need-based financial aid is offered. But obviously, admission into these schools is incredibly difficult for students without a leverage point to help them. For many, golf can be that lever. That doesn't mean, however, that you can have grades and scores below the standard.

These are incredibly competitive schools and golf programs that can recruit at a very high level because of their academic rankings. So if you have an aspiration to play at a school like Harvard, Stanford, Emory or Northwestern, my advice is to make sure you have the grades to get in on your own.

COMBINE YOUR SKILLS

As you may know, the maximum amount of scholarships available per school in Division 1 is 4.5 for men and 6 for women. I often tell people that if you get an offer as a freshman for a 20-25% athletic scholarship, you've hit a home run. But that obviously still leaves a wide gap for covering those rising tuition costs. What a lot of people don't know is that many schools will allow you to pair academic and athletic scholarships. And how do you get an academic scholarship? You do it by getting great marks in school and on your SAT or ACT!

I made a joke earlier about still paying student loans, but it is a fact that a lot of college golfers will never get close to a "full-ride", like that offered to basketball or football players. One of my only regrets in life is that I didn't try a *little* harder in high school. Getting a better GPA or SAT score and an academic scholarship would have saved me and my parents *THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS!* It is important for all junior players to listen to Mom and Dad, and study hard. As I like to say to my clients, "Good grades don't close any doors!"

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