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## Finding the perfect fit

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Whether you're talking about shoes, clothes, relationships or college basketball programs, "fit" seems to be a word that implies many different meanings. I had a powder-blue leisure suit that fit perfectly back in the '70s, but, I assure you, it wasn't right for me, or anyone else for that matter. Just because it feels comfortable on the surface -- or because it's a popular choice -- doesn't make it the appropriate decision, and that couldn't be more true than in the recruiting process.

Each year as I sit courtside, I think about how important an athlete's choice of program is to her ultimate success at the college level. There are an elite few prospects every year who will be impact players and have success no matter what program they choose. And then there will be those who forget that fit has many different components and choose a place that seems to be ideal but ultimately just isn't right.

Many schools can be the perfect setting, both academically and personally, and have all the resources you could ever want in a basketball program but still not be the best choice.

Just as with fashion, you can't talk about fit without talking about style. A coach's style of play, the conference the team plays in and the roster you might be a part of are all critical to a program being the right place to call home.

If you're not a transition player, the opportunity to be your best doesn't lie with a program that has seldom seen its shot clock get under 20 seconds. Conversely, if you're looking to run, you don't want to be playing for the queen of quick-hitters with the bench counting down the clock from 10 every possession.

For the most part, college coaches seldom actively recruit prospects who don't fit their style. Yet it's not uncommon for a half-court-oriented coach to want to get more athletic or for a fast-break-style program to look for more control.

In those situations it's important to understand why a particular coach might be recruiting you. You'll need to know if the coach is committing to a different style or just looking to add some speed or discipline to what they already do. Keep in mind you'll be joining three classes of recruits in front of you that might have been signed to play a different style from yours. Look at who else they're recruiting and who was in their last signing class to see if they're staying the course or if the winds of change are blowing.

Style often gets overlooked particularly when Big-Time U. comes calling. It's easy to get caught up in all the



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school has to offer and forget to take a good look at how the team plays and what your actual role might be. Everything might be the perfect fit, but if it's not right on the court, you have some prioritizing to do.

You have to decide if you can live out of your comfort zone and develop in the role they see for you or decide whether it's more important to find a setting that will allow you take your game as it stands now further. Neither choice is wrong. It's just important to know up front. This is the time when you get to decide the style you want to play. Once you're on board in a new program, your coaches will make those choices and you'll have to live with them.



Recruiting can be like shopping for new clothes -- you wouldn't buy anything without trying it on.

Basketball style and fit goes beyond X's and O's. If a program has always recruited and played a certain type of player at a position and now is recruiting a player who doesn't fit that mold, it's time for some questions. It's important to know why a coach is looking to sign a 6-foot-6 true low post when he or she has always had success with the 6-2 players who can run with the guards. A lot of college coaches have reputations for preferring a type of player. When players commit you hear it again and again: "She's their type of point guard" or "She fits the mold for their program." There's nothing wrong with going in a different direction, but if they're recruiting you as the instrument of change you'd better know why the change is being made and -- even more so -- why you seem to be heralding it.

Lastly, know a staff's experience with coaching a certain style or type of player. If a coach has always been a half-court coach, the coach isn't likely to let the team run. When a program has never worked with a player like that 6-6 post, it's important to know what the approach and long-term plan will be for that athlete's development. Just because coaches might see you in a different role or might want to move in a different direction doesn't make them a bad choice. It just means you need to get some answers that make you comfortable.

Many other elements go into recruiting decisions. Fit and style is an important part of that decision and a very individual component. Just like when you're purchasing clothing, you wouldn't buy anything without trying it on. Look at a program's style and the role the coach lays out for you and see how it matches up with the mirror in your mind. It's your comfort that's important. And, if you choose wisely, you might end up on someone's best-dressed list.

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