



[PRINT] ESPN.com: Womens

[\[Print without images\]](#)

Wednesday, March 24, 2010

Updated: March 30, 11:19 AM ET

## Keep a positive attitude on the court

By Mark Lewis  
HoopGurlz

The world of recruiting has never been known to take an active part in our nation's embrace of the politically correct or any other societal norm for that matter. So it should come as no surprise that college coaches are constantly profiling athletes when they walk in the gym to evaluate talent.

Before you say shame on them, I don't mean to imply that the recruiting process crosses any moral boundary lines, nor that recruiters pass judgment on anyone based on their inherent physical, lifestyle or religious characteristics. (Unless, of course, you view defense as a religion in which case then prejudice on that basis is completely acceptable.)

The kinds of labeling that goes on in recruiting are the characterizations of someone's style of play, behavior on the floor or other subjective areas that concern college coaches. These aren't statistical categories or physical and athletic attributes that every recruiter will pretty much be on the same page with their peers. They're perceptions of the intangible. The evaluation of these immeasurable aspects of an athlete's performance can have a big impact on a recruiter's opinion and ultimately their decision to recruit an athlete or not.



Aggressive play will attract recruiters, but check your attitude at the door.

All it takes is one demonstration or sequence of events to shape an impression that ultimately might eliminate recruiting options for a perspective student athlete. Take great care in not giving evaluators a reason to leave the gym with any of the following notions about your play.

**Not coachable.** Time and again we see athletes who seem to want to operate outside the parameters of their team. They don't pay attention in the huddles or when they leave the game they take the seat furthest from their coaches. Recruiters and evaluators aren't deaf and can hear coaches repeating instructions over and over again from the bench only to see them ignored by a player on the floor. Worse yet we see players who won't make eye contact or respond to their coach over the course of the game. Behavior along these lines is an enormous red flag and not something college coaches take lightly. It can be seen as a great indicator of your lack of commitment to your team as well as an indication of disrespect for your coaching staff.

**Won't play hard.** This can be the kiss of death for even the most talented of athletes. Not getting out and running the floor in transition or jogging back on defense is never going to impress anybody. One of the most revealing clues for a lack of effort is an athlete's play without the ball. It's hard to be interested in a player who's willing to stand and watch if they don't have the ball in their hands. At the other end of the floor not getting in a stance or just shadowing your player on every cut isn't going to make you popular at the next level or even with your current teammates for that matter. Players who "pace themselves" or "save it for the end of the game" may not get a chance to use it at the next level.

**Bad attitude.** When we talk about playing at the next level it's not just about talent and skills. It's about maturity, too. A scholarship is an investment and no college staff wants to babysit. The players who pout when they don't get the ball or the ones who seem to think it's OK to scream and yell at their teammates stand out ... and not in a good way.

Reacting negatively to coaches, showing disappointment when being taken out of the game or constantly being ready to fight your opponent is not a sign of competitiveness. It's a lack of focus. The same goes for reacting to a bad play or getting in the face of an official. If you can't seem to focus and be thinking about what's next coaches may start thinking about other recruits.

**Doesn't compete.** These individuals scare college coaches worse than new legislation from the NCAA. You can motivate players to a degree but true desire is something even the best coach can't provide for you. This concern isn't so much about what they do, but how they do it. There are players who look like they're just going through the motions out there and could care less about the outcome. I'm not talking about being a cheerleader who's all talk or a kamikaze who dives for balls in warm ups. There has to be real emotion and a competitive edge that set you apart from the rest and shows your willingness to do whatever it takes to come out on top. In a one point game or a 20-point blowout you have to respond competitively from tip to buzzer.

**Doesn't play well with others.** Not everything a coach looks at is basketball specific or even occurs on the floor. The way a player interacts with their teammates and coaches during practice and games or even with family and friends afterwards is a great indicator of character and the potential for contribution to team chemistry. When coaches have the opportunity on school, home or campus visits to see those relationships they're paying close attention to the demeanor an athlete has and the respect they show to those around them. What you are as a player is important but so is who you are as a person. If you can't represent yourself they may not want you representing their university.

Coaching any team is hard enough without adding to the mix the headaches that come with these kinds of issues. For a lot of recruiters they can be make or break characteristics when deciding to offer a prospect or not. The constantly growing number of talented players and the ultra competitive recruiting environment can easily lead to an offer going to a slightly less talented player with minimal baggage than a high maintenance all star. Your game may speak loudly but don't let it be drowned out by your approach and behavior. You never know who might be watching.

*Follow us on [Twitter](#), where you can ask questions and get instant updates.*

*Become a fan of the site on [Facebook](#) and get updates in your news stream.*

*Discuss this on our [Message Board](#).*

*Mark Lewis is the national recruiting coordinator for ESPN HoopGurlz. Twice ranked as one of the top 25 assistant coaches in the game by the Women's Basketball Coaches Association, he has more than 20 years of college coaching experience at Memphis State, Cincinnati, Arizona State, Western Kentucky and, most recently, Washington State. He can be reached at [mark@hoopgurlz.com](mailto:mark@hoopgurlz.com).*