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## Hollingsworth: Success is in the details

By Joy Hollingsworth  
HoopGurlz

I once was a 5-foot-9 shooting guard playing travel ball in small, hot gyms across the country. I clearly remember parents in the bleachers yelling, the unique AAU team names and the concession booths selling hotdogs and Red Vines. Walking into the gyms, I would look up in the stands to see all the college coaches decked out in their school gear of crisp polos and cool T-shirts. Trying so hard not to let my nerves make me turn ball over on a 3-on-0 fast break, it was difficult to keep my composure with the pressure of the game, making me sweat through my jersey.

I quickly learned it's the little details that matter the most. Never hung my head, always gave high-five to my teammates and cheered loud while sitting on the bench. Fast-forward 10 years later, and I'm now the one in the bleachers wearing a bright red polo having players trying to impress me.

It was new experience for me to sit with the other college coaches and watch games during the recent fall evaluation period. After the meet and greet of a smile, hug, or head nod, it was time to catch up with old friends, former teammates or coaches and establish new contacts. As I spent the day evaluating players, I was constantly entertained by the athleticism and explosion that comes with youth -- the sweet baby jump shots, tight handles or sticky defense. I'm truly amazed by the way the game has evolved with players running fast as Usain Bolt and jumping high like Nate Robinson.

For a moment, I flash back to my good, old AAU days wishing someone had pulled me aside and spit some words of wisdom my way to better prepare me for this first round of the recruiting process.

**Student first, athlete second.** Get your grades on point. You can be the best razzle-dazzle point guard or a dominant post player dunking, but if you don't have the grades, you will never set foot on the court. Play smart and invest the same amount of effort in the classroom as you invest in the gym.

**Play the game because you LOVE it.** Don't play because your mom and dad dragged you on a three-hour road trip to the middle of nowhere to fulfill their lost dreams. Play basketball because you get chills up your spine for an assist or a burst of contagious energy on an And1 tape. Coaches can tell if you're a true "baller."

**College coaches look at more than just you on the court.** We watch how you treat your parents. Are you the one yelling at Mom for buying the wrong Gatorade, or telling Dad to shut up in the stands? We watch the body language on the bench. Are you slouching, pouting, frowning or standing up and high-



Seattle University assistant coach Joy Hollingsworth, at left during her playing days with Arizona, offers advice for young players: Have fun.

fiving your teammate when they sub out? Basketball is just a piece of the recruiting process. We're always watching.

**A-plus for Attitude.** Get your attitude in check. Leave that trash-talking-potty-mouth-throwing-the-ball-hard-at-the-refs-slouching-in-your-seat-player at home. We don't have time for knuckleheads.

**Run back on defense.** One of the easiest ways a coach can tell if you have a case of laziness is by the way you run back on defense. Are you walking, jogging or sprinting your butt back? Please don't be the player who walks back on defense as your player scores a fast-break layup. Embarrassing.

In the end, just play, don't think. I can tell you all the tricks and trades of performing well, but if you if you're thinking too much, it will mess you up. If you only remember one thing, just remember to have FUN.

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