

2014 NFCA CONVENTION TRAVEL BALL CURRICULUM REPORT

The Panel included: Tim Walton (Florida), Jen McIntyre (UConn), Larissa Anderson (Hofstra), Randy Simkins (Dixie State, DII), Keith Parr (Christopher Newport, DIII), Pat Reardon (Central Methodist, NAIA), Darci Brownell (Sierra College, CAL JC) and Joe Yegge (Kirkwood CC, JUCO DII).

Each had an opportunity to offer their thoughts. The questions and their **summarized (not verbatim)** answers are below. **Additionally, it is important to note that the questions were not answered in the same order and Coaches were not redundant. So if a point of view had been expressed by every coach, it may not have been explicitly reiterated, but it does not mean they did not share a point of view.** It was a free flow of ideas – try to read it in the context that it is provided. And primarily that is new information for those who need it and amplifying info for the more experienced coaches.

	Walton	McIntyre	Anderson	Simkins	Parr	Reardon	Brownell	Yegge
5 things I wish I could communicate directly to every travel ball player	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Your freshman year of HS matters – take care of your grades ➤ Social Media Matters – be careful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ D1 Schools have 12 scholarships – not everyone is on a full ride ➤ There are lots of other places to get aid – look for it ➤ Study hard – good grades optimizes your options for athletic scholarships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Go See watch college Games – All levels ➤ Find a good fit – intersection of your needs, abilities and program fit ➤ Avoid the generic email 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 50/10/5 ➤ It's the Kids job to communicate ➤ Teach the kids how to play the game 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Find a good fit ➤ Visit lots of schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Don't Forget the non D1 Schools – there are lots levels out there ➤ Look for an academic fit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Respect the game 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Good Students can play JUCO too ➤ Be an athlete – play other sports
5 things I wish I could communicate directly to every travel ball parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Parents, we are watching you ➤ Let the kids play – take the pressure off them ➤ Roll players are a priority ➤ Understand what you can afford – there are not a lot of full scholarships ➤ Understand what an offer means ➤ What are kids goals ➤ Can your athlete handle the school work ➤ Understand how a scholarship works – semester to semester, year to year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Education kids on how to make a call to a college coach – have a plan. One word answers are not optimal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The way your athlete communicates to you matters – we are watching 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Schools are in the process of eliminating – don't give us a reason to eliminate you ➤ We want to see athletes fail – and how they react after they fail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ NAIA has no recruiting rules so the coaches can talk to athletes and parents at any time ➤ We'll go anywhere we need to, to see recruit athletes. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Watch your spend on camps/clinics. Consider choices carefully
	Walton	McIntyre	Anderson	Simkins	Parr	Reardon	Brownell	Yegge
5 things I would like to tell every club coach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Trust and relationship between club coach and college coach matters ➤ A response to an email 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Know the game and recruiting rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Let the kids choose their school – avoid steering them ➤ Follow up with your 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Teach your athletes "why" so they can take ownership of their actions in the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ There is a big gap between TB/HS & College 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Help your kids evaluate all levels of college ball ➤ Watch all level of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Don't forget about Cal JC ➤ There is a place for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not mean we are recruiting a kid ➤ College Coaches want to provide a good experience 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> kids when they go off to college – stay interested in your kids ➤ Understand NCAA rules ➤ Be honest with kids and us 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> game – NO Robots ➤ Let catchers run 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Practice more – work on your skills ➤ Continue to get better yourself 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ball so you know what each level looks like 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ every athlete ➤ We keep getting robots – let your athletes think for themselves and think the game 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Athletes are arriving in college unprepared – how are they unprepared 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Need to understand Arm Care ➤ Life skills are lacking ➤ Poor base runners and bunters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Athletes don't know what it means to work hard ➤ Athletes don't know what it means to practice ➤ They struggle to coach themselves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Instincts are lacking ➤ Don't understand game management ➤ Club coaches need to do a better job teaching the game 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Teach them how to fail and how to recover ➤ Teach them how to be a role player 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Not ready for academic load ➤ Be ready to seek help with studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Time management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Understand the pace of practice ➤ Time management is a challenge ➤ Arm Care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Not ready for practice ➤ Like skills ➤ Courtesy & Manners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do we decide which showcases / tournaments to attend 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ We go where our players are ➤ Seek the best teams against the best teams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ We'll go where ever the kids we are recruiting go 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ We'll go where ever the kids we are recruiting go 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruiting videos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ We can find a player on video ➤ Keep it short 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Keep them short ➤ Used to eliminate athletes ➤ Useful. Can find athletes via video 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Keep them short ➤ useful 					

Below is the full list of questions that were on the list. Above is what we were able to get to in the 1.5 hours allotted.

Here are some suggested topics for the college coaches' panel:

1. The top 5 things I wish I could communicate directly to:
 - a. Every travel ball player
 - b. Every parent of a travel ball player
 - c. Every coach of travel ball players
2. In what ways are players arriving to college softball programs not sufficiently prepared?
 - a. Physical skills
 - b. Physical condition
 - c. Mental skills
 - d. Academics
 - e. Life/time management skills

3. How big a role do the following play in your recruiting of players?
 - a. Showcase tournaments – So many now, how do you choose which to attend?
 - b. Showcase camps/clinics – coaches paid/coach expenses paid
 - c. Showcase camps/clinics – coaches not paid/coach expenses not paid
 - d. Competitive tournaments / Qualifiers?
 - e. ASA, PGF, USSSA, Triple Crown, etc? does it matter?
 - f. Skills videos
 - g. Communications from recruits (email, phone, text)
 - h. Travel ball coach evaluations/recommendations
 - i. High school coach evaluations/recommendations
 - j. Instructor evaluations/recommendations
 - k. 3rd party placement/recruiting services
 - l. Travel ball team – independent vs. big name or “franchise” team. Does the name create benefit.
4. Program Fit
 - a. What are the top reasons players leave softball programs?
 - b. What are the most common reasons players leave your program?
 - c. To what should players, parents, and travel ball coaches give more consideration to ensure a good player/program fit?