

THE COLLEGE HUNT

By Jonathan House and Addy Smith

Becoming a college athlete is something that many kids dream of. However, it's a dream that is difficult to achieve. According to the NCAA, there are over eight million high school athletes in the United States. However, only 480,000 of those athletes go on to play sports in college. This year at City High, a handful of athletes have already announced their plans to go to college to continue their athletic careers. Nate Wieland '17 announced in June that he plans to attend Northern Illinois University, a school in the Mid-American Conference, to continue to play football. Alexa Ingram '17 announced in August that she plans to go to Drake University in Des Moines to play volleyball. Grace Brown '17 is headed to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to play Big Ten soccer, and Shannon Stamp '17 has committed to play volleyball at Concordia University of Chicago. Joe Hoff '17 will be playing tennis at Creighton University, a Big East school in Omaha, next year. Finally, Mary Arch '17 plans to, but has not yet officially signed to run cross country and track at the University of Iowa. One junior, Ashley Joens, a five star basketball recruit — according to ESPN — has already committed to Iowa State.

The process is not easy. Only the top recruits get noticed early while others have trouble getting noticed, especially by NCAA Division I schools. This is something that baseball player Brett McCleary '17 has experienced. Next year, he says he plans to play junior college baseball to give him more time to develop and to try to get more attention from top programs.

"Going in my dream was

always to play at the highest level," McCleary said. "I have spent a ton of time picking out the right showcases and camps and making videos to send to coaches [in order to help with my recruiting process]." Shannon Stamp '17 has had a slightly different experience than McCleary. Stamp, a Concordia University of Chicago volleyball commit, says the toughest part for her was actually deciding which school to choose.

"The beginning was easy for me. You just have to send out as many emails as you can and see who responds and who has interest in you, but when coaches and schools actually start to recruit you it's kind of shocking at how many choices you end up having that fit your 'wants,'" Stamp said. "Eventually you narrow it down, and it was a huge decision, but I went with my gut and I think that's what most people do."

Other athletes at City High have received attention. Seniors Jordain Buckland, Vance Dillon, and Naeem Smith have all obtained offers from William Penn, a small school in Oskaloosa, Iowa to be apart of its football program.

In addition to athletes struggling to get attention from college programs, some athletes find it hard to attract interest from schools outside of the Midwest. The furthest traveller in this year's recruiting class is Grace Brown, with a 303 mile commute. Mary Arch '17 originally pictured herself competing at Dallas Baptist University or Indiana Wesleyan University, but ultimately decided to run collegiately at the University of Iowa. Upon visiting each school she felt that what Iowa brought to the table would be a better fit for her.

Through the struggles of college recruitment, numerous City athletes have excelled at the high school level and have committed to continue their sport on a bigger stage.



GRAPHIC BY JIM GEERDES

GRACE BROWN
D1 NEBRASKA
SOCCER

Grace Brown has been playing soccer since before she could even write her name. Ever since the very beginning of her career, she has pictured herself playing in college. Brown has decided to live out her childhood dream in a bright red Nebraska uniform.

"I visited Iowa, Creighton, and Drake. I was seriously considering going to Drake, but I knew I wanted to push myself the hardest possible. Nebraska is in the Big Ten conference — a really tough conference — and I just wanted to see if I could do it," Brown said of her college choice. Brown is known by her teammates to be a vocal leader and strong competitor on the field, and she attributes her strong love of soccer to the competition and team aspect the sport offers.

"You can't accomplish anything without the team in soccer. The defenders play a huge role as well as the forwards; in order to be successful, you can't just have one [component]."

Brown practices between six and fourteen hours each week. She has two first-place Regional finishes and one second place trophy

at Nationals with her ODP (Olympic Development Program) team under her belt. Brown also travelled to the National Premier League tournament in Colorado with a California team this past summer and brought home a first place finish.

Although Brown's experience has prepared her to excel on the field, she still has worries heading into the next level of competition. Brown stands at a mere 5'4" and understands the challenges that come with a short stature.

"I'm mostly worried about my size because I won't be Nebraska's tallest person, so I'll definitely have to work a lot harder."

Brown plans to major in elementary education next fall and not only seeks a Division I experience on the field, but in the classroom as well.

"[Academics] are also very important to me. I have never let soccer get in the way of me getting good grades."

"I've known this is what I wanted to do with the next part of my life since I was ten years old. [I have spent] a huge part of my life [preparing for] this new chapter, so it's super exciting that it's almost here."

JOE HOFF
D1 CREIGHTON
TENNIS

Joe Hoff has played tennis since he was around seven years old. Hoff first began contemplating the idea of playing tennis at the college level during his freshman year. Prior to that, Hoff played baseball, soccer, and basketball. Hoff felt that he had to quit those to focus more on tennis with playing collegiately as the ultimate goal.

In order to help prepare himself for the college level, Hoff has sought out coaching from professionals of the game, including Matt Hagan, the assistant men's tennis coach at the University of Iowa, as well as Sarah Borwell, a British doubles professional player.

Last month, Hoff took the next step towards his goal as he committed to play tennis at Creighton next year. He was also considering Luther, Case Western in Cleveland, Coe, and Iowa. Hoff says that as a future business major, he ultimately chose Creighton because he was drawn to Creighton in part because of its business college. He had been considering Creighton as one of his options since the beginning of his junior year. While he took into account

the level of academics there, he also liked the high level of Division I tennis that the Blue Jays play at.

"There were a lot of players who were at a right level that would both challenge me and help improve me as well," Hoff said.

Hoff isn't quite sure about the opportunities that he'll get to play singles, but he will play doubles in his first year.

Tennis is a unique sport in that, unlike other sports where most (or even all) of the recruiting comes from playing for your school during the school season, a lot of the attention tennis recruits receive is based off of their individual performances in tournaments outside of the school season, with the school season being only a small part of the process. However, this will change when he gets to play at the college level as he'll be attending matches with his teammates.

"Most of my tennis has been individual and going to tournaments individually, so I'm looking forward to having it be only with a team and having more connections when you go around and play," Hoff said.

ALEXA INGRAM
D1 DRAKE
VOLLEYBALL

Alexa Ingram has been playing varsity volleyball for the Little Hawks since her freshman year, although she says she never seriously considered playing volleyball collegiately until her junior year. Ingram says she ultimately chose the Bulldogs because of the school's close proximity and the level of interest they showed in her.

"Several other out-of-state schools showed interest in me, but I ruled them out early on because I was just looking at schools in Iowa."

"I emailed Drake not expecting much, but the coach came to [one of my] tournaments in Des Moines and liked me a lot more than he expected to, [considering] my height."

Ingram is a member of a very selective group. According to NCAA records, only 1.2% of all high school volleyball athletes go on to play at the Division I level. As a right side hitter, Alexa's height worked against her in the recruiting process. The typical height range for a DI right side hitter is 5'11" to 6'2". Ingram is 5'9".

Ingram juggled hitting on the right side and setting

throughout her high school career and was recruited for her versatile abilities.

"[When Drake first saw me], I was actually playing a different position than I usually do, and they were impressed with that."

Ingram has displayed her ability to compete at a high level of volleyball, earning her the title of a unanimous all-MVC first-team selection for three consecutive years. On November 19th, she was also recognized as one of the top 36 seniors in the state and participated in the IGCA All-Star Tournament.

"I hope to prove myself this fall and earn playing time my freshman year."

On top of developing as a player, Ingram is grateful for the friendships volleyball has brought her and is excited for the future connections she hopes to make.

"My favorite memories are watching Shannon Stamp fall during school volleyball and meeting a bunch of new people throughout club and school volleyball. I love getting to play with my best friends, [which is why] I'm most excited to get to meet new people and be a part of a new team next year."

NATE WIELAND
D1 NORTHERN ILLINOIS
FOOTBALL

Nate Wieland '17 has been City's starting quarterback for the past three seasons. The NIU commit says he first started considering playing college football during his first year starting at quarterback on varsity during his sophomore season.

"Ever since I started playing, I really just had a true love for the game, and that's carried on throughout the years," Wieland said on the idea of playing collegiately. "I've never lost the love for that game, so I knew I wanted to pursue it in college."

Wieland received attention from other schools including Iowa, Iowa State, Minnesota, and Kansas. He said he ultimately chose NIU, located in DeKalb, Illinois, a town about 60 miles west of Chicago, because of the opportunity to play early and because he liked the coaching staff.

"That was the one school they told me I was going to have a lot of playing time at very early in my career," Wieland said. "They will be very fun to play for."

After announcing his commitment, Wieland said that he received even more attention from other schools

than he did before.

"After you commit, I think other colleges see that one big school wants you, so they know that you're a good player and some of them will start coming in," Wieland said.

Wieland has yet to decide on a major yet and admits that he is nervous to go to school out of state, but he is excited about the opportunity to play football next year and not be redshirted. At Northern Illinois, he is expected to be the backup quarterback as a true freshman and possibly even compete for the starting job. However, unlike in high school, he says that as of now, quarterback would be his sole position.

"It's going to be fun having a new coaching staff, new teammates, and the whole college experience of football," Wieland said.

Wieland understands that with the new experience will come challenges that he has not had to face yet and knows that he'll have to work to get to the level that he wants to be at starting the second he walks on campus.

"I'm just going to go in with the mindset that I'll have to work hard each day," Wieland said.