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Colleges' Search for Athletes Continues to Change

By **BILL PENNINGTON**

HAVERFORD, Pa. — Four years ago, Greg Kannerstein, Haverford College's director of athletics, surveyed the convoluted intricacies of small-college athletic recruiting as it had evolved in his lengthy career and offered this appraisal.

"The nature of the recruiting process gets more organized every year," Kannerstein said. "The parents are more savvy, the athletes are polished and the institutions are meticulous. But if anything, it gets harder to predict, which, of course, is the one thing everyone is hoping to be able to do."

Kannerstein, who later became the college's dean, died last year at 67, leaving a hole in the Haverford community. His legacy endures, however, said his successor as the athletic director, Wendy Smith.

"Maybe the recruiting system is not any more predictable four years later, but Greg knew we had to be committed to it, anyway," she said. "It is the only way to strike the athletic and academic balance. If you don't go out and aggressively recruit, you aren't going to find the top scholar-athletes because everyone is competing for them. If the school is committed to excellence, then athletics shouldn't be any different."

In four years, however, the recruiting landscape has changed in a few notable ways.

"YouTube is taking over," the men's lacrosse coach, Colin Bathory, said. "And that's a good

thing. Too many kids had to pay for expensive DVDs. For players to be able to shoot a game video one morning and for me to be able to see it that evening, that's a breakthrough."

Several Haverford coaches said they thought YouTube had allowed the video part of the recruiting process to reclaim some of its authenticity.

"I feel like homemade videos seem more genuine," the softball coach, Jen Ward, said.

Dave Beccaria, the baseball coach, laughed when he talked about the recruiting video he viewed last year on YouTube made by a freshman on his current roster.

"He obviously was pitching to his father, who wasn't very skilled as a catcher," Beccaria said.

"About every third breaking pitch, the father took one off the shins. But you know, I saw that he had a pretty lively breaking ball. And when I met the father, I commended him on his bravery."

Beccaria was less complimentary about a trend he sees with high school players who participate in 10 or 12 showcases in a spring and summer season.

"It's not necessary to go to every showcase event, and it might even hurt your chances,"

Beccaria said. "As coaches, we talk about players who are so busy showing their skills, they no longer have time to work on their skills."

One issue raised frequently four years ago that continues to come up is whether athletic achievement should play any role in small-college admissions.

"It will always be part of the debate," said Jess Lord, Haverford's dean of admissions. "And that is why athletes who are admitted must have more than one thing compelling about them.

[Athletics](#) can be a part, it cannot be the whole."