

## Importance of Athletic Scholarships

By Sarah Daren

Athletic scholarships reward the hard work and skill of students and provide them further opportunity to shine. At the core, they financially assist students who have met prerequisites and show potential for further success. However, athletic scholarships are so much more - they are the key to a better future for the student-athlete and their loved ones.

Many student-athletes come from low-income households or, sadly, no household at all. For some, an athletic scholarship means the difference between success or homelessness. The economic imbalance isn't easy to discuss and assisting new generations with equalization is a priority for academic and athletic programs. As a coach, you can spot potential in anyone and help them seize opportunities, like athletic scholarships, that can entirely change their life path.

### **Poverty, Homelessness, and Athletic Scholarships by the Numbers**

These numbers are hard to swallow, and open our eyes to very harsh realities that can be avoided:

- 1.3 to 1.7 million youth experience one night of homelessness a year
- In 2015, 13.5% (43.1) million people lived in poverty
- 86% college athletes come from impoverished homes

These statistics don't improve when one considers the difficulty of receiving an athletic scholarship. Roughly 500,000 out of 8 million student-athletes will go on to compete at the collegiate level. Of those, only 130,000 will earn an athletic scholarship. The competition is fierce, and the odds are not in the student-athletes favor. Without the financial assistance, their impressive athletic performance will be replaced by a job after high school. They won't have a chance to compete at a higher level or, more importantly, earn a college degree and qualify for a higher paying position.

### **Athletic Scholarships Provide More Than Athletic Opportunity**

Above their passion for the sport, student-athletes earn scholarships in order to attend a university and earn a degree. Only the top few college athletes continue to play professional sports, so many athletes diversify their portfolio. Although following a dream is important, student-athletes can perform and study - it's very doable. Plus, they can earn a degree in something sports related such as: coaching, athletic administration, or a physical therapist. Regardless, athletic scholarships afford boys and girls the opportunity to play for a prestigious team, possibly go pro, and earn a degree without the financial burden.

## **How Coaches Can Help**

It goes without saying that coaches are much more than athletic team leaders. Coaches are vital to student-athlete growth play an influential role in multiple aspects of their life. Since the competition is fierce, coaches have to give their athlete every available, and legal, advantage. Earning a scholarship could bring them and their family above the poverty line, so it's no laughing matter.

Providing educational materials, explaining options, contacting recruiters and college associates, and tutoring are all ways in which coaches can help student-athletes.

There are many strict rules regarding recruitment, so staying up-to-date on recruitment regulations is important as well. Coaches have experience, helpful contacts, and understand what athletes need to do if they want a chance at a scholarship. It is up to them at the end of the day, but coaches can show the way and help as they follow the path. For many, this is their one chance to improve their lives, and they rely on coaches to help them succeed.