

6-12-2006 Verbal & Written Commitments

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2 JOSH CENTOR: My name is Josh Centor, and
3 I'm here with NCAA President Myles Brand. In today's
4 podcast, we're going to discuss verbal commitments and
5 written commitments.

6 Dr. Brand, what's the important difference
7 afternoons between the two?

8 DR. MYLES BRAND: Well, one is binding; the
9 letter of intent is binding. The oral commitment is not
10 binding. It kind of hooks people up, but it -- people do
11 change their minds.

12 You know, I should add something here,
13 Josh. The NCAA is not in charge of letters of intent.
14 That's done through the conferences and through the
15 schools. In fact, it's ran out of the Southeast
16 Conference. Of course, we track it. But it is not -- it
17 is not an activity of the NCAA.

18 JOSH CENTOR: In terms of 14-year-old,
19 15-year-old kids verbally committing to schools, is that
20 too early for kids to know what they're going to do with
21 their college careers?

22 DR. MYLES BRAND: I think it is too early.
23 You have to reach a point of balance. I think many will
24 grow up, say, in the neighborhood of a school, and
25 they've known the coach, and they know that they'll be

1 good enough athletes to join that team. And every now
2 and then, you get a young man or woman who really wants
3 to go to that school, and they commit very early on in
4 their own mind and sometimes verbally as well. There's
5 a -- that's okay.

6 But for most people, the vast majority of
7 people, I think you need to look around a little bit.
8 You have to make sure there's a good fit with your
9 academic goals, as well as your athletic goals. You have
10 to explore a little. Spread out and look around.

11 It's like getting a prom date. I mean, you
12 don't want to commit in your freshman year of high school
13 for a prom date in your senior year. You've got to
14 explore the field a little bit more.

15 JOSH CENTOR: I had trouble getting a prom
16 date anyway, but that's a good parallel.

17 What are the positives for a student
18 athlete who makes a verbal commitment early? Does it
19 take some of the pressure off?

20 DR. MYLES BRAND: You know, for the elite
21 athlete who is being approached time and again, and feels
22 the pressure and is uncomfortable with the pressure,
23 making an early commitment, an early verbal commitment,
24 will relieve some of that pressure both psychologically
25 and in fact -- and there's some advantages to that

1 approach. That only works for the most elite athletes.

2 I think those who are not elite, who want
3 to look for a good fit academically as well as
4 athletically, learning more about various schools that
5 are interested in you, as well as opening up new
6 opportunities you might not see at the beginning of the
7 process, are worth taking advantage of.

8 JOSH CENTOR: I think what worries me a
9 little bit is how kids know where they want to go to
10 school. But not only that, the coaches, how do they know
11 the kids at 15 years old?

12 DR. MYLES BRAND: It's a bit of a dance a
13 little bit. And the fact of the matter is that
14 sometimes, a coach will recruit a young man or woman but
15 not be fully committal. They'll say, you know, if we
16 have enough scholarships, you're on my list. Or you're
17 on my short list for first baseman or some such. You
18 can't misinterpret that, hear what you want to hear, and
19 think that really is an offer for a scholarship.

20 The student athletes really have to be very
21 clear in their own mind, with the help of their parents
22 or guardians, that an actual commitment is being made by
23 a coach. And that often doesn't happen. So I think one
24 has to be very careful here.

25 JOSH CENTOR: But it's possible for a

1 student athlete to verbally commit to a school and then
2 maybe pull out because it's not binding. So we could
3 have a problem there where a student athlete might leave
4 a program in the lurch.

5 DR. MYLES BRAND: That could happen. But
6 as we get closer to the sign-up time, the student
7 athletes, at least in Division I, will write letters of
8 intent, and those are binding. There are conditions
9 under which you can break it, but they are binding. So I
10 think once you write the letter of intent, you can't
11 leave the coach in the lurch.

12 But a verbal commitment could change. I
13 mean, you might say, I'm going to go to University X, and
14 University Y all of a sudden has a much better academic
15 program, or they just got a new coach that you like. So
16 that isn't unusual to have students change their verbal
17 commitments.

18 JOSH CENTOR: You know, I also worry that
19 those young kids don't know, you know, what they're
20 looking for in that school. When I went to look at
21 schools after my junior year of high school, I was really
22 looking at a specific school and a specific region. And
23 when I was 14, it was the furthest thing from my mind.

24 So I don't know. It's a tough issue. But
25 thank you for taking the time to discuss.

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DR. MYLES BRAND: My pleasure.

JOSH CENTOR: Thanks for listening to
"Mondays With Myles". We'll see you next week.