MIT athletic recruitment limited

By Robert E. Machnan
MIT does not award scholarships. As an NCAA Division III school, it has severe limitations imposed on recruitment procedures.

"We can't contact them," said Mike O'Brien, head coach of the men's basketball and baseball teams. "We have to wait for them to contact us."

"We don't have recruited athletes," echoed Director of Admissions Peter H. Richardson '48.

"For one thing, there's no budget for it. Some [Division I] schools have athletic department budgets as large as their admissions department's."

"It's off student interest," said O'Brien. "There's a card included in the application which asks the student to identify which sports he's interested in."

O'Brien outlined four basic steps necessary before an athlete runs out on a field in an MIT uniform:

1) Getting the person to apply. Our biggest task is to let people know we have a good program," said Richardson. "Our policy is one of information because generally people just don't know about this part of MIT."

"The policy is affective through the booklet MIT Today sent to prospective applicants, and the athletic card in the application.

Once the card is sent in, then the coaches can begin to contact the applicants. The contact usually takes the form of letters to the students and his high school coaches.

2) The second step is admission. "When the athletic card comes in," said Richardson, "we send it off to the coach of that sport and ask, 'Tell us, who's good'." "We do try to communicate with the admissions office," said O'Brien. "MIT looks for more than just good athletes. MIT is sensitive to well-roundedness. We want people who will be leaders, outstanding among the ones already here."

The commitment and dedication itself is important, agreed Richardson. "It's important input into the picture of the individual. MIT will not, however, admit anyone who is not completely qualified academically, a point which O'Brien stresses in his contacts with applicants.

3) Once accepted, getting the student to attend. Gregory Abowd is a senior and a basketball and track star from Farmington Hills, Michigan. He was offered a place in the class of '86. "Coach O'Brien's letter introduced me to the school. He said that the concentration there is on academics."

Eric Fleming '83 is the manager of the men's basketball team. His home is near Abowd's, and he visited the prospective Engineer. "It was very informal," said Fleming. "He asked questions about basketball and classes. I talked to his coach also. He wondered how we had time to make a commitment to both sports and academics. I told him it could be done, that many people did it."

"Eric talked about Coach O'Brien's philosophy," said Abowd. "He said there were no cuts, and that while MIT is Division III and usually an underdog, they have a good program and a good name. Abowd was impressed by O'Brien's program from as much as he saw of it, but he had to wait until he visited to be sure."

"We try to pive the personal touches," said John Benedick, coach of the swimming and water polo teams. "We telephone and write like crazy once they are admitted. We try to give them a place to stay with a team member, arrange interviews if they're interested in a particular department. Even if they don't attend, we want them to come away saying good things about the program." Division I schools are permitted to fly students twice to their campuses. MIT may not provide transportation, only room and board, which hinders someone who lives across the country.

Mike DiChristina '85 plays baseball and basketball. "When I visited last year, I talked with Mr. O'Brien," he said. "He told me that sports here strives for respectability, that but you come to the Institute for academics."

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