

POSSIBLE CONTENTS OF A “BRAG” LETTER

The intent of a letter of this nature is to make you stand out from the hundreds of letters that a coach or a scout will receive every season. You need to be unique. You need to appear to be special. Having coached at the high school level for 16 years, and having taught AP and college prep classes for 16 years in the high school environment, I have had the privilege of working with hundreds of college admissions officers, college coaches and professional major league scouts from all over the nation. I have assisted perhaps thousands of scholars and athletes as they seek entrance to college or university. I have repeatedly admitted to you that I know little or nothing about softball; but now, you are now entering my world of expertise. You just have to trust me on this one. Some of you have asked me what to include, and that is a fair question. It is unfair of me to ask you to do something when you have no idea what it is I want you to do. My bad. Remember that there are three ways to fail? One of them is that the coach did not educate you in what you were supposed to do. This letter will help correct my error. If you read this and still do not understand, you are to contact me directly. **Parents and players alike are to read this completely.** Thank you in advance for taking your time to do this. I promise that this will not happen very often, if ever, in the future.

GRADES

As Coach Enquist has told you, “Your bridge to college is not your stick or your glove. It’s your GPA.” First and foremost, discuss your GPA. If you are in “weighted” or “AP” or “Honor’s” classes, mention them. Please remember, getting a grade of “C” or even “B” in an advanced class will hurt more than help. You would be better off getting an “A” in the regular class. You need to keep everything at the “B” level or higher. Your **MINIMUM GPA** the close of high school should be **3.50 or better**. If you have a problem, talk to me. Get help **EARLY**, rather than waiting until it is too late to improve. (int. ____, ____, ____) There is no shame in asking for help. It is a real shame if you do **not** ask for help.

I always started every class with a lecture on study habits. If the students in class paid attention, they had a guide to an “A” in any class. If they did not take advantage of the lesson, they got whatever grade they deserved. There are short cuts. You can get better grades while doing less work, as long as it is smarter work. The topics include in-class note taking, how to read a chapter from the text, anticipating what essay questions will be asked, class discussion tips, how to take an exam, how to write a paper and how to spend less time studying while getting more out of the time you do spend. I will share the study habits with anyone who wishes to learn them, but I will not force the information on anyone. (int. ____, ____, ____) I recall something about “Cast not your pearls among swine.”

SOFTBALL

Everyone assumes that you think that you will be a Division 1 player playing somewhere in the Pac 10. You need both the game and the statistics to prove it. Our Desperado Team will help with the “game” end of it through coaching, exposure and promotion.

Unfortunately, the only reliable statistics come from school ball. You will need to be successful in both school ball and in travel ball to make it. (int. ____, ____, ____) You will need school ball so coaches learn about you and want to come and see you. You will need travel ball so they have the opportunity to see you in action, and so they will like what they see once they do see you. You need to make all-league as soon and as often as possible. Your high school coach is the only person that can nominate you for all-league. Be nice to your high school coach. **Coaches of the other teams in your league**, who do not care about you, or even know you, **will give you credibility by casting their vote for all-league in your behalf. You need to make a special point of addressing each opposing coach after each game (pre-league, league or CIF). You need to be articulate, polite and complimentary after each game, employing a firm hand shake, using good eye contact and a strong, confident voice as you speak to them.** (int. ____, ____, ____) You do those things and they will remember you, no matter how you did in the game. These are the same people who will select the All-County Teams and the All-CIF Teams. That is very important. Newspaper coverage will provide statistics given to the papers by your varsity coaches. Coaches and scouts all learn about players from the newspapers. The most exclusive schools have **“unofficial recruiters”** that live in an area, read the local sports page, and report back to the coach. These people are usually alumni that will be used to watch the local athletic talent, interview perspective candidates and facilitate the process for the school’s coaching staff by saving the school expensive recruiting trips. (As an example, a personal friend of mine, Pete Gizzi performs these tasks for the West Point Academy.)

In your “brag” letter, be as complete as possible; 1) what positions have you played? 2) how many years have you played? 3) what are your strengths? 4) what are the teams you have played for? 5) what awards have you earned? 6) how have your teams done? What are your times to first base?

PRIVATE LESSONS

Be sure to list what private lessons you have taken (pitching, hitting, fielding), how long you have taken them and whom you have taken them with. (int. ____, ____, ____)

OTHER SPORTS

Any other sports that you have played need to be mentioned. It shows that you are versatile. It shows that you are coach-able. It shows that you had options, and have selected softball as your sport of choice. If you received any awards, get them down.

SELECT A MAJOR

Each of you should have a college major in mind. Mention it in your brag letter. If you don’t have one yet, get one by tomorrow. No, I am not joking. Go to your high school career guidance counselor and ask for the addresses of the 5 best schools for your major in state, and the 5 best schools for your major out of state. (int. ____, ____, ____) Bring me the addresses, and I will send a letter to each of the coaches at each of the schools asking for information on their softball program. Because we initiate contact, they are allowed to reply. We will ask for their media guide, as well as their schedules. We will

express an interest in seeing them play anytime they are scheduled in the area. We will send them our media guide, which will include your “brag letter.” If nothing else, your Major is “**Undeclared.**”

COLLEGE ENTRANCE TEST SCORES

Take the SAT and the ACT tests as soon as possible. You can take them over and over at no penalty. They will keep the best score. There is a PSAT test you should take as a sophomore. It is very valuable to take. There are **SAT classes you can take to help you on the SAT tests.** Take them. Be sure to mention your test results. They are going to find out anyway, so put them down. Arrange for these tests to be taken around your school softball schedule. They are Saturday events, so plan accordingly. There was nothing worse than to have a player miss a game because the test was not taken until the spring season. I had one kid, Dave Dieter, who missed a game where three professional scouts had planned on coming just to see him. The scouts did call first to ask if Dieter would be playing, and I had to tell them “No.” Don’t feel too bad; David accepted a full ride to UCI on a baseball scholarship. When UCI shut down its baseball program, he took the full ride offer from Arizona State University. Not bad.

MENTION THE FOLLOWING IF IT APPLIES:

- 1) Any religious affiliations or church groups you belong to and for how long.
- 2) Any hobbies and interests that you may have. (ie: origami, painting, singing)
- 3) Any charity work or volunteer work you have ever done (ie: coaching younger kids).
- 4) Any leadership role you have ever been placed in, any where at any time. (team captain, President of any club on campus)
- 5) Any jobs you have had, and what you did.
- 6) Any music you like to listen to, any books you like to read and any instruments you have ever played, no matter how long ago or how badly you played them.
- 7) Any other languages you can speak, read, write or understand to any degree.
- 8) Any extended traveling you have done, with or without your family, any where, any time.
- 9) Any special honors you have received. (Swallows Day Queen, Homecoming Princess)
- 10) Any university camps or clinics you have attended. (UCLA “Bruwin” Academy)
- 11) Any extra-curricular activity at any school. (helped to decorate the float in the school homecoming parade, car wash fund raiser for tennis/track/cross country/soccer/water polo/basketball/golf/softball)

YOU CAN HELP YOURSELF TO IMPRESS COACHES OR SCOUTS BY:

Warming up as if God in Heaven was watching your every move, and your very salvation

Depended on pleasing Him. (int. ____, ____, ____) You never know who is watching. Coaches already know that you can play, or they would not come to see you. They want to see how you conduct yourselves when “no one is watching.” You may really get lucky and get noticed by a coach that came to see someone else play, but you were so amazing in your technique at playing catch, that the coach couldn’t help but pay attention to you. If your entire team looks sharp, the college coach or scout will pay far more attention to your team and will ask your coach questions about you because your coach looks like he knows what he is doing because you look like you know what you are doing.

Knowing what to do. (int. ____, ____, ____) The better you execute, the better you look. Even if you lose the game, a college coach or scout will realize that you worked a “double cutoff,” a cut and relay, a “trailer play” or a first and third play. Most colleges do not do what you are doing. I have yet to see even one travel ball team do what you are doing. If that coach or scout has anything more than a pea for a brain, they will notice what you are doing, but only if you can execute. This is not about your coaches getting a scholarship; it is about you playing so well that people will notice you.

Hustling everywhere you go. You want to get unnoticed? Just loaf once in a ball game and watch the level of interest completely vanish. (int. ____, ____, ____)

Taking a speech class. (int. ____, ____, ____) We had a Professional Hollywood Acting Coach give you lessons in poise and diction last July. He had you enunciate with a cork in your mouth. He had you rehearse lines in an answer questions that may be asked of you by a college coach. He had you work on posture and on eye contact. Did you ever wonder why?

Not letting bad things get you down. The college coach or scout is really, really, really interested in seeing your reaction to adversity. (int. ____, ____, ____) They are almost hoping you make an error, throw a wild pitch, strike out or over run a base. They want to see how you react to a bad thing happening. Anyone can be wonderful and cheerful when they go 4 for 4 with a game winning hit. Anyone can be a good team mate when they throw a no hitter. How do you act when someone drops your throw on a steal? How do you act when a team mate makes an error? How do you act when you pop up with the bases loaded and the game on the line?

By being a team player. Do you support your team mates, no matter what happens? Do you take responsibility when you make a mistake, or do you create some excuse, or try to lay the blame on someone else? The only person you are fooling is yourself, and you look like a dork in the process. You may get past Mom and Dad because they tend to turn a blind eye to your faults, but your team mates see through it, your coaches see through it and the college coaches and scouts see through it. Do yourself a favor and save yourself the embarrassment.

ASA

All of you should have registered with the ASA system. It is not great, but it is better than not doing it at all. Very few coaches will rely on that avenue, but you never know and it is not hard or expensive.

WHY NOW?

Your sophomore year is your most important year. (int. ____, ____, ____) Having a great freshman year puts you a huge advantage, but your sophomore year is the year that counts most of all. If you have a poor sophomore year, you will not get much of a shot as a junior. If you are able to get into position during your sophomore year, especially with your school ball team, you will be all set as a junior. What is the year that the college coaches press and recruit the “blue chip” kids? (right after the Junior year) You want to be in a position to accept a college commitment by July of the summer after your junior year. The very best players have it all done BEFORE their senior year even happens. That should be your goal.

So, hopefully now you can see what is needed in a “brag letter.” You can see what will be expected of you during ball games. You can see why the coaches are trying to get you exposure a year “ahead” of schedule. You may even be able to see why we have done some of the things that we have done (UCLA Clinic, Acting Tutor, encourage you to exhibit correct technique on the “small stuff” like playing catch...)

Of the **SIX** brag letters I have received since I asked for them beginning last February, Hannah has the most acceptable letter. All of you should go to our website, look under “ROSTER,” click on your own name and see what it says. That is what a college coach will see as they look on our site to learn more about you.

How soon can you get me what I need to be able to promote you? The first opportunity has a deadline of September 12th to be in the tournament director’s hands. You will need to give me time to formulate the contents of whatever I receive. The sooner, the better.

Ladies, I would prefer that you attempt this letter on your own first. You are welcome to ask your parents for help after you have given it your best shot. After you and your parents have had a go, if you want help, and if you think that I could do any better, you are welcome to ask me, but only after you have first given it your best effort.

There are several places where the letter contains (int. ____, ____, ____). **Each of you, and each of your parents, is to read this letter and to initial in each of the places I have asked you to note.** Initial the appropriate places and get this back to me this weekend.

We have not completely set our team yet, so, depending on who tries out, we still may have additions and/or subtractions. Just remember, no matter where you play, or whom you play for, everything you have read still applies to you, and to your future, IF you want to continue on and play any sport in college.

If you have any questions, please let me know,

Coach