RECRUITMENT *Player*

Varsity Programs

When we talk about player recruitment, a big difference for many clubs is a 'club' scene versus a 'varsity' program. The fluidity of the varsity status can have a multitude of definitions, but one shared aspect is that the players, coaches, and teams are officially 'recognized' by the university, often times with scholarship backing.

Competitive Levels

Most top-level schools will require their students to meet certain expectations of 'rank' or experience within a game. This can be seen on the surface level, but for every school there is a limited number of these 'top' level players available; so we must delve into what it means to recruit malleable players that can grow into a program that DEVELOPS top level skill players.

Gameology

Diversifying your college program to offer many different games is often a good thing -- but for player recruitment, you need to be selecting the most competitively viable games with the largest player bases to yield better results. This doesn't mean recruiting for 'non-meta' games is unviable, just that the focus should be on the games being played the most

Discord

Discord can be an extremely powerful recruiting tool. Almost every game that is major for esports has some sort of discord server that is often times community or organization ran. (i.e the Upsurge discord for League of Legends recruiting.) Not only can you tune in to games and tournaments happening in 'minor' leagues, but there are places to reach out and recruit players from these Discords.

Solo Que

A key to improving the system of recruiting at your program is learning how to maneuver solo que in games. Often times, if you have the talent already, you can market yourself in the actual game with the players on your team. Being able to recruit players that exist already in the top echelon of the game that you are interested in competing in can be a huge boom overall to the program and the school, and becomes it's own sort of pipeline. The players you just recruited from solo que will likely spread (hopefully good) word about your program at the high level that they compete at.

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Marketing

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Kids wanting to go varsity already have an idea of their top 5-7 schools participating in esports; and exactly what the program looks like, feels like, and acts like. This is because programs that are exceptional in recruiting good players don't just 'get lucky' or create a pipeline from their previous known talent -- they invest in marketing campaigns, such as content videos, social media presence, brand management, and sponsorships/partnerships. Marketing is a vital part of player recruitment, and often times isn't as visible as the other aspects but --nonetheless-- is central towards the goal.

Recruitment Forms

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Recruitment forms are the backbone of your forward - facing recruitment. Going on later in the 'iceberg' is SEO index, which plays in a mutualistic way with Recruitment Forms -- meaning they both benefit off of each other. Recruitment Forms like UCI's are a good example and will be the main place potential prospects of your college program will reach out to if they are already interested in esports. These serve as good advertisements and should be updated every year with up to date rankings and popular games.

Convincing Parents

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A 'Convincing Parents' section is often a necessity as esports is still seen as a misunderstood topic and a 'waste of time', and ultimately parents are a motivating factor of where they send their kids to school. These sections should include the research-backed benefits with hard data, testimonials, videos of your club/team bonding, and achievements in legible understanding for an older generation.

SEO Index

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SEO indexing or keeping track of specific keywords and making sure that your school shows up to niche keywords is one aspect of marketing and advertising that will make your school stand out. Making sure that you are using the correct hashtags on social media, engaging with the right posts, creating the right content with specific niche keywords to attract exactly the type of players you want. Learn to play into the connectivity of social media and internet searching and it will reward you with exactly what you are looking for.

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Internal Recruiting

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One resource that will almost never exhaust itself is the already existing members of your esports club. By 'internal' recruiting, you hone the skills of those already interested in your club, and this doesn't just mean games -- it can be any peripheral area as well. Students already interested in the basics of broadcasting, discord marketing, player recruitment, brand management, etc.; have access to assets that already exist in your club that can be resources even if they aren't part of the professional team . Gaining an aspect on how to build internal recruiting will be one of the stepping stones that opens up every other form of recruitment.

Pipelines

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Part of the power of internal recruiting is it's permanence factor on local recruiting or the pipelines from local high schools to your college program. Having the ability as a coach to not only influence these pipelines, but strengthen them with niches in the esports realm will help to bring more esports talent to your school and also leads to better advertising from the players already at the school. In addition, focusing on the pipelines from secondary education to college is a clear, foreseeable goal, and you can work out many events in the high school areas that boost your branding and player outreach to esports fans watching twitch streams, for example.

Diversity, Inclusion, & Equity

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At the bottom of the iceberg for Player Recruitment, we have a topic that has just recently come to the light it has deserved. Diversity, Inclusion, & Equity should be at the forefront of every single conversation regarding esports player development and recruitment, as without it, our industry fails to be global. Part of the allure of esports is that it isn't restricted to what traditional sports values are. In esports, creativity, reaction time, passion, and the mind are much more on the spotlight than any physical abilities. Esports should be a welcome space to ALL that want to enter it and player recruitment should not only allow accessibility in the space, but encourage it. Coaches that recruit based on equitable values will breed players that have a more developed moral far-sight and in turn will synergistically improve the college program process. We need to remember to be inclusive to all individuals, be equitable to all thoughts, ideas, and challenges, and be diverse in not only our backgrounds, but our minds too. All of these factors will breed creativity and encourage a safe space for all involved.