



**Lax Scout:** You've spent numerous years coaching at so many different levels which certainly gives you a unique perspective on recruiting. Can you first share a bit of your lacrosse background?

**Coach Hogan:** I played at Springfield College in Massachusetts. I coached in college for 20 years—two years at Maryland, two at Delaware, two as Head Coach at Clarkson University, 13 years as an Assistant at Navy and one year as Head Coach at the University of Pennsylvania. For the last two years I have been the head coach at St. Mary's High School in Annapolis, MD.

**LS:** What was it like watching Navy this year in the National Championship? Did it get you thinking about coaching at the collegiate level again?

**Coach:** I was very proud of the guys playing and thrilled for the coaches who have put so much time, energy and commitment into the program. It was emotional watching the guys I coached and recruited

have success and lay their hearts out. Sure, I think about coaching in college. I enjoy the guys I am coaching now and look forward to building upon something here. St. Mary's has a tradition of lacrosse success and I plan to continue with that pursuit.

**LS:** As a college coach at some of the country's most elite institutions, you must have spent a considerable amount of your time recruiting. What was it like recruiting for the various programs?

**Coach:** Recruiting is the basis for success. I often counseled young coaches that if you want to be successful in the college game, mastering the X's and O's is important, but to make a name for yourself, become a recruiter. I worked for an Athletic Director who once said the three most important aspects of a successful college athletic program are, "Recruiting, recruiting and recruiting." I believe that with one exception, I would replace the third recruiting with retention. As a college coach you spend more time recruiting than any other aspect of running a program—it is most often the first thing you will do in your day and the last. College coaches often tell me, "I am sure you do not miss the recruiting." To be honest, I do. Recruiting is daily competition, and competition is good. Everyday you are battling and maneuvering versus other really good people to attract some great young people to your school and program. Recruiting for the various schools was different. Just like in sales, you need to know your product, what your market is and what each student-athlete's needs and wants are. Each school limits you in some way of recruiting certain types of student-athletes. Your job is to find out who fits your needs and who is a "Penn guy" or "Navy guy." Being at Navy for so many years, I really began to understand who fit our profile pretty quickly. The first year at Penn—it was unsettling to me trying to figure out who were and were not Penn-type student-athletes. Think we—the staff—did a great job, but it was intense.

**LS:** What did you look for when recruiting high school players?

**Coach:** There are all kinds of factors and often they all get too jumbled up and can therefore make the process perplexing. However, I focused on four areas when evaluating a recruit. I still do the same here at St. Mary's when watching youth players.

First, Academics—evaluating someone's academic level is pretty easy to determine through transcripts, scores and such. Your admission liaison is going to make that evaluation for the cases that you cannot. If someone can play at my school but cannot handle the academic work load, it is the wrong school.

Second, Athletic/lacrosse ability—relatively time consuming process, but pretty accurate to evaluate. It is not a perfect science which is why one student-athlete can be attractive to one coach and not another—the college programs' needs may effect that also. I would take an athlete over a skill player. You need both. In beginning youth league up to about 6th grade, skill dominates. During high school, the athlete begins to show. In college, the athlete dominates.

Third, Character—the most important aspect and most difficult to evaluate. I want young men of solid character. I was going to be spending a tremendous amount of time with these guys and working hard, very hard, for a goal that was not going to be easy to attain.

# *An Interview with Coach Hogan*

I wanted guys that would be accountable, work hard, loyal, dedicated, and could handle adversity—because they were going to experience some during their four years of college. I want people I can trust.

Fourth, Passion for the sport—often I would recruit a lesser player due to his passion for the game—his love of the game. Someone who loves what he is doing but has less talent will, I believe, surpass the more talented person who possesses less passion. I love practice and want players who want to practice, lift, run—make themselves better. Not because I want them to be better or reach their potential, but because they want to reach their maximum potential.

**LS:** When scouting high school players at camps, tournaments and games, what would you look for? What sorts of things would make a player stand out?

**Coach:** The last two points I just discussed [third & fourth above] are what I am looking for. What showed me that? Did a player listen when he was coached? Did he hustle after groundballs—fight for everything? Did he compete? Did he treat his teammates well and with respect? Did he treat his parents and coach with respect? I liked to watch after the game was over. How did he react to winning, and more importantly, how did he react when he lost? Did he do things for his team or did he do things to attract attention to himself? I have not recruited players—and will continue here not to recruit players—due to their treatment of officials, throwing sticks in anger and poor sportsmanship. What makes a player stand out are hustle, determination, competitiveness and support of his teammates. The standard skills I looked for—speed, shooting, leadership, athletic ability. I do not support the trend that banging your chest, yelling, taunting and such are signs of passion and competitiveness. The greatest competitors allow their play to draw attention to them.

**LS:** Can you briefly describe what your recruiting philosophy and strategy was? Did you have a timeline and/or formula that you would try to adhere to each year?

**Coach:** You would determine all the high school players who possess both academics and athletic-lacrosse ability you were seeking. From that group you would then determine the competitors and characters you were seeking. Through e-mails, HS coaches contacts, camps and such determine what schools the high school guys were thinking about. Then, narrow your scope from there. I wanted all the transcripts of the juniors on our list by the beginning of May—never happened, but it was a goal. I wanted financial aid pre-reads of all recruits who said, "Money is a factor," by mid-August. Narrow the list from there. Hold junior unofficial visits during the winter and spring of a prospect's junior year. Determine official visits to be held in the fall of the prospect's senior year by mid-August. Narrow your list of those not visiting. All the while you are keeping an eye on the competition and evaluating the needs of your program. This causes players to move up and down, on or off your "recruiting depth chart." Basically find those that possess the academics and lacrosse-athletic ability first.

Determine your needs for the program and the student's interest levels. Look at leadership, desire to attend your school, character and passion. Find out who fits best with your guys during visits.

**LS:** Were there any recruiting experiences you had that particularly stand out in your memory?

**Coach:** There are some really great stories. Here's a few...

When Coach Meade was hired as the head coach at Navy, he wanted to initiate home visits—which is where we would visit a prospect and his family in their own home. We had not done home visits during the previous four years. So I wanted to impress the new coach and arrange a week of home visits. Coach Meade is a tough guy from Long Island who likes tough kids. He is a boxer and a son of a New York City beat policy officer. He is a no nonsense, tough guy. I arrange the first meeting with a defensive prospect. He is a big kid, important to Coach Meade, and a good student. We conduct the visit during the Christmas holidays. I am already on the road and I pick him up at the local train station and we go to visit this family. Here we go, five days of home visits with the new coach. I am excited to impress coach and we talk on the 20 minute ride to the family's home. When we sit down in the living room, we start small talk. There is a display case with about 10-15 Santa Clause dolls. I ask the mom if she collects them and she does and the recruit chimes in while pointing to a

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doll on the second shelf, "And this one is my favorite." And I got a curious glance from Coach Meade—there was an awkward moment of silence and we moved on. About 20 minutes later Coach Meade is deep into his recruiting pitch and he is on a roll, there is a knock on the door, a friend of the recruit is there and comes in the living room and asks the recruit if he—the friend—could borrow the recruit's red tights. As if the recruit had many different color tights—and this is way before Under Armour. Now I get a glare from Coach Meade and I want to die—hide under the sofa, be anywhere but where I am now. The visit ends pretty soon after. We now have to travel from Pennsylvania to Upstate New York. We are going to be in the car for four plus hours. For the first 30 minutes, not a word was spoken. Finally, Coach Meade says, "And that one is my favorite." We burst into laughter and I apologized more than once during the four hour ride.

We visited a recruit who was living with his aunt and uncle in Baltimore—although he was from Ocean City. His parents made the trip up during the week for the dinner. We had our small talk and things are going pretty well. We talk about the Naval Academy and things are going smoothly. We move into the dining room for dinner. There are monster crab cakes, steak and salmon. I am starving—but you always take little and eat little during visits. As I am taking a crab cake off the serving tray as it is being passed around and I am putting it back on the table, Coach Meade asks the recruit what he thinks about the Naval Academy. The recruit responded, "I cannot see myself going there, and really do not want to." I quickly pick the serving tray back up and put another crab cake on my plate and asked for the salmon to be passed my way. If we were not getting the recruit, I was at least going to eat well.

In my first home visit as the Head Coach at Penn, I was visiting a local kid who my staff was excited about and I really hit it off with during his campus visit. I called his high school coach on the way into the home to get some insight. He told me that the recruit really wants to go to Notre Dame and the high school was pushing that way also. I was crushed, but I was not hearing that. The father was on the Wharton Business Graduate School advisory board—something to that extent and worked in New York City. Great people—I am trying to read them and getting no read at all. We sit down to dinner and I go into my pitch about how playing at Penn—graduating from Wharton will allow him to make great contacts in the Philly area...and the father cut me off saying, "I don't agree with that." Going through my head was, "I was done—we were never getting this kid—how can I recover from this—what did I just say?" The father said, "The Wharton School and any Penn degree will allow him to make contacts all over the world. That degree is respected and admired anywhere, not just Philadelphia." Yeah, that's right. Isn't that what I said? My heart slowed and within a few minutes, I got brave and asked the recruit, "Where do you want to go to school?" I wanted the Notre Dame thing out in the open. I wanted him to say that, so I could address that. He responded, "Penn." YeeeHaw! I relaxed. Coach Murphy and I looked at each other pumped, and the visit after that went very well. He came to Penn.

**LS:** What's your fondest memory as a collegiate level coach?

**Coach:** There are many. I loved the players I worked with. I loved picking other coaches' minds about the game and recruiting. There are three memories that stand out.

John Brianas was a local kid at the Naval Academy. He was average his first two years at Navy. He worked hard and was/is a great kid/man. I loved having Johnny-B around. He was named Captain of the team his senior year. During our playoff loss his junior year, his knee began to bother him. He found out in the fall he had torn his ACL. Surgery was planned for December. There was a traditional Maryland vs. New York or Senior/Freshman vs. Sophomore/Junior football game of players on the lacrosse team right before Thanksgiving. John tore his other ACL in the football game. He was his positive self. During pre-op testing they determined that John had testicular cancer. He called me when he found out on December 23rd. Knee surgery was obviously cancelled. I remember John telling me all this like it was yesterday. I was crushed—John moved forward. He went through Chemotherapy in December. He lost his hair—the team shaved their heads. He still showed up for the 5:15 am running during January and he looked awful. I came home from work one day pretty upbeat and feeling good about things. My wife said that Mrs. Brianas called. It stopped me cold. She left a phone number I did not recognize. I swallowed hard and made the call. I knew it was bad news. John answered the phone. I asked, "Where are you?" He responded, "Anne Arundel." I thought to myself, "What is he doing at the community college?" Then it hit me that he meant Anne Arundel Hospital. I stood still and waited for him to talk. He said that he had had appendicitis. I burst out laughing, in relief—so hard that his mom and dad could hear me on the other side of the room through the phone. John played for us that spring with two knee braces, about 20 pounds too thin and weak. He scored a goal in his first game back against Air Force. John is an inspiration to me today.

My first game at Penn was versus Notre Dame—the year

after they appeared in the Final Four. I looked at our schedule to see how we were going to be over .500, since Penn had not been over .500 for 13 years. Notre Dame was one of those games we weren't going to win. Then, the more film I watched, the more I thought it was possible. About Wednesday of the week prior, I began to believe we could win. On Friday, I thought we should win. The team was jelling and we—the entire staff had worked extremely hard in preparations. We won 7-6. I remember walking into the locker room and seeing the joy, confidence, and I don't know how to describe the attitude and atmosphere, except that it was awesome. Complete joy. That was my first win as a D-I head coach. That feeling was incredible. The faces of the players was worth all the hard work and time in the office. That is why I did, and do what I do—to see them enjoy the victory like they did. We became a team that day. The players believed in themselves, the program and each other.

This one occurred after our Brown game that same year while I was at Penn. We won against a very talented and well coached team. I have a lot of respect for Scott Nelson and wasn't sure if we could keep them from scoring a bunch. We won in a see-saw battle and we scored the last four goals to win 12-11, after we were ahead 8-6. We had some youth games at half time—my son played on one of the teams. I invited the youth teams to come into our locker room after the game. The atmosphere was thrilling—loud and male locker roomish. The young kids had wide eyes and were thrilled to be there. At the end of all our games and practices, the team would put their hands in and yell "Quakers" on my count. When we started to put our hands in, the guys on the team wanted my son to get in the middle of the huddle. They called for him, he came running from the back of the locker room as fast as he could. I will never forget the players for including him, and the look in my son's eyes for the guys wanting him to be a part of their day.

**LS:** In the past few years you've made the transition to high school coaching. What's the biggest difference between being a college coach and a high school coach?

**Coach:** Biggest difference between high school and college is the amount of time you spend preparing for your opponent—you spend much less in high school. You need to concern yourself with yourself more. Two games a week was hard for me to adjust to the first year. It is tough to have really hard practices since you only have one day during the week that isn't a day before or after a game. Parental involvement is another big difference.

**LS:** Obviously St. Mary's is one of the top programs in the country making your entire roster a prime target for nearly every college recruiter. What advice do you give your high school student-athletes to prepare them for the recruiting process?

**Coach:** I have an optional meeting at the end of lacrosse season and I have a PowerPoint presentation, handouts and NCAA handouts for parents and players. I discuss the college search process and the recruiting process. They are different. But, the most important aspect of the recruiting process is to be honest with the college coaches, and more importantly, with themselves. I also tell them to focus on what they can control—their effort, their attitude and how they play in games and summer camps and tournaments. To respond to all correspondence and phone calls. Be polite on the phone.



**LS:** We developed Lax Scout to give high school students greater exposure in the recruiting process, but also to provide coaches with significant visibility into the larger talent pool throughout the US, and ultimately the world. If you were still a college coach, would you be utilizing this service?

**Coach:** Any support a coach can get in evaluating players is positive. I think Lax Scout is the only one where "lacrosse people" are evaluating the athletes. Your publications are professional, clean and accurate. The sport is growing quickly in participation numbers all over the country. College recruiting budgets do not allow coaches to travel to many of the "non-traditional" lacrosse areas. Though coaches are reaching into Canada, the Midwest, and very soon coaches will be traveling to the West. However, Lax Scout allows an introduction of a player to the coach, allows contact to be made and then the college coach can determine where the player is playing for the coach to evaluate and then watch. It is the first step in a recruiting relationship for many players. It is a long answer to Yes, I would use Lax Scout if I was still a college coach.

**LS:** You've been very active in coaching at all levels across the United States, and even in other countries such as England. Are you surprised by the increase in participation worldwide? Do you think the rest of the country will ever catch up to the caliber of play that you experience in the MIAA [Maryland Interscholastic Athletic Association], and if so, where do you think this will occur first?

**Coach:** No, I am not surprised by the increase in participation in our neighborhood, country or worldwide. Lacrosse is a fascinating sport. I haven't, nor have any of us, been able to put our finger on the reason for the focus people get when introduced to lacrosse—the lacrosse bug. I think there are areas that already possess the individual caliber of play in our area [MIAA]. Meaning, there are players or athletes as good as our best in all parts of the country. I think there are teams from other parts of the country that can compete with our best. I think what separates our league is our consistency with producing quality teams and players—and the competitive nature of our league from top to bottom. All 11 teams in the "A" conference are producing players that can play in quality programs at the collegiate level. I think New York can compete with us now. From time to time there will be teams in other areas also. There was a year when Upper Arlington [PA] or Brother Rice [MI] had phenomenal teams that could compete in the MIAA. But they are not as consistently good as the teams in our league—in my opinion.

**LS:** Please share your outlook on the growth of the sport and your vision for its future. There's been a significant emphasis on national and international growth at the youth levels, the pro's, world games, etc. Where do you think the sport's heading?

**Coach:** The sport is growing like mad in California—much of that is due to the leadership of quality people like Hank Malloy in Northern California. I do hope that our sport does not get away from being a High school sport and become more of a club emphasis—keep educators in a supervisory role. I do not like the soccer, gymnastics, swimming models. They encourage, and often require their young

athletes to participate in their sport year round. I am not a fan or supporter of that as a college coach, high school coach or dad. Most college coaches want their recruits to play at least one additional sport. It goes back to wanting an athlete. I do not support the club focus or national development direction. It is putting too much focus on the single-sport athlete too soon. I have kids—13 and 11. I see the difference in the multi-sport athlete at that age.

I am witnessing it now and witnessed it in college. I think parents need to step away from the scene. They are so focused on what team their child makes in order for their chances at a college scholarship or participation. Step away parents. Some parents are ruining the joy of sports for their children, other children, coaches and for themselves. I had a parent question why I would have my son travel in the summer to England to play in a lacrosse tour. He wondered how that was going to help him play in college. He was 11 years old then.

Play because you love playing. Play because you want to learn about commitment, dedication, adversity—that is a huge one. Learn about not getting what you want and trying to get what you want and sometimes you fail at that.

I do not like the summer decision emphasis of the college recruiting process—too soon, too early, too much pressure. Kids are asked to commit to a college before ever visiting overnight. It is like wanting to purchase a car but never test driving. Being told you have 72 hours or less to accept or turn down a scholarship is wrong. Being told by a college coach, "I have made a scholarship or admissions offer to three recruits. The first to accept the offer gets it. I only have one spot for you three," is wrong. I think both the 72 hour offer and the 3-for-1 offer are poor ways to build a solid relationship. College coaches are now wondering why so many players are transferring—because the relationship wasn't built well is one reason why.

I do not like that the focus the high school and the parent of a high school athlete have is how lacrosse is going to get them into college. If that is your thought process, you are playing for the wrong reason. All you can control is how hard you work, the effort you put in and how you perform. You cannot control who recruits you. If more parents and players would focus on what they can control, they would find where they belong will work itself out.

I think the sport is headed in many good areas. The growth of the college fan base is great. You can see college games on TV every week. More regions are found on college rosters—meaning kids from outside of New York and Maryland are on rosters of the best college programs. High school players are gaining exposure everywhere. There are more opportunities for coaches to attend professional development seminars and clinics. The coaching is improving. The equipment is more protective and advanced than ever. Kids are getting an opportunity to play at a younger age. I didn't play organized lacrosse until I was in high school. Kids are now playing at five or six years old. Opportunities are growing at all levels for participation.

I would recommend the student-athlete be in control of the recruiting process. To sit back and wait to see who recruits you is a mistake. This is your future. Find out where you want to go and get exposure to those coaches—camps, Lax Scout, arrange visits.

*Visit [www.hoganlax.com](http://www.hoganlax.com) to follow Coach Hogan and the St. Mary's Saints this year in the Maryland Interscholastic Athletic Association.*