

BRIDGE
THE GAPS

STUDENT ATHLETIC BRANDING GUIDE

A RESOURCE FOR STUDENT ATHLETES

LET ME BE
GREAT

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Introduction

Welcome. This free student branding athletic guide is a great resource for high school students interested in playing collegiate athletics and beyond to help shape their image and develop their own unique and individual brand.

Your brand is your identity and what athletic coaches learn about you before they even meet you or get to know you. They'll utilize resources such as your coach, assistant coaches, and several online resources to learn who you are as an individual before they even begin their research towards you as an athlete. Your brand matters and is a huge defining characteristic that sets a precedence with your opportunities. We like to emphasize how important your brand is because often when there are hard coaching decisions to make, your character and your brand are the defining attributes that might influence major decisions. Decisions that can impact your life and what options you have. We strongly encourage all our student-athletes to always consider their brand before making any choices.

This guide should serve as one of many resource tools to help you be successful in the classroom and accomplish the necessary steps to help you gain recognition, exposure, and build your individual brand towards gaining a full or partial scholarship opportunity at an accredited university.

Before you continue reading, know that you are more than an athlete! Your athletic ability is just one of the many talents and resources that you have to offer and if you choose to play at the collegiate level, you should prepare for success by ensuring the best possible outcome and opportunity for yourself.

Every individual is unique, and all resources may not be applicable. Use what you find to be the most helpful and useful.

-Coach Durham





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You Are A Brand

You Are A Brand

A lot of students may not realize this, but YOU are a brand. Even if you never played sports or want to play college-level sports, we as influential individuals, are all brands. Today's world of communication and marketing has substantially evolved, and "influencers" of the world have changed the game. As a student-athlete, you should always think of yourself as a brand and base your actions on how they benefit you.

The power of athletic-influencers and their brand was finally recognized in 2020, when the [NCAA allowed for athletes to monetize](#) from their own personal brands. This means they could be influencers, have blogs or YouTube channels that allowed them to make profits from their hard work and expertise.

Don't flinch at the strength of online e-commerce; there are young YouTubers out there right now making millions ([Forbes, 2019](#)).

We want to emphasize the strength of your individual brand, because everything you do should be towards growing your future; be it going to college, opening your own business, or wherever your dreams can take you. This means your dedication, your actions, your work ethic, pretty much everything you do now and today. It sounds like a lot of pressure for a young adult to consider but not really. Maintaining a strong brand is just that, a little bit of maintenance and just good overall practice but doing so will open a world of opportunity for your future; and that's what this is all about. Your education, your ability, your brand – are all about opening doors and creating opportunities.

Grow Your Brand:

1

CREATE A
VISUAL
IDENTITY

YOUR STYLE | SWAG

2

ALIGN WITH
POSITIVE
INFLUENCES

YOUR CREW | TRIBE

3

CONNECT
HASHTAG
PRODUCE

YOUR NETWORK



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STUDENT ATHLETIC BRANDING GUIDE

Social Media

Social Media

We're going to jump right into the core of it, social media has changed the game for recruitment and athletic branding. Social media plays a huge factor in your branding capabilities and helping you gain exposure for recruitment purposes. Several coaches not only utilize digital submissions but require them as part of the prescreening process.

| FAQ FOR SOCIAL MEDIA |

Should I have different accounts on different platforms? SURE. You should be flexible but mostly use what works for you. Use the application(s) that you are most comfortable with and allow you to easily share your highlights and successes.

What are coaches using today? EVERYTHING! They are on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Huddle, etc. Coaches have a team of resources and the job of a recruiter is to find the best talent available. Whatever application your sport utilized the most, you should absolutely have a presence.

Who should run my account? YOU! While some athletes have help from parents or hired resources, we think it's important for you to have a presence and build your accounts personality. Help is ok, especially when you're busy during the season but working your own accounts shows good time management and discipline.

If you haven't done so already, we recommend a quick self-search on Google. You'd be surprised how much info is already out there about you!

Establish accounts with similar names so you're easy to find:

Twitter

@_____

Instagram

@_____

Facebook

YouTube Channel

Establish professional accounts:

LinkedIn

Don't forget to set passwords that protect your privacy. Social media is a direct reflection of YOU. Protect it.

CLICK HERE & GOOGLE
YOUR NAME

STUDENT ATHLETIC BRANDING GUIDE

What To Post?

- All of your highlights! Maybe not every single one but don't be ashamed of your accomplishments and hard work. Remember to chop them and keep them short with links to the full video for those who want to keep watching.
- Repost! Sometimes posts are missed or pushed down on your feed. It's ok to share them again especially as it relates to a moment, a play, a rival team, etc.
- You with your pet, your family, and friends.
- When you get good grades! Share that! It's great news!
- Birthdays, happiness, inspirational quotes.
- It's ok to add some personal touches; coaches like to see that you're personable and able to engage with the world.
- Throwback posts – when you ran a touchdown from little league, that's a great example of a memory to share especially during the offseason when posting options might be limited.
- Stay creative, there are several free apps that allow you to slice and dice your film, slow-motion your plays, or speed up a workout.
- Always keep your posts classy and experienced – meaning banter and Twitter wars are for Wendy's - not for your future.

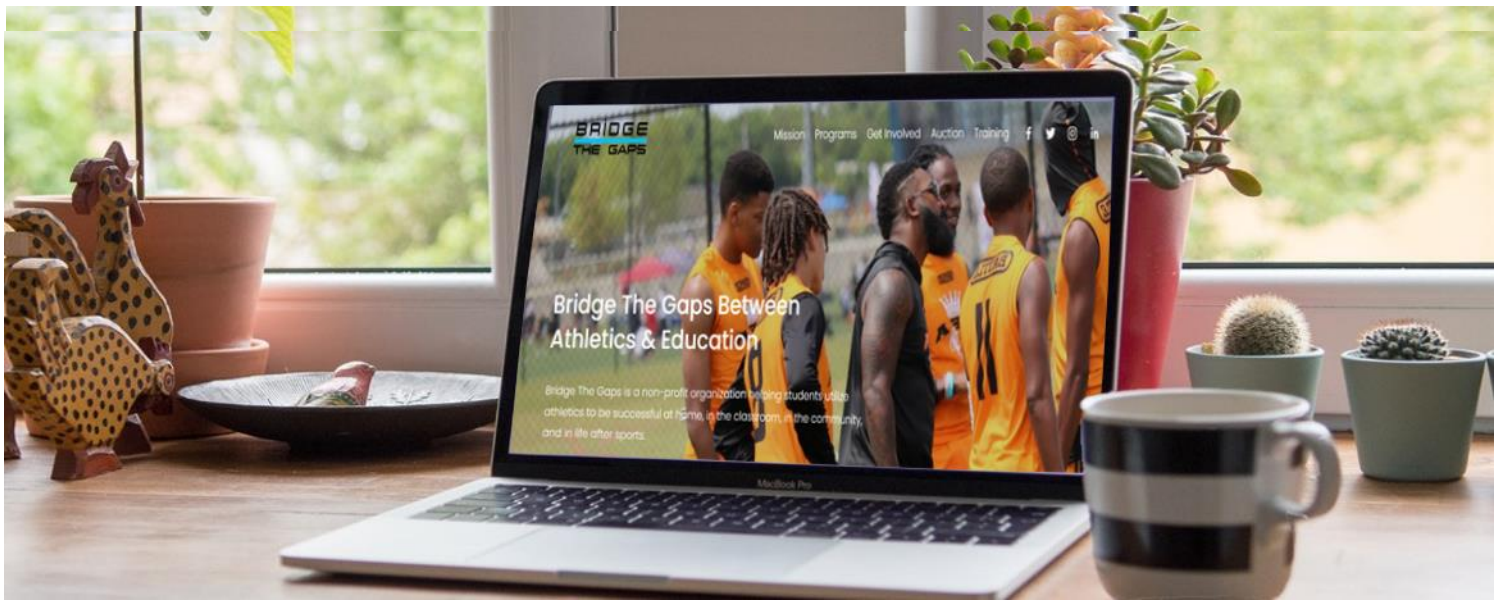
What NOT To Post?

- Anger of any kind. While it's easy to want to reply to another post or chime in on something that may have offended you, the best thing to do is just focus on your goals
- Inappropriate activities – sometimes this can be misunderstood as just “having fun” but part of wanting to become a student-athlete at the college level is putting your education and your love for your sport before potential misinterpretations
- Any sort of illegal activity – we hate that we have to say it, but we have to say it
- Be mindful of your replies to other posts because they are also seen
- Chose your likes and follows wisely. Never follow or like an account that could jeopardize your future by simple association
- A quick rule of thumb that we like to consider when it comes to posting is “if your Grandmother wouldn't approve, don't post it”

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Paid Resources



STUDENT ATHLETIC BRANDING GUIDE

Paid Resources

We're almost always asked if student athletes should hire social media services or consultants. Here's a look at the pros and cons to paid resources:

Pros

vs.

Cons

- Paid resources are often efficient and will help accounts get established quickly.
- A paid resource will have some connections you may not have access to.
- A paid resource will know the ins and outs of social media, marketing, and the communication process.
- You should never have to open your wallet for media assistance. There is an abundance of free online resources available.
- Paid resources for social media management are often costly.
- Managed accounts are sometimes subject to alternative opinions and perspectives, managing your own account means only your opinion and perspective is shared.
- Paid resources cannot guarantee an opportunity or specific exposure. Remember, a large following does not necessarily mean the right resources are seeing you.

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Check List

Check List

Establish Social Media Accounts:

- Twitter
- Instagram
- Facebook
- YouTube Channel
- LinkedIn

Always Make Sure Posts Are:

- Positive Posts
- Check Spelling | Grammar
- Developing Your Brand
- Utilizing Hashtags
- Videos > Photos
- Links back to your resource
(Huddle, Google Drive, Slack, YouTube)

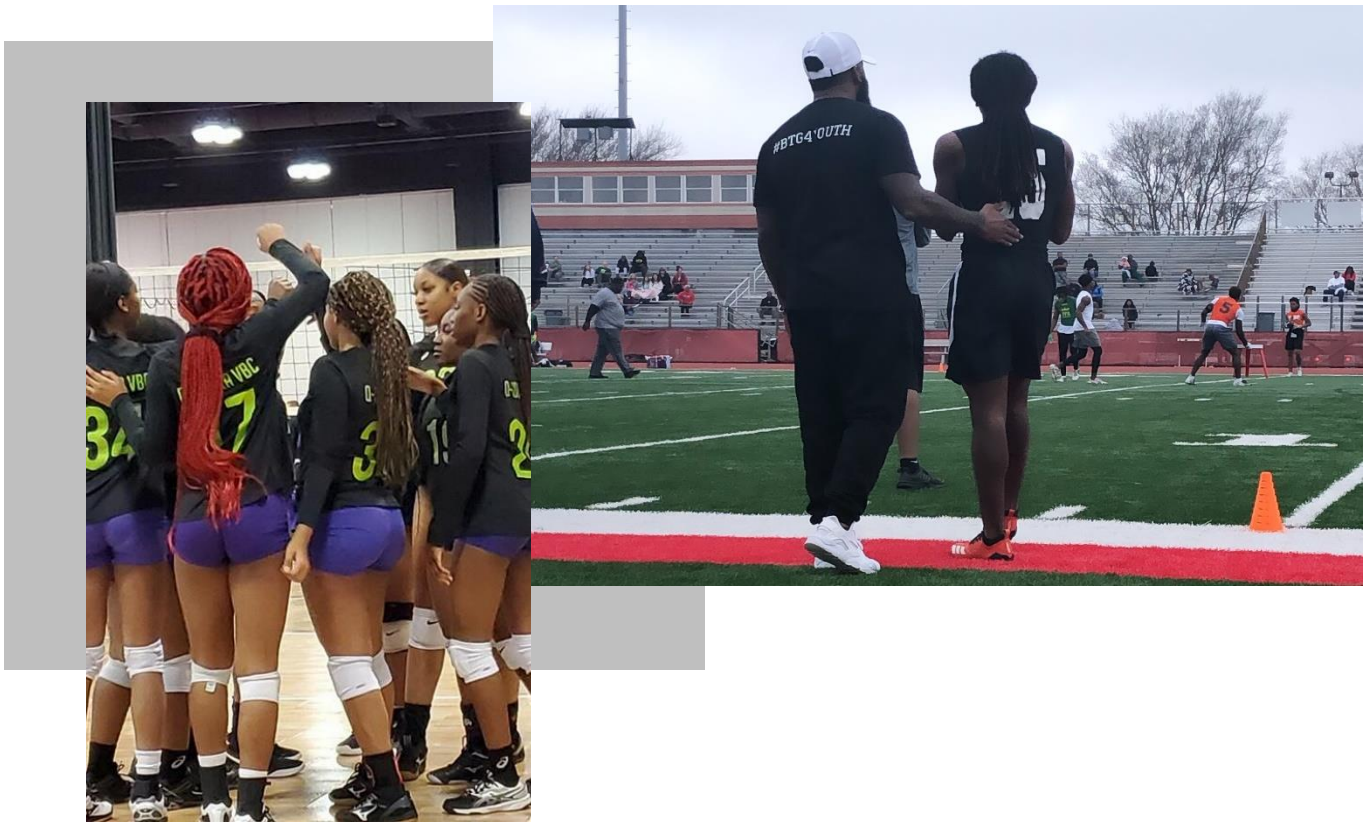
Follow | Connect | Engage

Find coaches, teams, universities that you love:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

After Your Accounts Are Running:

- Clean Your Followers
(remove anything inappropriate or suspicious)
- Remove Any Negativity



You Got This!

Student-Athletics and branding have evolved, but you got this!

Whether you're a student aspiring to play at the college level or a parent trying to support your student's efforts, we hope this Student Athletic Branding Guide has been helpful in establishing your brand. If you need additional assistance utilizing athletics to be successful at home, in the classroom, in the community, and in life after sports, feel free to [contact us](#).

[CLICK TO LEARN MORE](#)

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WWW.BRIDGETHEGAPS.ORG

About the Author



Omar T. Durham

Founder | Owner | CEO - Bridge The Gaps

Throughout his career, Omar has worked at various independent & private education institutions as a certified special education teacher & athletic coach. Omar's expertise in the education system allowed him to influence, mentor, & cultivate several underprivileged & at-risk students and athletes.

Bridge the Gaps is a non-profit 501(3)(c). The mission of Bridge The Gaps is to assist underprivileged, lower-income, minority, and at-risk athletic students by reconnecting their cultural, emotional, mental, and educational gaps.

Our Vision is to utilize sports to teach student athletes to be successful at home, in the classroom, in the community, and in life after sports.

BTG believes all students should have access to the resources they need for mental, social, and physical wellness to live healthy, productive, and successful lives.



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