

THE BEST COLLEGE RECRUITER™

SPECIAL REPORT 4

"50 Twitter Tips for Student-Athletes"

SOCIAL media is a big part of the athletic experience for athletes on the high school, collegiate, and professional levels of competition. Twitter has become the medium of choice for athletes to utilize to express their thoughts on topics that affect them. Improper tweets, in some instances, have cost some athletes their position on the team. Is there a correct way for today's student-athletes to tweet?

I found an article by Tom Satkowiak, the Associate Media Relations Director and Sports Information Director for men's basketball at the University of Tennessee at www.athleticmanagement.com that addresses this topic in a very thorough and insightful manner. His guidelines focus on the NCAA Division I student-athlete, but many of these tips are applicable to athletes on any level of competition.

The purpose of Special Report 4 is to assist coaches with the development of team rules for Twitter, and to assist student-athletes with their Twitter accounts. I thank Tom for his vision. Enjoy his "50 Twitter Tips for Student-Athletes."

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- 1) Before you do anything else, read @Darrenrovell's "100 Twitter Rules to Live By."
 - 2) Your Twitter account is one of many mediums through which you can build your "personal brand." When people decide to follow you, they are investing in your brand because they believe you can add value to their timeline. Don't craft useless Tweets--you know the kind... they're the ones you skip over every day while looking for something worthwhile.
 - 3) After composing a Tweet, but before you hit send, ask yourself: "Would I be comfortable saying this in front of my parents, my grandmother, my pastor?" If the answer is no, discard it.
 - 4) Turn off the "enable location data" option on your Twitter app. Do you really want everyone knowing where you are at all times?
 - 5) Take pride in who/what you represent. In addition to representing your family, hometown and church, you also represent your university and your team.

- 6) The visual elements of your Twitter account (avatar, background) are how other Twitter users form a first impression of you. Put a shirt on. Don't photograph yourself lying in bed--this isn't soft-core porn.
- 7) Twitter hasn't made the text message obsolete. Tweet things worthwhile that are appropriate to share publicly. Don't Tweet about the party you're hosting tonight. Instead, text the party details to friends you want to show up.
- 8) It is perfectly fine to display your sense of humor on Twitter. Fans in particular love it when student-athletes show their personality. But don't Tweet at the expense of others. Making fun of people or Tweeting a photo of the overweight family in Wal-Mart just makes you appear shallow and cold.
- 9) Don't allow the impersonal nature of Twitter lull you into a false sense of security. It's easy for a thought that materializes in your head while you're lying in bed or sitting on the couch to suddenly find its way into a Tweet. But once you hit send, it's there for the world to see.
- 10) Don't use Twitter as an outlet to complain about how rough your life is. You are getting a college education, traveling to interesting places, getting free athletic shoes and apparel and more. Thousands of people would crawl over glass for the chance to enjoy the opportunities you have.
- 11) If a fan Tweets at you telling you how much they enjoy watching you play or how much their son/daughter looks up to you, ReTweet them and add a "Thx" at the start of the Tweet. You can make someone's day just by granting them that simple, public acknowledgement.
- 12) Chances are there are some young kids who view you as a role model and follow you on Twitter. Do their parents a favor and keep your Tweets "family friendly." Don't type LMAO or LMFAO when LOL works just as well.
- 13) When you Tweet something clever or funny, try to leave around 15-20 characters free. This makes it easy for fans to ReTweet you without having to edit your original Tweet.
- 14) Don't Tweet about how much you hate school. You chose to become a college student-athlete. If you hate school so much you should have joined the Marines.
- 15) Speaking of the Armed Forces, use Twitter as a way to engage your fans. Ask if any of your followers are in the military. Thank them for what they do, then ReTweet the ones who respond. The same goes for schoolteachers, police officers, firemen, etc.
- 16) Maintain a decent follower/following ratio. @JayBilas has the market cornered as far as Twitter snobs go. He makes up for it by having one of the most value-adding accounts in existence. You, my friend, are no @JayBilas (maybe one day...).
- 17) ReTweeting profanity is no different than using it in your own original Tweets. Don't do it.

- 18) And while we're on that topic, remember it's not ok to Tweet about how that meal you just ate was "good AF" or how your finance professor is "on some boring ish." Assuming your followers don't know what that ish means is insulting.
- 19) Avoid replying to or ReTweeting Twitter users with vulgar names. Do you really want to be associated with @BigPhatBooty or @herpesboy?
- 20) Don't Tweet daily about how hard you're working on the field/court/diamond/weight room/etc. If you were really working that hard, you wouldn't be on Twitter to tell us all about it.
- 21) That's an awfully nice Twitter background you have... looks like it was designed by a professional. Keep in mind that if the person who designed it for you for free typically charges for his/her design work, you may be receiving an improper benefit.
- 22) If you wouldn't say something in a media interview, don't Tweet it. You're being naïve if you think the media isn't keeping an eye on your Twitter feed (and locking your account is not a failsafe way of ensuring only your friends are following you).
- 23) Don't Twitpic a photo of someone who doesn't know they're being photographed. You'd be angry if someone did that to you.
- 24) Look over your recent Tweets. Chances are you could delete one out of every 10 Tweets and not feel as though anything worthwhile was being lost. That said, don't Tweet the worthless stuff to begin with. Numerous people who would be considered "social media experts" often compose a Tweet, read it over, think about it and then decide to discard it.
- 25) Follow at least one news feed that will keep you informed on major current events (such as @CNNbrk or @CBSNews).
- 26) Don't allow yourself to be photographed while holding a drink. If you're posing for a photo, put your drink behind your back or on a counter out of the frame. Even if you're only drinking water.
- 27) Baby mama drama? Don't air your dirty laundry on Twitter.
- 28) Don't Tweet after a tough loss. You pour your heart and soul into training to become a champion, and losses are emotionally draining. Sleep on it. Your followers will still be there tomorrow.
- 29) Enjoying a big win? Take 30 seconds to Tweet a "Thank You" to the fans who were there to cheer you to victory.
- 30) Don't allow a hater with 20 followers to bait you into a "Twitter beef." Ignore them and remember their actions are usually fueled by jealousy.

- 31) If you don't like something a media member wrote about you, your coach or your teammate, ignore it. Engaging in a public Twitter argument is a battle you won't win. You'll only end up looking foolish (you'll also likely boost the other person's follower count).
- 32) It's the morning of a big game/match, you feel like you have the flu and it looks like you won't be playing tonight. Don't announce that on Twitter. If you compete in a revenue sport, Tweeting something like that will have ripples that reach all the way to the Las Vegas sports books.
- 33) Next time you're skimming the Internet while sitting on the toilet, do yourself a favor and do a Google search for "Marvin Austin" and "Twitter." Apply the resulting lessons learned to your own personal Twitter usage (a biased and explicit, yet interesting, account [HERE](#)).
- 34) You know that 10-second period after you type a Tweet during which you re-read it and ask yourself if you really ought to hit "send?" Take two more seconds to ask yourself, "Is this going to give my SID an ulcer?"
- 35) Consider polarizing topics off limits on Twitter. Avoid commenting on sexual orientation, race and religions you don't understand.
- 36) Know the type of Tweets that are boring and painfully unoriginal. They include such gems as A) Just got a great workout in; B) I'm up early, finna get this money; C) Wattup Twitter??
- 37) Don't Tweet about how much you respect your mamma and grandmamma if, 10 minutes later, you're going to Tweet about the "juicy cakes" on the girl walking past you on campus. Twenty years ago, those "juicy cakes" belonged to your mamma. Do you see the irony?
- 38) Many Twitter users are only religious when they wake up. Do you Tweet thanks to God every morning? If the other 90 percent of your Tweets reflect a different attitude or lifestyle, people notice. So does Jesus--he's on Twitter (but not yet verified).
- 39) There are many other teams and student-athletes at your school. Take the time to give them a shout-out on Twitter when they do big things. Ultimately, you're all on the same team.
- 40) Smile in your avatar or background picture!
- 41) People want their experience on Twitter to be fun. Make a real effort to Tweet far more positive content than negative.
- 42) What happens in the locker room stays there. Things that are said in private team settings should never find their way onto Twitter.
- 43) Don't Tweet during class. That's like disrespecting someone (in this case, your professor) behind their back. And always be mindful that your professors may be monitoring your Twitter account.

44) One of your Twitter followers may be in a position to hire (or draft) you someday. Evaluate your Tweets from time to time and ask yourself, "Would I want to hire this person?"

45) If you feel like the Twitter guidelines your coaching staff and/or athletic administrators expect you to comply with prevent you from "keeping it real," then that should probably be your cue to re-evaluate your definition of "keeping it real." Your team support staff has your long-term best interest in mind.

46) Your athletic compliance office is monitoring your Twitter account. And the NCAA has acknowledged that it monitors student-athlete activity on Twitter as well. Even if you don't compete in a major conference or a revenue sport, don't be fooled into believing nobody is paying attention.

47) Share Twitpics when your team takes part in community outreach projects. But it's important to remember that all students entering ninth grade and older are considered prospective student-athletes (PSAs), and should not appear in any Twitpic (for men's basketball, PSAs are all students entering seventh grade and older).

48) It's ok to Tweet once about what a great dinner you had at Red Lobster. But multiple mentions of the same business could be considered an endorsement, which is impermissible according to NCAA legislation.

49) Twitter can be a tattle-tale. For instance, you told your coach you missed a team meeting because your phone's battery was dead and you didn't get the call/text about the meeting. But if your Twitter timeline shows a Tweet from a mobile app during that time, you're busted.

50) Don't let these rules prevent you from enjoying your Twitter experience. It's perfectly acceptable to show your personality and have fun on Twitter--it's encouraged. But like anything else, the key is to enjoy it responsibly.

These special reports are a complimentary service from Dr. Steve Brennan and The Best College Recruiter™ website.