

"The Impact of Your Desired Degree and

Your Goal of Playing College Golf."



"You can have it all.
Just not all at once."
- Oprah Winfrey

If Oprah says it then it must be true, right?

Many young, overachieving student-athletes feel that "If I work hard enough, I can do it all" but in reality, it isn't always quite that simple, especially when it comes to playing college golf. While the dedication and determination of these young student-athletes deserve admiration and respect, there are just so many factors, scenarios, and variables that go into the equation when it comes to identifying the best college golf fit for a prospective recruit.

A Biology Major at a top 75 DI program shared her thoughts,

"I absolutely love Biology. I definitely can't imagine myself doing anything else. That being said though, it is really difficult to do with golf. It's much more demanding than most other majors and more difficult to schedule classes around practice and travel schedule with all the lab requirements and that sort of thing."

After some recent discussions with several of my clients about the state of their game, their college golf goals, and their plans to pursue a particular major or field of study, I decided to dive into some in-depth research and discussion about this aspect of the process.

Here are my conclusions and some insight from what I discovered:



The more difficult and demanding degrees for college golfers:

Medicine, Nursing, Pre-med, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), and Education degrees tend to be the toughest ones to pursue while also competing on a college golf team. These majors typically have labs, rotations, and internships that overlap practice and tournament time, along with most of them being very demanding for out-of-class workloads.

"Many of these [Chemistry] classes are graded on a curve, and I have a 20-30 hour disadvantage against the other students every week which just means I have to time manage really well and study when I'm tired after practice, etc.....I spend as much time doing organic chem as I do golf and that is not an exaggeration. Probably 25-30ish hrs doing both each week including class time." - Freshman Chemistry major at a top 25 DI program

In the research I was able to gather from the team websites and coach responses, there are approximately 1,038 current student-athletes among the top 125 DI women's golf programs. Of those rosters, I was able to identify 435 of the student athlete's majors. This does not distinguish between those who may or may not be traveling on a regular basis or those who may or may not be on athletic scholarship, both of which do play a major part.

The most common major is a degree in Business Admin or Business Management with 101 student-athletes pursuing this degree. Followed by a degree in Communications (38), Psychology (35), Marketing/Advertising (30), Finance (24), Sports Admin/Management (23), Health/Exercise Science (23), Political Science/Int'l Relations (19), Management (19), Economics (17), Engineering (14), Biology (14), Kinesiology/Movement Science (13), Accounting (11), Media/Journalism (10), Sociology/Family Studies (7), Art/Design (7), Environmental/Agricultural Studies (7), Leadership/Human Organizational Studies (7) and any remaining ones had less than 5 student-athletes in that field of study. *

College coaches:

"Nursing, Architecture, and Engineering are very difficult to do and play a sport. The lab requirements for these majors are overwhelming at times."

"I don't tell them they can't major in something, if they are interested they will be good."

Each institution's policies and criteria will affect the options differently:

As with many parts of the process, this is always going to be the case and it's no different with the degree you plan to pursue. Such factors as scheduling conflicts and absentee policies will play a role in how achievable it is to pursue certain degrees, no matter the coach's willingness to accommodate.

Yes, it is more likely that at a top-ranked DI golf program you could encounter stricter institution, coach, and athletic department limitations than maybe a lower-ranked DI program or a DII/DIII program, but in some cases it's just how the institution runs their departments, no matter the division level or ranking. A DII coach once told me she would love to allow her players to do nursing as that would be a great recruiting incentive, but the nursing schedule overlaps their tournament schedule and it just wasn't possible for any nursing major to travel to tournaments.



College Coaches:

"Any engineering or architecture is very difficult..we've also had issues with pre-med/bio/sciences and nutrition with afternoon labs and absence policies"

"Nursing will not be a future option as the 12-hour rotations then going straight to practice just don't work"

"I always have recruits ask me if there are majors that I don't allow and my answer is always no. It's all about getting your education just knowing which majors are more difficult!"



Coaches have their own factors and demands to consider:

When coaches are considering potential recruits, especially ones they are going to offer athletic scholarships, they have a LOT to consider and your intended major could play a factor. Let's look at a few different scenarios the coaches encounter:

If you are already a stud golfer (or a truly realistic recruit that will easily break into that particular program's lineup) AND a really good academic student then a coach may be more inclined to allow a tougher major when they feel you can handle the load while still being a top player for them. You have proven yourself to play at the level they need and your priorities are in line with their expectations of you athletically and academically.

If you are a really good academic student, a supportive teammate with great time management skills, your game is not too far from the golf scores needed to make the lineup and you AREN'T looking for scholarship money, the coach may consider you for a roster spot if they have the room for one. However, if you plan to pursue a demanding major this may deter them from even offering the roster spot, as each additional person on the roster, scholarship or not, still requires their time, attention, expense, and energy.

If you are pushing the "late bloomer, I'm going to peak in college" pitch AND you are trying to convince an out of reach school to consider you AND you plan to pursue a more demanding major AND you need scholarship money, then it's much tougher for them to be flexible. All of these factors just don't fit the puzzle for a successful experience for coach or athlete.

These are just a few scenarios that may present themselves throughout the process and lead a coach to select one recruit over another one, or not be as willing to take you on even as a roster spot with no scholarship. Yes, sometimes a coach not allowing a student-athlete to pursue a certain degree is simply their own personal choice for their own reason. I can list many different reasons that I've heard from them (valid or not), but that is the importance of communication throughout the process to find out if that will work or not.

College Coaches:

"I will always accommodate someone's desire for one of these majors but they often figure out that is hard to do them and play a sport."

"We have not yet had to restrict a player from any major. The kids wanting to do the super difficult majors just have to understand the massive (I mean massive) time commitment from golf and school."

When you are on athletic scholarship it is different:

One of the bigger factors that many parents and recruits don't always fully understand when the coach and institution are investing in you as a golf scholarship athlete, they have justifiable reasons to restrict certain majors that they feel are going to prevent you from contributing to the success of the team. While you may feel this is unfair, it is something that needs to be addressed and discussed prior to making a decision to commit to that particular school/coach. In most of these cases, the coaches and institutions aren't being unsupportive of an athlete's academic pursuits, they are simply trying to maximize their investment in you. There can certainly be different expectations and limitations between the athletes who are on athletic scholarships vs ones who may only be on academic or no scholarship money.

College Coach:

"I try to remind prospective student-athletes that the investment a school is making in them adds up to quite a significant amount and with that there is a high level of expectation to Be the best they can be in their sport and academically."

College Golfer:

"Although, it's supposed to be fun, it's also a business and coaches have a job to do. I feel super appreciated as a person by our staff in every way, but I don't take any decisions they make personally and that helps me deal with things like that. Now I fully understand why some coaches don't allow you to do certain majors."

* Please note, that I tried to compile these majors into the best possible categories given the various institution-based titles and overlapping categories. Some student-athletes have a minor they are pursuing or a combination of two degrees in the same field.

Conclusions and Considerations

At the end of the day, there are SO many different scenarios and factors that are considered and aren't always shown on paper.

Some players are pursuing tougher degrees because they aren't on scholarship money.

Some players came into college with credits to allow them more flexibility in their schedules.

Some players pursue a tough degree and it comes at the price of not traveling to tourneys.

Some coaches are simply more flexible and accommodating than others.

Some coaches can read into a player's priorities and potential to see what is in their best interest.

Some coaches have more pressure to perform and they have to make tough decisions.

Some institutions aren't as flexible on absentee policies.

Some institutions have different requirements for degrees compared to the same degree at another institution.

Golf is one of the most demanding sports in college athletics because both fall and spring are competitive seasons, with more travel days than most other sports. This is just fact. And while education is of the utmost importance, there is also an expectation of athletic performance and commitment that is needed in order for the coach and institution to have a positive return on their time and investment in the student-athletes.

If you have a particular major you want to pursue that is considered more demanding or not possible at some institutions, it doesn't mean you can't still do that and also play college golf. But what it does mean, is that you **MUST** be willing to consider different options, communicate with the coaches, and potentially adjust your preferences in other areas.

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