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Effective Highlight Reels

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Interview by Chad Zimmerman

The highlight tape is one of the most effective tools athletes have to make their talents known. AJ Hodel, owner and founder of Athletic Scholarship Corp., is an expert at producing effective highlight reels, among other marketing tools, to get athletes exposure. Here, Hodel breaks down some essentials of highlight clip creation.

STACK: Does every athlete need a highlight tape?

AJ Hodel: The highlight tape is crucial for athletes of every sport. You need to document, and a camera captures the truth. If someone calls me for recruiting help and says, "I don't have film," I can't help him or her, because then it's just me [trying to persuade] college coaches. If I can't prove your talent, it doesn't exist.

STACK: Are highlights or game films more important?

AH: Highlights are great marketing tools. They get athletes visibility, put on mailing lists and open communication, so you need one. But if you're creative, you can make a good highlight film for any athlete, and recruiters are savvy to that. So full film is where scholarships are.

STACK: When should I start getting game film?

AH: Once you start varsity. For juniors, we use game film to create powerful highlight videos to demonstrate athletic ability. It's quick, clean and five to 10 minutes long, tops. Recruiters don't pay attention to juniors' full-length films, because they look at athletes graduating that year. In the middle of an athlete's senior season, we put together another highlight clip, which serves as the introduction to a full game film.

STACK: Should the camera be zoomed in on the athlete, or out to view the whole play?

AH: Recruiters want to see the whole span, so they see the play develop. They also want to see how an athlete reacts when the play doesn't go his way. Does he stand around? What does he do from a whole team standpoint?

STACK: What else do recruiters look for?

AH: Body type—the athlete's physique. How does he carry his weight? How does she move her feet? How are his hips? Personally, when I look at film, I look to see if the athlete ever quits, and when he makes a mistake, how does he gather himself? If someone else makes a mistake and is emotionally distraught, does he try to pick the kid up? How does he support the team? You can see things on the field that speak to the kind of person he or she is—character and motivation. That's important, no matter the sport.

STACK: If you use music, do lyrics matter?

AH: Yes. Inappropriate music could be a deal breaker, so be careful. Typically, we go with instrumental or clean, radio versions of songs with explicit lyrics.



- ★★★★★ Four Stars
- ★★★★★ Five Stars



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