

## Recruiting Document for High School Prospects

Drafted by Colin Sheehan (Updated October, 2021)

Thank you for your interest in Yale and the [golf program](#). I am always eager to share the following information about the team and the recruiting process with those seeking an elite education while playing highly competitive golf at the Division I level. At Yale, there is no reason to compromise either ambition.

For a visual perspective of the program, here is a [slideshow of team highlights from 2008 to the present](#).

**Program Background:** The Yale Golf Team has a very proud and storied tradition that dates to 1896 when it became the first college team ever formed. In November of 1896, Yale defeated Columbia—"by the high score of 35 holes"—in the very first intercollegiate match at the Ardsley Casino in Westchester County, New York. The following year, the Bulldogs won the very first Intercollegiate Championship in May of 1897, again at Ardsley. Over the next 47 years, Yale were Intercollegiate Champions an additional 20 times, including a consecutive nine-year run between 1905 and 1913. The 21-championship total is the highest in NCAA men's golf, six clear of the University of Houston. During that era, many amateur legends contributed to the program's considerable dominance, including [Robert Gardner '12](#), twice a US Amateur Champion (1909 & 1915) and [Jess Sweetser '23](#), winner of the US Amateur (1922) and British Amateur (1925). From 1897 to 1923, a Yale golfer either won or finished runner-up in the U.S. Amateur 12 times in those 27 years.

Since 1945, the Yale team has been one of the elite programs in the northeast, winning the Eastern Intercollegiate "the Easterns" and/or the Ivy League Championship a total of 25 times since 1949—including eight Ivy Championships during the Coach Dave Paterson era from 1975-2008.

More recently, the team has had a successful run. We have won our home fall event, **The Macdonald Cup**, five times (2009, 2011, 2012, 2014 & 2017), **The Princeton Invitational** seven times (2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2018 & 2019), **The Doc Gimmler** (2013, 2014, 2015), **The Yale Spring Invitational** (2010, 2017 & 2019) and **The Ivy League Championships** in 2011 and 2018 by 20 and 22 shots respectively. Since the start of the 2008-2009 year, a Yale golfer has been named to the D-I Northeast All Region team 24 times, twice as many as the next Ivy program. It is our goal every year to earn a bid to the NCAA Regionals and vie for the chance to advance to the NCAA Championship. A Regionals bid is earned either by winning the Ivy League Championship or receiving an at-large exemption from the NCAA selection committee.

During the 2017-2018 season, the team had one of the great years in the program's modern era. They won three times—The Macdonald Cup, The Princeton Invitational and the Ivy League Championship—and we had Eoin Leonard '19 win the Ivy tournament individually and James Nicholas '19 voted Ivy Player of the Year by a narrow margin over his teammate Eoin. The team finished the year 29-0 and 736 strokes up against our conference foes. We finished our last three events, consecutive weeks in April, with a 31-1 record. That includes an 11-stroke head-to-head win over top-50 ranked Virginia at the Yale Spring Invitational. The only head-to-head loss was at that same event to the University of Tennessee.

During the 2018-2019 season, the team managed to eclipse the previous season's heights with three more team wins, including a first: winning the 2018 Cornell Invitational by 24 shots with a 14-under-par team score. In April 2019, the team set a new all-time 54-hole scoring record in relation to par when they posted 23-under par at the Princeton Invitational, winning that event for the seventh time in 10 years. The following weekend Yale defended its home Spring Invitational with a come-from-behind win. While we had a disappointing two-stroke loss at Ivies, I was no less proud of that incredible team who completed the year 27-2 and 725 strokes up against the conference. The players also had the ninth lowest unadjusted team scoring average in Division I and James Nicholas '19 and Teddy Zinsner '21 finished with the ninth and 23<sup>rd</sup> lowest individual scoring averages in Division I respectively. James would win three tournaments *en route* to another Ivy League Player of the Year honor, this time unanimously. He also set the all-time tournament scoring record at the 2018 Macdonald Cup with rounds of 64-64-67 (197, 15-under par)!

**Updated October 11, 2021:** In September of 2021, the team returned to competition after a 23-month disruption from covid-19. In the very first event back, **The Alex Lagowitz Memorial at Colgate** during Labor Day weekend, the boys won the event by 15-shots. Three weeks later, the team held off the Michigan Wolverines by four strokes to win **The Macdonald Cup** for the sixth time in 12 years. (We were also 164 strokes up on the other five Ivies in the field.) Our last 54-hole tournament of the fall was the Maidstone Invitational in East Hampton, New York. The opening day was carnage but we did close with a seven-under par 281 to finish ahead of Cal-Berkeley and all the northeast programs in the field.

**Academics as Top Priority:** At Yale, it is not athletics, but rather academics, that are the top priority. I do ask that the student-athletes make their commitment to golf a close second, but the team's academic success is every bit as important to me as their golf results. To their credit, they consistently achieve a very high academic standard, a feat recognized annually by the Golf Coaches Association of America's President's Special Recognition/All-Academic Team Honors. (It is awarded to teams with a cumulative grade point average above 3.5.)

**Academic Freedom:** Yale golfers are welcome to pursue whichever major they like, no matter how rigorous or time-consuming it might be. They can also take any class they wish at any time they wish. Because the golf course is so convenient to campus, we promote a flexibility to the practice schedule that conveniently works around their academic schedules. We have an Uber account for easy transportation to and from the course. At the same time, about three or four players will have a car on campus in any given year. There are a number of indoor parking garages conveniently located near the dorms.

**Quality Undergraduate Experience:** Lastly, I want to make sure that my players have a very well-rounded and enriching undergraduate experience. In spite of the academic rigor and dedication to the team, there is still plenty of time for the students to enjoy this critical third component of their time at Yale. That includes making plenty of friends, being exposed to new and interesting ideas, growing as a person, participating in campus events and supporting their fellow students in their own competitions, performances and activities.

I encourage you to visit Yale's website to learn about the residential college system, the academic departments and other general information. I also encourage you to seek out reviews like *The Insider's Guide to the Colleges*. <http://admissions.yale.edu/> <http://admissions.yale.edu/home>

**The Golf Facilities:** The Yale players are very fortunate to call the [Yale Golf Course](#) their home. Conveniently located just 12 minutes from campus, it is perennially ranked the #1 college course in the country. Designed by Charles Blair Macdonald and Seth Raynor between 1923-1925, the course formally opened in the spring of 1926. It is considered by golf architectural experts as one of the most daring creations from the “Golden Age” of golf design. Famed golf writer, Herbert Warren Wind, a Yale graduate from 1937, called it “a back-breaking job over an untouched plot of rugged land whose hazards and greens have the kind of dimensions that one would have expected of Michelangelo.”

To this day, the course remains a very challenging test for college golfers as well as frequent host of NCAA Regionals, including four times during the past 20 years: 1995, 2004, 2010 and 2015. (The tournament returns in May of 2022.) Here is a video by Andy Johnson from the Fried Egg called [The Scale of Yale](#).

For an independent review, I welcome you to read the following profile from leading critic Ran Morrisett: <http://www.golfclubatlas.com/courses-by-country/usa/yale-university-golf-course-ct-usa/>

Here is a [link to the history of the property and course](#)

Because it is a varsity facility, the players have top priority when it comes to tee-times and access; and the staff does a wonderful job accommodating our needs. For example, the team plays 18-hole qualifiers on Friday afternoons after classes are over and again early Saturday mornings. This allows them to get back to campus in time for the start of brunch in the dining halls. Furthermore, we are able to host two tournaments every year: the **Macdonald Cup** in the fall and the **Spring Invitational** in April. Both of these events are on weekends. The Macdonald Cup (formerly the Yale Fall Intercollegiate) dates back to 1976. As a two-day, 54-hole competition, it is the premiere northeast college event on the fall calendar, as it attracts programs from around the country. Recent winning teams include Texas Christian (2007), Oklahoma (2008), Illinois (2013 & 2018) and Minnesota (2019). We also host the Yale Spring Invitational every April, the week before Ivies. Recent winners include Wake Forest (2015) and Tennessee (2011 & 2018). The home events give the team the benefit of spending two fewer weekends of the year away from campus, in addition to the obvious home-course advantage. It is also an opportunity for the players to have their roommates and friends come out to the course to watch them compete.

The Yale Athletic Department announced in late September 2021 that Gil Hanse has been hired to produce a master plan prior to a comprehensive renovation in 2023. The plan will restore the original width of fairways and dimensions of greens and original location and shape of bunkers. It will also include major upgrades to the existing varsity practice facilities.

Back on campus, the men’s and women’s teams are also fortunate to have exclusive access to the **David Paterson Golf Technology Center**, a marvelous indoor facility on the second floor of the Payne Whitney Gym. The DPGTC is a year-round resource and a place for the teams to spend time together during the winter months. Just two floors down from the varsity weight room, the facility has three hitting bays, a practice putting green, a golf simulator and two Trackmans. (It is also a place where the teams conduct winter clinics for [New Haven-area middle school children](#).)

On any given afternoon in the winter, there will be players from men's and women's teams stopping by before or after a workout. With music always playing on the docking station, the players will have putting competitions, compete in Trackman combines and just hang out together with the golf coverage streaming on the television.

**Coaching Credentials:** Both the men's and women's programs have a proud tradition of being represented by coaches who bring out the best in the players. That was the case with my coach, David Paterson, who led the team from 1975-2008. As a former member of the team—and someone familiar with the undergraduate experience—I am empathetic to the challenge the players face balancing their academic and athletic demands. This is the basis for my “players-friendly” coaching attitude. It has helped me set a practice and tournament schedule that allows them the best chances to succeed as students and athletes. Here is a link to my [coaching profile](#). And this spring I was interviewed for the Yale Athletics [Coach's Corner](#) series that provides some additional perspective on my approach to the program.

**Typical Fall Semester:** The players generally return to campus for the last week of August after having their own three- or four-day preseason amongst themselves. Once classes begin on the Wednesday before Labor Day weekend, we are officially in season so we are able to begin having practices. Practices are typically 3:00pm to 6:00pm Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays with qualifiers and tournaments on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. There is not a strict structure to practice. Players always have the option to swap days and adjust their time accordingly. I want them to use the time wisely and efficiently and they often adjust their routine throughout the week as we get closer to qualifiers and tournaments. Practices are almost always very relaxed affairs. It is a joy for the players to leave campus on a gorgeous autumn afternoon around 2:45 and arrive at the course by 3:00pm where they can hit balls for half an hour and then play a twilight nine with their teammates who happen to be some of their closest friends on campus. They return to campus around 6:00pm for dinner feeling invigorated.

We often use Labor Day weekend to conduct the F.A. Borsodi Student Championship, a 54-hole medal competition amongst the team and anyone competing to walk on. (Frederic Borsodi graduated from Yale in 1939 and became a decorated pilot in the European theater during World War II. ([He died from an airplane crash in England in January of 1945.](#)))

By the second weekend of September, we begin leaving on Fridays for tournaments that usually follow the same structure: leave campus Friday morning for an afternoon practice round at places like Colgate, Cornell, Bethpage Red (St. John's) or Maidstone (Loyola). We will play 36 holes on Saturday and the final round on Sunday. We normally return to campus by dinner time. In normal times, we schedule one tournament that requires us to fly where we can compete with nationally ranked teams. In the past we have played in events at Old Town in Winston-Salem (Wake Forest), the Gopher Invitational (Minnesota), the Inverness Intercollegiate (Toledo), etc.

We will often play about four, 54-hole events in as few as four weeks or as many as six weeks. Either the third or four of the events is our fall invitational, the Macdonald Cup.

Towards the end of the fall season, I try to schedule a one-day, 36-hole match, either a head-to-head like we've done through the years with Georgia, Texas A&M, Richmond, etc., or the H-Y-P tri-match like 2010, 2011, 2018 and again in October of 2021.

By the middle of October, the players begin transitioning into full time students. We continue to have practices and take advantage of the really beautiful days, and they will begin having a more consistent workout schedule in the varsity weight room. However, the players will mostly use the down time to catch up on their work and take advantage of the opportunity to participate in more campus events. The team will continue to meet for meals and host recruits and we will use the indoor facility to get together to watch golf and football games.

**Typical Spring Semester:** The spring semester begins in the middle of January and much like the second half of the fall semester, the first half of the spring semester is a chance for the players to stay ahead of their academics and enjoy campus life. During those seven weeks from the start of the semester until we leave for spring break, the players will use the David Paterson Golf Technology Center and we often conduct introductory golf clinics to the middle school kids involved in New Haven's First Tee program. The players elect to have three team workouts each week under the supervision of a dedicated strength and conditioning instructor who tailors the golf-specific workouts to each individual player. Players are only given a workout plan that they feel is in their best interest for their game.

By mid-February, we start to get mild days which prompts the time-honored tradition of the first years joining me to shovel the snow off the mats. Most years, we will get a few weeks of hitting outside prior to leaving for spring break.

During **Spring Break** each March, which is 16 days in the middle of the month, the team travels to warm-weather destinations to prepare for the spring season. These trips, to places like Florida, Georgia, South Carolina and California, allow the team to sharpen their skills and play in a tournament or two while also sampling some of the finest courses in the country, from Seminole to Riviera to Cypress Point and SFGC. During the 2019 spring break, the Yale team played in two events, the first at Mission Inn near Orlando and the second at Furman's event in Greenville, South Carolina. We spent the four days in between those two events at the Ohoopie Match Club in Cobbtown, Georgia. Here are two spring break videos by James Nicholas '19. The first from [2016 in Northern California](#) and this one from [2017 in Southern California](#). And here is a [compilation of all his years at Yale](#).

We will return to campus in late March and get ready for the last five weeks of the semester. During the month of April, we will travel to Princeton, host the Yale Spring Invitational and then leave for Ivies five days later. The team that wins the conference automatically qualifies for the NCAA Regionals several weeks later.

[Needless to say, those three weeks in April are quite stressful on the students since it is so late in the semester. During these final few weeks of the year, the kids will have major assignments due and exams looming. There is no question it is a very difficult challenge to balance the academic rigor or four or five classes while playing golf to a high level in April in the northeast when conditions can be quite adverse. It isn't easy, but it can be done by a certain type of conscientious student-athlete.]

Following the Ivies, the men's and women's teams will have an end-of-year banquet together at [Mory's](#), a 19th century campus institution. The jacket-and-tie affair includes the first years standing to read passages by [Herbert Warren Wind '37](#), the legendary sports journalist considered the second best golf writer of all time behind Bernard Darwin. During the evening, we elect the captains for the following year and have

speeches from the graduating seniors, the newly-elected captains, the coaches and anyone else who wishes to do so. By then, the students have a reading week prior to another week of exams. Once they complete their last exam, they pack up and head home. The graduating seniors will return for Senior Week, during which I have a tradition of taking them on a day-trip to play a few of the more exquisite Long Island gems as a proper final send off before they graduate a few days later.

Occasionally, the players have accepted summer internships on campus since that are permitted access to all the golf facilities.

An average year the team will play a total of seven 54-hole events, 36 holes for the Yale Spring Invitational, and the occasional one day matches. Sometimes we are able to compete in more than just one tournament during spring break.

**Quadrennial Overseas Trip:** We are also the only college program to make an overseas trip to England and Scotland every four years since 1976. Our most recent trip, in June of 2016, was yet another installment of a once-in-a-lifetime golf experience where the team plays foursomes (alternate shot) and singles (twosomes) matches with a number of British universities, including St. Andrews, Edinburgh, Oxford and Cambridge. The team also plays matches against the members of clubs like Royal Cinque Ports, Royal Liverpool, Royal St. George's, Royal Blackheath and the Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers, in addition to playing such legendary links at St. Andrews, North Berwick and Prestwick. Any Yale golfer from the past 45 years who has been fortunate enough to attend such a trip will remember it as one of the golfing highlights of their life. I am planning to take the team back in March of 2023. Here is a video by James Nicholas from [the Scotland portion of the trip back in 2016](#). And here is a [long video of the 2008 trip](#) during Coach Paterson's final UK tour during March of his 33rd and final year coaching.

**Candidate Profile:** In each recruiting cycle, I will receive unsolicited emails from approximately 300 talented and ambitious prospects from around the country, and increasingly around the world. So the process is understandably very competitive since I am in a position to support two or three candidates from each class. I am looking for conscientious student athletes who are motivated, disciplined and passionate about the game and eager to continue to mature, develop and make a solid contribution to the team for four years. I've been very fortunate that we've had a very positive team culture through the years. The players never need to be motivated: they can be trusted to do whatever is needed to be ready for the next event. They are each dedicated to their craft and committed to making and staying in the starting line-up and they happily sacrifice on behalf of their teammates for the betterment of the team.

**Golf Achievements:** To become a top recruit, a player will need to demonstrate the ability to consistently shoot around par—and more than occasionally break par—in elite tournaments. Examples of successful benchmarks would be winning an AJGA event or a state junior amateur, or qualifying for the US Junior and reaching match play. I do not insist that a prospect travel the country playing in events—I don't begrudge those who do—however I do recommend that candidates play in their state's, or golf section's, amateur and professional events, especially state amateurs and opens. I also encourage everyone to participate in regional qualifiers for the US Junior, PGA Junior Championship and the US Amateur. As for a specific handicap, someone with a tournament-tested, proven handicap of +2 or better has reached

the desired threshold. Another benchmark is candidates who have at least a -1.00 scoring differential on the [Junior Golf Scoreboard](#) website.

While I don't discourage candidates from including some of their high school golf team results—like notable state championship wins or other important 18-hole rounds—I place more emphasis on individual tournaments at the state and national level that typically take place during the summer.

I always suggest to prospects to review the golf credentials of the [players on Yale's roster](#) to get an idea for the type of achievements that elevated them to the top of their recruiting classes. I also suggest a prospect do that for any program with which he is interested.

**Academic Requirements:** Prospective candidates need to have academic standards as high as possible, meaning students need to be at the top (or near the top) of their high school class. That includes a transcript with a grade point average as close as possible to an unweighted 4.0, while taking the most rigorous classes the high school has to offer.

Yale accepts, but does not currently require, the SAT and ACT and TOEFL, which is only required for international applicants who have not attended a high school where English is a primary language of instruction. I would prefer my candidates to have taken one of those standardized testing options multiple times by June of the end of their Junior year. Like the gpa, these scores also need to be as high as possible. While there are not any absolute benchmarks, a prospect remains on my recruiting radar with an SAT “super score” above 1450, or a 32 or higher on the ACT or a TOEFL around 108 or higher.

As for combined golf and academic achievements, I place a value on those named to the AJGA's Scholastic All-American team.

**Recruiting Calendar:** NCAA compliance precludes any college coach from initiating emails or replying to emails with prospects prior to June 15 following sophomore year. Because of that, I file away any emails and letters from high school freshmen and sophomores (other than a reply stating NCAA rules) and then reply with my lengthier introductory email during the summer after sophomore year.

**Unofficial Visits:** Recent NCAA legislation has changed the visitation rules. Coaches cannot meet prospects or their families on campus until August 1 before their junior year. Prospects can visit campus on their own as freshmen and sophomores but I cannot participate in any in-person meetings. Nonetheless, I do encourage prospects to make an unofficial visit to New Haven to tour campus and our golf facilities. Anytime of the year is fine, but I recommend trying to come during the academic calendar when the campus is busy with student life, although I realize for many families it is easier done during the summer.

I will always make an effort to meet with a prospect when compliance permits, but even if my schedule doesn't allow it, I still encourage prospects to visit when they can, especially for the information sessions and tours that leave from the Department of Undergraduate Admissions, located at 38 Hillhouse Avenue. Here's a link <http://admissions.yale.edu/tours>

**Official Visits:** The rules have recently changed to allow prospects to make an official visit to campus after they begin their junior year school year. During these official visits, Yale pays for the travel and

meal expenses of prospects to come spend up to 48 hours on campus attending classes, joining the team for meals, observing practice, staying overnight in the dorms and getting the full experience of campus life. While only a few prospects will be invited for an official visit, more will be welcome for unofficial visits that accomplishes much of the same things without Yale covering transportation costs and meals.

**Academic Pre-Read:** The admissions department will not let me support a candidate they do not think can handle the rigor of Yale and I cannot support any candidate without their blessing. During the second half of June, I will ask all serious prospects to send me their complete academic information, which needs to include their high school transcript for freshmen, sophomore and junior years, all ACT, SAT and any-and-all AP tests.

For the Pre-Read, the following materials are required:

- High school transcript through junior year
- Scores from any SAT or ACT or TOEFL testing that has been taken
- Scores from any AP tests already taken.
- Senior class schedule

The following materials are helpful:

- High school profile
- Class rank – if applicable

No sooner than July 1, my admissions liaison will review completed profiles one of three ways: “Continue to Recruit,” “Recruit with Caution” or “Stop Recruiting.”

Around this time—primarily late June, July and early August—I will travel to as many tournaments as needed to evaluate as many candidates as possible. It isn’t necessary to always see a candidate in person in order for him to become a top recruit. As I refine my list of recruits, I begin to follow up on their contacts and spend an additional amount of time on the phone getting to know them if they haven’t already come to campus.

From the start of July through mid-August, I will create a depth chart of those prospects who were given “Continue to Recruit” by the admissions liaison. This process will include not only an evaluation but multiple phone calls and in-person conversations. Eventually, I ask those at the top of my list if Yale is their first choice, and if it so, I offer to support the applications of the two or three top candidates who commit to Yale.

**Application Process:** In a typical year, I will have the opportunity to support two academically vetted candidates. These candidates will almost always apply “early action.” Even though the early decision application deadline is November 1, the supported applicants will usually submit their completed application by the end of September since October 1 is the earliest that I can trigger an “early read.” As soon as October 11, admissions will begin sending “likely letters” to athletic recruits who are then admitted formally on December 15 with the rest of the early action applicants. During the entirety of a supported recruits senior year of high school, he must remain on the same upward academic trajectory as

the first three years of high school. Yale does not want to see any elements of *senioritis* among those students matriculating that coming fall.

**Financial Aid:** While Yale and the other Ivy League schools do not offer any athletic-related scholarships, Yale is one of the most generous need-based private school intuitions anywhere in the world. I encourage prospects and their parents to visit the website for Yale's Financial Aid office that includes a calculator. <http://www.yale.edu/sfas/finaid/>

**Applying Without Support:** I am frequently asked if there is any consideration I can give to a candidate I am not supporting during the application process. Unfortunately, there isn't anything I can do to be helpful. The Admissions Department is quite clear on this matter: My support is strictly limited to those I am officially supporting in the admissions process.

**Walking On:** For those players who matriculate to Yale on their own, I am very open-minded to walk-ons, with whom I have had success through the years. To make the team, the candidate will be given at least a 36-hole try out during Labor Day weekend. A potential walk-on will need to be competitive for the starting five when he is playing well.

**Transfer Students:** Each year I will also hear from candidates looking to transfer after one or more years of college elsewhere. For someone who had an "Continue to Recruit" academic profile through the end of high school and maintained that standard during their first year of college, that candidate might be a potential transfer recruit but he must have at least three years of eligibility remaining.

**Consideration of Gap Year:** Each year a number of candidates who did not find a match with a program or school to their liking consider taking a gap year. This gives such candidates an extra window in which to compete during the spring of their senior year and following high school graduation. Certainly, most candidates look to establish a strong resume being a year older, stronger, wiser, better, etc. However, jumping into the following recruiting cycle is never any less competitive, but on some occasions, a player has a breakout performance during this window that attracts the serious attention of coaches. Certainly, a gap year could be a very fruitful opportunity to continue to develop as a golfer and compete.

## APPENDIX

Golf team updates and past results can be tracked on the [Yale Athletics website](#):

### **Niche.com 2018 Best College for Student-Athletes in America**

#1 Amongst Ivy League Schools & #22 in the country

<https://www.niche.com/colleges/search/best-student-athletes/>

### **Forbes Magazine: The 25 Top Colleges that Dominate Athletically and Academically**

#1 Amongst Ivy League Schools & # 8 in the country

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/huntersharf/2017/08/02/25-top-colleges-that-dominate-academically-and-athletically/#10d6d1047c3d>

**The 25 Best Colleges for Student-Athletes**

#1 Amongst Ivy League Schools & #5 in the country

<https://affordableschools.net/25-best-american-colleges-student-athletes/>

**Money Magazine/Sports Illustrated's 100 Best Colleges for Sports Lovers**

#1 Amongst Ivy League Schools & #9 in the country

<http://time.com/money/4695629/best-colleges-sports-lovers/>

**College Factual's Top Colleges per USA TODAY**

#1 in the country

<http://college.usatoday.com/2017/09/11/college-factual-best-colleges-ranking/>