

Brent Noble

Head Coach, Wabash College



Noble wrapped up his second season at Wabash, a small all-men's liberal arts college in Crawfordsville, Ind. His Little Giants finished fourth in the highly-competitive North Coast Athletic Conference, which includes perennial Division III powerhouses Kenyon College and Dennison University. He was named NCAC Coach of the Year.



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY WABASH COLLEGE

● What, in your opinion, is Division III swimming all about?

At Wabash, athletics are an extension of the classroom where student athletes grow, learn and lead in a competitive environment. In Division III, the swimming is serious, and the athletes are motivated and driven. Division III swimming is about serious and competitive swimming in an environment that encourages the swimmers to gain much more than improvements in time.

● What type of swimmer is suited to Division III competition?

I think most swimmers could find a great fit in Division III, but student-athletes competing in Division III are usually looking to gain as much as they can from their college experience.

Speaking for myself, I look for swimmers who are talented and motivated, as well as a perfect fit for the college. The fit at the institution is very important, so I try to recruit swimmers and divers who can make our whole college better. If the athlete can make our college better, he can make our team better.

● What's the level of intensity of Division III competition?

The level of competition at the D-III national meet is higher than any high school or club state meet. Fast swimmers can compete in Division III and have other swimmers to push them. The overall talent level in Division III is lower than at the top levels of Division I, but I think people would be surprised by how many Division III teams could compete with a large number of Division I teams. Many swimmers who are offered scholarships in Division I could also fit really well into many Division III programs.

● What kind of transition is it from high school/club swimming to Division III swimming?

A stronger sense of team is really clear when a swimmer transitions into Division III swimming, or college swimming in general. Our swimmers take representing the college very seriously. They compete for the Wabash community, our alumni, and each other. It's a really great feeling knowing that so many people care about what you're doing, and that sense is incredibly strong here.

Also, given that college swimmers usually compete in only three different events, training can become much more specific to each swimmer's races. On top of that, college teams often have more coaches and space per athlete, so it is easier to structure the training program to cater more closely to the needs of each individual. We are typically building on the groundwork the athlete has done beforehand and taking it as far as we can by exploiting every means for improvement available.

● How will swimmers know if Division III is the right move for them?

It's much more about the individual school than the division. If you're initially looking for schools that would be a good athletic fit, leave every

option open. There's plenty of overlap, so you may fit in some programs across all divisions. I think finding a place to really contribute and compete is a great idea, so I generally encourage swimmers to look for a place where they can do that. Once you've narrowed down the schools you fit into athletically, find a school that feels the best. Find a place where you can completely buy into the whole environment.

● What is the balance between school and athletics like in Division III?

Most of these schools want their students to succeed and have opportunities to grow. Coaches cooperate, and so do professors. We're all in this together, and I like to think that we work together well towards our common goal. The possibilities are here for a really full experience. All that said, it's up to the athlete to do the work and make it all happen.

● How do Division III programs identify prospective swimmers?

Recruiting sites and services, club and meet visits, word of mouth, and coaches' referrals are all important. That said, we often miss swimmers who could be a great fit. I don't know any Division III coaches who don't like to receive correspondence from a new swimmer who took the first step. I encourage anyone looking at any school to go ahead and contact the coach.

Note: NCAA Division III swimming and diving teams do not award athletic scholarships.

Looking for Other Options?

CLUB SPORT TEAMS: Club sport teams are intercollegiate athletic teams funded (and often founded) by students. They are often open to students, faculty, alumni and staff of all ages and abilities and compete against other club sport teams from other colleges and universities. There is even a national championship meet.

NAIA: Some schools are members of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics, rather than the NCAA. There are nearly 300 NAIA colleges nationwide, with 60,000 student-athletes awarded more than \$450 million in financial aid each year. The NAIA offers national championships in 13 different sports, including swimming.

NJCAA: The National Junior College Athletic Association is made up of two-year colleges and institutions. Scholarships are available, and national championships are held in swimming.