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[Austin Rivers discards Florida from choices](#)

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By Eamonn Brennan

Maybe recruiting a player when he's still unable to earn a learner's permit *isn't* the most prudent strategy ever devised.

Of course, it sort of makes you look like a scumbag. There is that.

But there would be plenty of coaches willing to take on that unseemly reputation if it meant a leg up on the top talent in the country. That seemed to be the case for Florida coach Billy Donovan, when he landed Austin Rivers, [now the country's top-rated high school player](#), when Rivers was a freshman in high school at Winter Park High in Orlando, Florida. That recruitment wasn't [as bad as Billy Gillispie's dogged pursuit of an eighth-grader](#) (which, ick), but it seemed a little, well, premature. Is a high school freshman really ready to make his college choice?

In Rivers' case, the answer was no. The 6-foot-3 guard de-committed from the Gators in April and opened his recruitment to schools like Duke, North Carolina, Kansas and others. Florida remained an option, Rivers said at the time, but he wanted to explore other options, too. Probably the smart play.

As of Thursday, it turns out Florida is no longer even an option. Rivers told Scout.com recruiting analyst Evan Daniels [that he's narrowed his choices to Duke, Kansas, or North Carolina](#). Many believed Rivers was leaning toward Duke earlier this offseason, but other than a curious get-up, the point guard has offered few clues to go by.

Instead, we only know one more school where the nation's best recruit won't attend, and that's the school that locked in his commitment when he was probably a bit too young to be handing it out. If that sort of example means fewer coaches will take on those sorts of commitments -- the trend, as it were, [is already being examined by the NCAA](#) -- then that's probably a good outcome for college hoops, even if Florida fans will be sorely disappointed.

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Eamonn Brennan

Brennan joined ESPN.com in 2009 after several years of blogging at Yahoo Sports! and other places around the Internet. He lives in Chicago with his roommates, his dog, and a crippling addiction to caffeine.



Diamond Leung

Leung joined ESPN.com in 2009 after five years at The Press-Enterprise in Riverside, Calif., where he covered sports at UCLA, USC and the Los Angeles Dodgers beat. He lives in San Francisco.

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