Watauga High senior Jordan Pineda will sign his national letter of intent to play college football at Wake Forest University in the Atlantic Coast Conference.

Pineda will be a grey shirt recruit, which means he can take up to six hours of college courses next fall before he transfers to Wake Forest in January of 2012. The Demon Deacons have gone through two consecutive losing seasons after reaching the EagleBank Bowl in 2008. Wake Forest was a 3-9 last fall.

And Pineda, a defensive end by trade, will learn a new position at Wake Forest---outside linebacker----a position he hasn't played since his freshman year at WHS.

"It's going to be a challenge for sure," Pineda said. "I played outside linebacker and it lasted about two months. I'm so use to charging up field, dropping back in pass coverage felt strange. But I've grown into my body, and they have a shortage of outside linebackers at Wake, so they gave me a look and I'm ready to learn and contribute."

Pineda was a big-play guy for the Pioneers on defense since he joined the varisty his sophomore year. He had 227 tackles in his career, 59.5 tackles for loss (282 yards in losses), 26 quarterback sacks, seven forced fumbles, five fumble recoveries and two interceptions. He made 90 stops for the Pioneers last fall, including six sacks and 16.5 tackles for loss. And he did all of that while playing with a hip injury for the last year-and-a-half.

"My hip is fine," he said. "I'm rehabbing and I feel great. And I'm not worried about the injury. It's healed. I've been pushing myself ever since the surgery. I'm not one to sit around. I wanted to get up and around on it right away."

Wofford College, Lenior-Rhyne University, among other schools were in line waiting for Pineda to make a decision. And Pineda, who originally committed to play at Wofford, changed his mind when Wake Forest called. Ironically, Pineda was on his way to Spartanburg, SC, on a recruiting trip when he got the call.

"Nothing against Wofford," Pineda said. "Its a great school and the Harvard (University) of the south. But I just wanted a chance to play in the ACC. It's a dream for every guy growing up from the pee-wee leagues. I wanted to be on the big stage. And Wake gave me that chance."

And it was redemption for Pineda, a hot commodity that lost steam with many Division I schools when they learned about his hip injury.

"Jordan could have played at a higher level than Wake," said WHS football coach Tim Pruitt. "But the hip injury scared a lot of the bigger schools off. But a lot of South Atlantic Confernce (Division II) schools were interested in Jordan, as well as Wofford. He's just a great athlete.

"He has a motor, and I really believe that was a huge selling point for Wake. And Jordan has the talent to play outside linebacker in a 3-4 scheme. He could be like Clay Matthews of the (Green Bay) Packers. He will primarily be an up field guy that will rush the quarterback."

And rushing the quarterback has been his trademark the last three years at WHS. But Pineda is also preparing himself for life after football. He plans on going to seminary school and he wants

to be youth minister.
"Wake Forest has a great seminary school," Pineda said. "I want to study sociology and religion, and my goal is to reach people through my faith. It really hit me last year, and it's something I really want to do. And I feel coming to Wake Forest will allow me to do that.
"I'm elated to be playing Division I football. I've met (WFU) coach (Jim) Grobe. Sure, he's a demanding guy, but he gets the most out of his people. And I'm real motivated to play for him. It's a great opportunity, and I'm thankful for the chance."
Pineda will sign his national letter of intent at 11:30 am Wednesday morning in the Watauga High library. AM 1450, WATA will air Jordan Pineda's interview Wednesday morning at 11:30 am.