

Williams Signs With Alderson-Broaddus

Written by Mike Kelly

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Watauga High senior Nick Williams made it official on Tuesday afternoon as he signed his National Letter of Intent with Alderson-Broaddus College, a Division II school in Philippi, W.V.,

to play men's lacrosse next season. And Williams, a pre-dental major, who was a football and a baseball player most of his life, found his niche playing lacrosse. Ironically, it seems like Williams, who started playing competitively last season, was born to play the game. In just his first season with the Pioneers' lacrosse team last spring, Williams exploded for a school-record 37 goals. That effort led the Pioneers to a 6-6 record, and nearly got them into the state playoffs.

"We lost to Patton (by a 7-6 score)," said WHS coach Chris Wallace. "And it cost us the district title. Our district only gets one berth. Nick had the last scoring chance of the game, but their goalkeeper got a leg out and stopped him. If he scores, we're tied, and who knows what happens. But Nick was a huge blessing to our team and our program.

"I don't think we scored 37 goals in our first two years of existence. He's a solid player, and along with Dominick Hamilton, they gave our program a huge boost."

And Williams, who plays attacker, loves the physicality of the game. It almost like playing football.

"And I can do it with a stick, and that's not bad, either," Williams said. "I got into it to stay in shape to play football. And a good friend of mine, Dominick Hamilton, asked me to play. I love the game, and I must admit, it came pretty easy for me, especially scoring goals. The toughest part is learning how to throw and to pass to a teammate. In baseball, you can throw the ball right at the person you're playing catch with. But in lacrosse, you must aim for the stick, so he can catch it in transition right off the pitch."

And Williams, who plays attacker, has a nose for the net. Stationed behind the net, it's Williams' responsibility to create scoring chances. But he has company along the way. Defenders are constantly trying to knock him down.

"But Nick has such great balance," Wallace said. "Plus, he's fast. He can move around, and he has the ability to avoid the hits. But if he gets hit, he has the strength to stay on his feet. That's what made him so special to the college coaches."

And Williams had his suitors. Six schools in all (Limestone, Belmont-Abbey, Pfeiffer, Wheeling-Jesuit, just to name a few...) were anxious to sign him, but he settled on Alderson-Broaddus.

"It was the perfect fit for me," Williams said. "The most important thing is that they have my major and I want to get a good education. Dominick and I went up to Maryland to play at a camp this past summer. We played something like seven or eight games in two days in 100-degree heat. It was fun. (A-B coach Bob Bennett) got wind of me, and then he came to a camp to see me play in person. We've been in touch ever since."

Bennett, who has coached at various schools at the collegiate and high school levels, is in his first year at A-B. And the Battlers will be members of the newly-formed East Coast Athletic Conference Men's Lacrosse League, which officially starts competing in February of 2013.

"I'm excited for the chance to play," Williams said. "And I'm real thankful for my family and all their support through this. "Once they saw how good I was at playing lacrosse, they said, 'you

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got a chance to be good at this.' But I'm playing a position that suppose to score. It's my responsibility. But I am surprised how I picked this up so quickly."

"It's a big day for the program," Wallace said. "This really helps us. With Nick signing and our program putting together a good year last year, Watauga lacrosse is elevating itself. We don't have a feeder program and kids don't pick up a stick until they're freshmen. We're trying to get that changed. Hopefully, this will help us get there."

Williams is the first scholarship player in the program's short three-year history. Former Pioneer Will Bridges is a walk-on junior at Lees-McRae College in Banner Elk. Ray Cameron, who got the lacrosse program started as a women's club sport at WHS, was named the women's head coach at LMC last May.