

Speir Inks 15 on National Signing Day

Written by Daniel Hooker

Thursday, 02 February 2012 07:17

Western Carolina head football coach Mark Speir today announced the signing of 15 student-athletes to National Letters of Intent to play football for the Catamounts beginning in the fall of 2012. All told, Speir and the Catamounts currently have 17 in this year's incoming class with

two players - junior transfer Eddie Sullivan and incoming freshman Michael Helms, both quarterbacks - enrolling at WCU for the spring semester in early January.

Sullivan is the only upper classman brought in by Speir and his inaugural staff with the remaining 16 all coming straight out of high school. Ten of those incoming players are from the state of North Carolina with the remaining seven coming from out of state including three from Georgia, two from South Carolina, and one apiece from Florida and Texas.

"We were able to address some immediate needs on our football team with the change in staff and schemes with this year's incoming class. We have added some quality young men who are great student-athletes and will be excellent representatives of Western Carolina University both on and off the field," said Speir on Wednesday afternoon. "We are excited about the future of Catamount football."

Looking at the class as a whole, 12 of the 17 players brought in are on offense with five on defense. A combined six will play on either the offensive or defensive line with six initially listed as "quarterback/athlete."

"With the adjustment to the spread offense scheme, the quarterback position is paramount - both as a runner and a passer. In this offense, you need to have two-or-three quarterbacks with what we ask that position to do," explained Speir. "We've brought in six quarterback athletes with this incoming class. The ones that aren't calling signals will be great players at other positions on our team because of their overall athleticism."

He added, "We were also able to fulfill some needs along the offensive line with players that are athletic, while also adding a big, strong receiver in 6-4, Spearman Robinson, to be a big target and a `Barry Saunders'-type of running back in Darius Ramsey."

On the defensive side of the ball, initially the five players include a pair of defensive ends, two in the secondary and a linebacker.

"Our goal on defense was to find a smaller, but more athletic defensive end that will help us get pressure on the opposing quarterbacks. We also supplemented our secondary and the middle of our defense with some skilled athletes," said Speir.

Western Carolina Football and the Catamount Club will host a National Signing Day reception in conjunction with the Catamounts' home men's basketball game on Thursday, Feb. 2 on-campus in Cullowhee. The event will be held in the first floor Hospitality Room in the Ramsey Center prior to WCU's Southern Conference North Division showdown with the Chattanooga Mocs. Fans are encouraged to wear white to Thursday night's game in support of the annual "White Out" game.

The event, which is open to the public, will begin at 5:30 pm and will include light refreshments. Speir and his staff will be on hand to talk about this year's incoming class and will also feature video highlights of each signee.

As per NCAA rules, prospective recruits (ninth grade and up as well as individuals enrolled at

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two-year schools), signees and family members of prospects or signees are not permitted to attend this event.

The Catamount football team is scheduled to open its annual spring drills on Monday, March 12 with the NCAA-mandated 15 practices to be spread over five weeks. Practice will culminate with a spring event on Saturday, April 14 in Cullowhee.

WESTERN CAROLINA CLASS OF 2012

Seth Curtis QB/Ath. 5-10 175 HS Murphy, N.C. (Murphy HS)
Matt DeGraffinreed OL 6-2 305 HS Raleigh, N.C. (Millbrook HS)
C.J. Goodman QB/Ath. 5-11 165 HS Mableton, Ga. (Pebblebrook HS)
Sertonuse Harris Jr. LB 6-0 190 HS Mableton, Ga. (Pebblebrook HS)
Caleb Hawkins DE 6-3 220 HS Durham, N.C. (Northern Durham HS)
Michael Helms Jr. QB/Ath. 6-0 190 HS Morganton, N.C. (Freedom HS)
Hunter Kirby OL 6-2 265 HS Inman, S.C. (Boiling Springs HS)
Brandon Littlejohn QB/Ath. 5-11 175 HS Lawndale, N.C. (Burns HS)
Jaleel Lorquet CB 5-10 165 HS Jesup, Ga. (Wayne County HS)
John McBeth DE 6-2 220 HS Greensboro, N.C. (Northern Guilford HS)
A.J. McKoy CB 5-10 180 HS Council, N.C. (East Bladen HS)
Troy Mitchell QB/Ath. 6-0 200 HS Mobile, Ala. (Cypress Falls (Texas) HS)
Andrew Potts OL 6-3 310 HS Hampstead, N.C. (Topsail HS)
Darius Ramsey RB 5-8 175 HS Waco, N.C. (Burns HS)
Spearman Robinson WR 6-4 210 HS Greenwood, S.C. (Greenwood HS)
Eddie Sullivan QB/Ath. 6-1 200 Jr. Boca Raton, Fla. (Marshall / Boca Raton HS)
Josh Wineberg OL 6-6 250 HS West Jefferson, N.C. (Ashe County HS)

Seth Curtis

QB/Athlete - 5-10 - 175 lbs.

Murphy, N.C. (Murphy HS)

Prior to Western Carolina: Set the Murphy HS record for career yardage (rushing and passing) with 7,794 yards including over 5,000 yards through the air ... As a three-year starter, led the Bulldogs to 33 victories ... Tabbed as the NCPreps.com 1-A Player of the Year ... Also named the Asheville Citizen-Times All-WNC Player of the Year while also being touted as the 2011 Smoky Mountain Conference Back of the Year ... Guided the Bulldogs to back-to-back state title

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games, winning Murphy a NCHSAA 1-A championship as a senior - the first state championship for the school since 1996 ... Threw for 2,111 yards and 21 touchdowns with just five interceptions while also rushing for 1,301 yards and 20 TDs.

Personal: Is the son of David and Melanie Curtis.

Matt DeGraffinreed

OL - 6-2 - 305 lbs.

Raleigh, N.C. (Millbrook HS)

Prior to Western Carolina: Three-year letter winner and two-year starter at Millbrook High where he played both offensive and defensive line ... Earned All-CAP-8 conference accolades as a senior ... Was additionally named to the All-OT Football second team offense as selected and released on HighSchoolOT.com ... Listed as a Top 100 player at the ScoutingCarolina.com and made the All-Combine team at the Charlotte Nike SPARQ combine ... Also played basketball as a prep.

Personal: Full name is Matthew Allen James DeGraffinreed ... Is the son of Paul M. and Carmelitta M. DeGraffinreed ... Has an older sister, Hannah, who plays basketball at USC-Aiken ... He had two uncles play collegiate football - one at Miami (Ohio) and another at Ashland College, while one of his cousins played at Wittenberg College.

C.J. Goodman Jr.

QB/Athlete - 5-11 - 165 lbs.

Mableton, Ga. (Pebblebrook HS)

Prior to Western Carolina: Selected to the Cobb Senior Bowl as a senior ... Listed as a "dual threat quarterback" ... As a junior, threw for over 1,340 yards and 10 touchdowns, adding over 430 yards rushing and four scores ... Also ran track & field as a prep, competing in the high jump and sprint events ... Joined by high school teammate, Sertonuse Harris, to sign at WCU in 2012.

Personal: Full name is Curtis Bernard Goodman Jr., but goes by C.J. ... Is the son of Curtis Goodman Sr., and Monica Brown ... Has three siblings - Brent Brown, Jarrett Brown and Jordan Brown.

Sertonuse Harris

LB - 6-0 - 190 lbs.

Mableton, Ga. (Pebblebrook HS)

Prior to Western Carolina: Selected to the Cobb Senior Bowl as a senior ... Three-year letter winner that played both as a running back and defensive back in high school, rushing for 1,249 yards in three seasons including 557 and five touchdowns as a senior ... Caught 30 passes for 389 yards and three TDs ... Defensively, tallied 115 total hits including 59 solo stops and one interception ... Named team's defensive player of the year and offensive back of the year as a senior ... Earned Cobb County Offensive Player of the Week plaudits during his junior season and picked up defensive weekly honors in his final year ... Joined by high school teammate, quarterback C.J. Goodman, to sign at WCU in 2012.

Personal: Full name is Sertonuse I. Harris Jr. ... Is the son of Qudeski Curtis Sr., and Shauntel Strozier ... Has four siblings ... His cousin, James Davis, played college football at Clemson before going on to play for the Detroit Lions ... His grandfather, Roy Harris, also played pro football for both Atlanta and Tampa Bay.

Caleb Hawkins

DE - 6-3 - 220 lbs.

Durham, N.C. (Northern Durham HS)

Prior to Western Carolina: Named the Defensive Lineman of the Year in the PAC-6 Conference as a senior... Was additionally named to the All-PAC 6 post-season honorary squad at defensive end ... Also played basketball as a prep.

Personal: Full name is Caleb Xavier Akinseye Hawkins ... Is the son of William Peebles and Moya Hawkins.

Michael Helms Jr.

QB - 6-3 - 190 lbs.

Morganton, N.C. (Freedom HS)

Notes: Enrolled at Western Carolina for the spring semester in January, 2012 and will participate in 2012 spring drills with the Catamount football team. Prior to Western Carolina: Two-time Burke County Player of the Year and a three-time All-South Mountain Athletic Conference selection ... Garnered the league's offensive player of the year plaudits as a junior after throwing for a school-record 2,652 yards and 30 touchdowns, adding 361 rushing yards and eight rushing TDs ... For his three-year varsity career, threw for 6,227 yards and 77 touchdowns, adding 1,008 yards rushing and 20 scores on the ground ... Set and matched a school-record with 30 passing touchdowns as both a junior and senior, collecting five passing

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touchdowns in four different games ... Selected to play in the North-South Shrine Bowl ... Also ran track and played golf as a prep.

Personal: Is the son of Mike Sr. and Barbara Helms ... His father, Mike, is a former football standout at Lenior-Rhyne and the head football coach at Freedom High while his mother played collegiate basketball at Wake Forest and currently coaches girls basketball at Hickory High ... Has a younger brother, Brandon.

Hunter Kirby

OL - 6-3 - 270 lbs.

Inman, S.C. (Boiling Springs HS)

Prior to Western Carolina: Helped Boiling Springs High to 32 wins over a four-year career along the offensive line ... Was an all-conference, all-county and all-region selection as a senior, grading out at 92.1-percent with 69 pancake blocks - he was the only player in the Upstate of South Carolina to grade out over 90-percent ... Selected as the Most Valuable Offensive Player as a senior ... Only gave up four sacks in his entire prep career ... Named to the Spartanburg Herald-Journal All-Academic team.

Personal: Full name is Hunter Tredway Kirby ... Is the son of Trey and Denise Kirby ... Has three brothers ... His father played collegiate football at Newberry College in South Carolina.

Brandon Littlejohn

QB/Athlete - 5-11 - 175 lbs.

Lawndale, N.C. (Burns HS)

Prior to Western Carolina: A three-year starter, became the 27th different quarterback in state history to eclipse the 6,000-yard passing mark in his prep career, finishing with over 7,557 yards and 97 career TD passes ... Broke Cleveland County's career record for passing yards ...

Guided Burns High to back-to-back South Mountain Athletic Conference (SMAC) championships en route to the 3-A West region championship game ... Amassed 2,225 yards and 24 touchdowns as a senior, adding 682 rushing yards and 13 TDs on the ground ...

Selected to the second team offense of the All-Region team by the Charlotte Observer ...

Played in the North-South Shrine Bowl ... Earned PrepInsiders.com Player of the Week in mid-September of his senior year after throwing for 163 yards in a win over Q Foundation which put him over 6,000 yards passing for his career ... As a junior, threw for 2,827 yard and 39 touchdowns, slightly better than his 2,638 yards and 34 touchdowns as a sophomore earning SMAC Offensive Player of the Year plaudits ... Also played basketball as a prep ... Was joined by Burns High teammate Darius Ramsey in signing with WCU in 2012.

Personal: Full name is Brandon G. Littlejohn ... Is the son of Cynthia Littlejohn.

Jaleel Lorquet

CB - 5-10 - 165 lbs.

Jesup, Ga. (Wayne County HS)

Prior to Western Carolina: Was a three-time all-region selection in southern Georgia for head coach Jody Grooms at Wayne County High ... Also played basketball as a prep.

Personal: Full name is Jaleel Kadrid Lorquet ... Is the son of Eulanda Durden.

John McBeth

DE - 6-2 - 220 lbs.

Greensboro, N.C. (Northern Guilford HS)

Prior to Western Carolina: Helped guide Northern Guilford to a both a Mid-State 3-A Conference championship and North Carolina 3-AA state championship as a senior, boasting a 14-1 record ... Northern Guilford won the title game, 31-6, over Crest HS ... Finished with 99 total hits including 71 solo stops and 12 sacks ... Also broke up two passes, forced and recovered three fumbles for 25 yards of return while blocking three kicks including two field goals and a punt ... Named All-Mid-State 3-A Conference as well as to the first team All-Area defense by the Greensboro News & Record ... Also played basketball as a prep where he was selected to participate in the Carolina Challenge.

Personal: Full name is John Christopher McBeth ... Is the son of Lynette McBeth.

A.J. McKoy

CB - 5-10 - 180

Council, N.C. (East Bladen HS)

Prior to Western Carolina: Two-way player that broke the East Bladen High career rushing (4,715 yards) and touchdown (87) records ... Was a three-time all-conference and all-county selection, garnering all-area plaudits his final two seasons ... Helped the Eagles post a 48-9 overall record including three Waccamaw Conference championships ... Caught 69 passes for 1,273 yards and 12 scores ... Played in the state championship game as a true freshman, joining the varsity team after eight games ... Gained over 1,000 yards for the jayvee squad ... Also played baseball as a prep, earning both all-conference and all-county accolades in the outfield.

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Personal: Full name is Glenn A. McKoy ... Is the son of Glenn McKoy and Latisha Wooten ... Has two younger siblings ... His grandfather, Glenn McKoy Sr., coached high school football for 27 years and is a member of the Fayetteville State Football Hall of Fame ... His grandmother is Phyllis McKoy.

Troy Mitchell

QB/Athlete - 6-0 - 200 lbs.

Mobile, Ala. (Cypress Falls (Texas) HS)

Prior to Western Carolina: Was a three-year starter who threw for over 2,400 yards and 30 touchdowns as a senior at Cypress Falls High in Houston, Texas ... Earned Texas 5-A All-District 17 honors following his senior season ... Dual-threat QB who tossed seven touchdown passes in a single-game against Elsik in bi-district playoff meeting in Nov. 2011 ... Earned the Marine Corps Elite Warrior of the Week honor following a 331-yard, six TD performance against Jersey Village ... Was named second team all-district as a junior.

Personal: Full name is Troy Lavaughn Mitchell ... Is the son of Troy and Shanita Mitchell ... Has two siblings, Raybon and Zurie.

Andrew Potts

OL - 6-3 - 310 lbs.

Hampstead, N.C. (Topsail HS)

Prior to Western Carolina: Four-year varsity letter winner and three-year starter along the offensive line, earning first team all-conference, all-county and all-state accolades as a senior ... Started at center for North Carolina in the North-South Shrine Bowl of the Carolina's ... Was among the top 25 in the Nike SPARQ Charlotte combine ... Was named a team co-captain as a junior ... Earned the Coach's Award as both a freshman and sophomore ... Tabbed with the Most Outstanding Sophomore honors in his first full season on the varsity squad ... Also participates in track & field as a thrower on his high school squad.

Personal: Full name is Andrew T. Potts ... Is the son of Thomas and Pat Potts.

Darius Ramsey

RB - 5-8 - 175 lbs.

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Waco, N.C. (Burns HS)

Prior to Western Carolina: Named the Cleveland County Player of the Year and was selected to the Cleveland County All-County team as a senior ... Selected to the second team offense of the All-Region team by the Charlotte Observer ... Rushed for 1,928 yards - the fifth-best in county history - with 31 touchdowns as a senior, accounting for 198 total points - the highest single-season total in county history ... Helped guide Burns HS to the NCHSAA West Region finals, finishing with a 13-2 record ... Finished his career with 4,627 yards, the tops in Burns High history and third all-time in the county .. Was a three-time South Mountain Athletic Conference selection ... Was joined by Burns High teammate Darius Ramsey in signing with WCU in 2012.

Personal: Full name is Darius Devon Ramsey ... Is the son of Derrick and Phyllis Ramsey ... Has a younger sister, Breiona.

Spearman Robinson

WR - 6-4 - 210 lbs.

Greenwood, S.C. (Greenwood HS)

Prior to Western Carolina: In three seasons on the varsity squad, hauled in 104 passes for 2,111 yards and 15 touchdowns at Greenwood High including 1,042 yards and 12 scores as a senior ... Was selected as a senior team captain ... Guided the squad to back-to-back state championship finals appearances, garnering All-Lakelands and all-region plaudits as a senior ... Was chosen to play in the North-South Shrine Bowl ... Helped the school record the most wins over a two-year period in school history (26-4) ... Also played basketball as a prep.

Personal: Full name is Kenneth Spearman Robinson, but goes by Spearman ... Is the son of Ken and Barbara Robinson ... His uncle played football at Western Carolina.

Eddie Sullivan

QB - 6-1 - 200 lbs. - Junior

Boca Raton, Fla. (Marshall / Boca Raton HS)

Notes: Enrolled at Western Carolina for the spring semester in January, 2012 and will participate in 2012 spring drills with the Catamount football team.

Prior to Western Carolina: Committed to and attended Marshall out of high school ... the dual-threat quarterback saw action in seven games as a true freshman in 2010 ... As Marshall's No. 2 QB, he completed 6-of-24 passes for 134 yards and one touchdown while rushing 12 times for 51 yards ... Contended for the starting quarterback job at Marshall during spring practice in 2010, posting a 10-for-20 showing for 160 yards and a TD in the 2011 spring game; At Boca Raton HS: Threw for nearly 2,700 yards and 24 touchdowns while rushing for five

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scores and 294 yards during his senior season ... Was a first-team all-area and all-conference selection ... Rated three stars by most recruiting services coming out of high school and one of the top quarterbacks coming out of the state of Florida ... Named his team's MVP in the Outback High School All-Star game ... Verbally committed to Wake Forest before signing with Marshall out of high school.

Personal: Is the son of Terry and Ed Sullivan.

Josh Wineberg

DL -6-6 - 250 lbs.

West Jefferson, N.C. (Ashe County HS)

Prior to Western Carolina: Named the 2011 Mountain Valley Athletic Conference Defensive Player of the Year after recording 75 tackles including 19 for loss and six sacks ... Added four pass break-ups, forced two fumbles and blocked three kicks ... Was named All-MVAC on both sides of the football as a senior, leading Ashe County High to the school's ninth-consecutive state playoff berth ... Earned All-Northwestern Region accolades on offensive and defensive line - the only player to do so in the region ... Led the region in sacks ... Was a three-time all-conference selection, amassing over 279 career tackles ... Was a two-sport athlete at Ashe County High, adding an individual conference championship in wrestling ... Was a two-time state qualifier, placing one season ... Was twice named all-conference as a wrestler, recording over 125 career victories.

Personal: Full name is Joshua Dale Wineberg ... Is the son of Dale and Amanda Wineberg ... Has an older sister, Jessica Smith.

Photo Courtesy: Mark Speir, ASU Athletics