

## Poulos Is Officially A Catamount

Written by Mike Kelly

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Watauga High senior Ethan Poulos signed the necessary paper work on Wednesday afternoon that makes him officially a preferred walk on at Western Carolina University. Poulos, a wide receiver, who caught 34 passes last season for the Pioneers, will join an old family friend and a new regime in Cullowee. Poulos is among the walk ons that will join first-year

coach and former Appalachian State assistant Mark Speir.

"And Mark knows the value of a walk on program," said WHS coach Tim Pruitt. "He was part of the walk on program at ASU, and he saw how successful it was. He's bringing that same philosophy to Western. And Ethan is a fine addition to their program. He's a quiet leader. He's always showing up to workouts, and he leads by example. He's a quality kid."

Poulos, who also received an offer to play football at Methodist University, a Division III school in Fayetteville, N.C., decided WCU was a much better fit.

"I love coach Speir," Poulos said. "My brother, T.J., has been friends with his son Zeb for a long time, and I've known the family for a while, so that really made my choice pretty easy. The familiarity of the people down there, knowing I can trust them, and coach Speir's ambition to turn that program around were huge selling points for me."

And Poulos isn't afraid of battling the odds. He knows there's no guarantees, especially for a walk on who stands five-foot-nine and weighs 170 pounds. The main objective is hard work, and not getting frustrated. No matter how tough it gets.

"Coach Speir is a fair man," Poulos said. "And he didn't guarantee me anything. It's up to me. I've got a lot of hard work ahead of me. And yeah, I'm a little nervous. But I attended one of their practices when I was down there, and they had some big guys, but a lot of the walk ons weren't much bigger than me. The main goal for all of us is to turn the program around."

"Ethan makes plays," Pruitt said. "He's not the biggest guy, the fastest guy on the team, but he had a big year for us. He was a huge part of our program last year. I think he'll be a good special teams player, and he could step into some roles for them. But it's going to take time. A lot of it depends on his effort."

And Poulos showed plenty of effort for the Pioneers last fall. He caught 34 passes for 544 yards and four touchdowns; he also returned six punts for 41 yards and 11 kick-off for a 24-yard average.

"I've been playing football since I was in the third grade," Poulos said. "I used to be a quarterback, I was also a running back. Then I switched to receiver. I love playing football, and I'm not afraid to go out there and make a play. I'm hoping to red-shirt this year, work my way onto special teams, and maybe work my way up the depth chart by my junior, senior year."

The Catamounts have really struggled in recent years. They were 1-10 last season, and winless (0-8) in the Southern Conference. But Poulos feels confident the program will turn itself around. He also wants to major in forensic science.

"They have an excellent forensics program," he said. "I'm real excited about that. They and Tennessee are the only two schools in the country with a live body program. I'm very happy with this decision. This year, next year, the recruiting classes are getting better. It's going to be a lot of fun. Going to Western is just a good fit for me."