

WESTERN OREGON SPORTS INFORMATION

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23 have now signed NLI's with WOU

Western Oregon adds to football recruit list on Thursday

MONMOUTH, Ore.— Western Oregon head football coach Arne Ferguson announced the addition of eight more players to his class of 2009, bringing the total number of National Letter of Intents signed to 23.

Thursday's theme mirrored Wednesday's, with an emphasis on linemen. Six of the eight newcomers today play in the trenches, meaning that 14 of the 23 players signed to date are offensive or defensive linemen.

"Our emphasis is always on local kids and this year it was also on linemen," said the Wolves leader. "These are the biggest and most athletic kids that we have ever recruited. We felt like we have signed some players that will really help us."

Included in Ferguson's list today was 2A Defensive Player of the Year John Benthin of Knappa High School. Benthin helped lead the Loggers to a 12-1 mark and a state title. He joins 6A Defensive Player of the Year Paul Tuma, a fellow defensive tackle who helped lead his Southridge High School team to a state crown.

"To be competitive in NCAA Division II at the national level, you have to have big and athletic linemen that you can develop," Ferguson explained. "Our goal is to be a player at the national level, and we are taking steps towards that."

Other players signed on Thursday include Eric Mishler (Lincoln/Portland), Alex Jones (Grant/Portland), Zak Cooper (Wilsonville), Cash Wenick (Grant Union/John Day), Clint Sager (Hidden Valley/Grants Pass), Nate Kirkpatrick (Lincoln/Portland) and Sami Sione (Leilehua HS/Hawaii). Sager is a linebacker and a tight end, Kirkpatrick is a wide receiver/running back, while all the rest of the players are linemen. Sager was the Skyline Conference Player of the Year on both offense and defense.

There are eight league or state player of the year awards in the group.

McKay running back Tony Gonzalez leads a strong group of local players that signed yesterday. Gonzalez rushed for 2,188 yards (nearly 200 a game) and scored 22 times. Zach DuFault (South Salem), Darian Kauffman (McNary) and

Central HS's Marcus Cuellar and Eric Phillips also attended signing parties on Wednesday morning.

"Adding kids from this area is very, very important to us," Ferguson emphasized. "Many of the top players in our program are from Salem, and this group of recruits has the potential to follow in their footsteps. We are looking for a few more of the valley area kids to lean our way in the coming days."

Ferguson and his staff have more verbal commitments in addition to the names listed below, but the school is not allowed to announce those names until the National Letter of Intent form is returned. In addition, there will be more signings in the next week or so.

"We are confident that more of the top players in the area and in the state are coming here, and we will add more players in the next few weeks and be close to done with our recruiting," Ferguson confirmed.

Ferguson, who is heading into his fifth season at WOU, has a career mark of 27-15. The Wolves were 7-4 last season and finished 9-2 in 2007. They compete in the Great Northwest Athletic Conference.

"As the only Division II university in Oregon, we have a unique niche," Ferguson added. "With the support of WOU President Dr. John Minahan and Associate Provost for Academic Affairs David McDonald, we continue to build this program. They have both been very instrumental in helping us in any way that they can."

WOU National Letter of Intent signees to date

- **Andrew Allen**, Rainier HS, DL/RB, 6-0, 250.
- **John Benthin**, Knappa HS, DL, 6-2, 270. State Defensive POY (2A), 1st-team all-state DL, State Lineman of the Year, 1st-team All-Northwest League DL, 1st-team All-Northwest League OL.
- **Joel Brunello**, McMinnville HS, OL, 6-4, 300.
- **Zak Cooper**, Wilsonville HS, OL/DL, 6-2, 280. Honorable mention all-state (5A) C, honorable mention all-state DL, 1st-team All-Northwest Oregon Conference C, 1st-team All-Northwest Oregon Conference DL.
- **Marcus Cuellar**, Central HS (Independence), OL/DL, 6-4, 285. 1st-team all-state (4A) DL, 1st-team all-state OL, Val-Co League Defensive POY, 1st-team All-Val-Co League OL, 1st-team all-league OL.
- **Zach DuFault**, South Salem HS, WR, 5-10, 165. 2nd-team All-Central Valley Conference WR, 2nd-team all-league KR.
- **Tony Gonzalez**, McKay HS (Salem), RB, 5-9, 175. 2nd-team all-state (6A) RB, Central Valley Conference Offensive POY, 1st-team All-Central Valley League RB.

- **Jason Grosjacques**, Tualatin HS, DL, 6-4, 230. 1st-team All-Pacific Conference DL.
- **Paul Gutzman**, North Valley HS (Grants Pass), DL/OL, 6-2, 270. 2nd-team all-state (4A) OL, honorable mention all-state LB, 1st-team All-Skyline Conference OL and LB.
- **Alex Jones**, Grant HS (Portland), OL/DL, 6-4, 285. 2nd-team All-Portland Interscholastic League DL.
- **Darian Kauffman**, McNary HS (Keizer), LB/FB, 6-1, 230. 1st-team All-Central Valley Conference LB, 2nd-team all-league RB.
- **Nate Kirkpatrick**, Lincoln HS (Portland), WR/RB, 5-11, 180. 1st-team All-Portland Interscholastic League RB.
- **Eric Mishler**, Lincoln HS (Portland), DL, 6-4, 215. Honorable mention all-state (6A), 1st-team All-Portland Interscholastic League DL.
- **Mark Moore**, Newport HS, QB/ATH, 6-5, 205.
- **Eric Phillips**, Central HS (Independence), WR/DB, 6-2, 190. 2nd-team all-state (4A) WR, 1st-team All-Val-Co League WR.
- **Josh Riggs**, Sweet Home HS, LB/TE, 6-1, 240. 1st-team All-Val-Co League TE.
- **Clint Sager**, Hidden Valley HS (Grants Pass), LB/TE, 6-2, 225. 2nd team all-state (4A) LB, honorable mention TE, Skyline Conference Offensive POY, Skyline Conference Defensive POY.
- **Sami Sione**, Leilehua HS (Wahiawa, HI), DL, 6-4, 235.
- **Taylor Taft**, Gladstone HS, QB-DB, 6-1, 170. 1st-team all-state (4A) DB, Co-Capital Conference Offensive POY, 1st-team All-Capital Conference QB and DB.
- **Bill Thompson**, Mountain View HS (Bend), DL/TE, 6-4, 200. 1st-team All-Intermountain Conference DL.
- **Paul Tuma**, Southridge HS (Beaverton), DL, 6-0, 230. State Defensive POY (6A), 1st-team all-state DL, Metro League Defensive POY, 1st-team All-Metro League DL.
- **Blake VerHaalen**, Oregon City HS, OL, 6-4, 285. 1st-team All-Three Rivers League OL.
- **Cash Wenick**, Grant Union HS (John Day), OL/DL, 6-7, 280.

Signing list for newspaper agate.

Name	Pos.	Ht-Wt	Hometown/School
Andrew Allen	OL-RB	6-0, 250	Rainier, Ore.
John Benthin	DL	6-2, 270	Knappa, Ore.
Joel Brunello	OL	6-4, 300	McMinnville, Ore.
Zak Cooper	OL/DL	6-2, 280	Wilsonville, Ore.
Marcus Cuellar	OL/DL	6-4, 285	Independence, Ore. (Central)
Zach DuFault	WR	5-10, 165	Salem, Ore. (South Salem)
Tony Gonzalez	RB	5-9, 175	Salem, Ore. (McKay)

Jason Grosjacques	DL	6-4, 230	Tualatin, Ore.
Paul Gutzman	DL/OL	6-2, 270	Grants Pass, Ore. (North Valley)
Alex Jones	OL/DL	6-4, 285	Portland, Ore. (Grant)
Darian Kauffman	LB/RB	6-1, 230	Salem, Ore. (McNary)
Nate Kirkpatrick	WR/RB	5-11, 180	Portland, Ore. (Lincoln)
Eric Mishler	DL	6-4, 215	Portland, Ore. (Lincoln)
Mark Moore	QB/ATH	6-5, 205	Newport, Ore.
Eric Phillips	WR	6-2, 190	Independence, Ore. (Central)
Josh Riggs	LB	6-1, 240	Sweet Home, Ore.
Clint Sager	LB/TE	6-2, 225	Grants Pass, Ore. (Hidden Valley)
Sami Sione	DL	6-4, 235	Wahiawa, Hawaii (Leilehua)
Taylor Taft	QB/DB	6-1, 170	Gladstone, Ore.
Bill Thompson	DL	6-4, 200	Bend, Ore. (Mountain View)
Paul Tuma	DL	6-0, 230	Beaverton, Ore. (Southridge)
Blake VerHaalen	OL	6-4, 285	Oregon City, Ore.
Cash Wenick	OL	6-7, 280	John Day, Ore. (Grant Union)