

WESTERN OREGON SPORTS INFORMATION

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Football Wolves sign 15 players

Western Oregon inks 15 to National Letters of Intent

MONMOUTH, Ore.— The Western Oregon football program signed 15 players today to National Letters of Intent. The announcement was made by head coach Arne Ferguson on the first day that recruits can sign, per NCAA rules.

“Our emphasis is 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 signed some players today that will really help us.”

Ferguson’s list includes 6A Defensive Player of the Year Paul Tuma, who helped lead his Southridge High School team to a state title. Four players in this initial group are conference players of the year. Eight of the first 15 players signed are linemen.

“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 took steps towards that today.”

McKay running back Tony Gonzalez leads a strong group of local players that signed today. 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 earlier this 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.
- **Joel Brunello**, McMinnville HS, OL, 6-4, 300.
- **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.
- **Darian Kauffman**, McNary HS (Keizer), LB/FB, 6-1, 230. 1st-team All-Central Valley Conference LB, 2nd-team all-league RB.
- **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.
- **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.

Signing list for newspaper agate.

Name	Pos.	Ht-Wt	Hometown/School
Andrew Allen	OL-RB	6-0, 250	Rainier, Ore.
Joel Brunello	OL	6-4, 300	McMinnville, 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)
Darian Kauffman	LB/RB	6-1, 230	Salem, Ore. (McNary)
Mark Moore	QB/ATH	6-5, 205	Newport, Ore.
Eric Phillips	WR/DB	6-2, 190	Independence, Ore. (Central)
Josh Riggs	LB/TE	6-1, 240	Sweet Home, Ore.
Taylor Taft	QB/DB	6-1, 170	Gladstone, Ore.
Bill Thompson	DL/TE	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.