

CWU FOOTBALL ANNOUNCES ADDITION OF 26 TO NATIONAL LETTERS OF INTENT

Ten Seattle Times White Chip Prospects Sign with Wildcats for 2010 Season

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ELLENSBURG, Wash. (Feb. 3) -- A total of 26 high school seniors, including ten players listed on the *Seattle Times*' White Chip prospect list, have signed National Letters of Intent to continue their football careers at Central Washington University beginning the fall of 2010.

The Wildcats' 2010 signing class, which is the second-largest in the program's history, features a balance of offensive and defensive players. All but one of the 26 signees hails from the state of Washington, as the lone out-of-state signee is wide receiver **Blaine John (B.J.) Bennett**, the son of CWU head coach **Blaine Bennett**. B.J. Bennett (5-9, 175) prepped at William Henry Harrison High School in West Lafayette, Ind., for the past three seasons and will join the rest of his family in Ellensburg later this year.

"We feel that this is the best recruiting class (talent-wise) that we have had in our three years here as a staff," Blaine Bennett said. "We think that every player we signed has a chance to be a starter and an impact player here at Central Washington University."

The position that Bennett is most enthused about is the quarterback position, where the Wildcats signed three in-state standouts. Among those three quarterbacks are **Austin Dodge** (Vancouver, Wash./Skyview HS), local product **Ethan Sterkel** (Ellensburg, Wash.), and **J.R. Grosshans** (Gig Harbor, Wash./Peninsula HS).

Sterkel led Ellensburg High School to a number one state ranking in Class 2A and helped the Bulldogs to the WIAA semifinals this past season. Sterkel (6-3, 205), the Central Washington Athletic Conference Offensive Player of the Year after throwing for nearly 3,700 yards with 38 touchdowns and just five interceptions, is also expected to compete in baseball at CWU and gives the Wildcats a local flavor.

"We are excited to get a dual-sport athlete from Ellensburg who can help both the football and baseball programs," Bennett said of Sterkel.

Another local product to sign with the Wildcats on Wednesday is running back **Joe Fuerst** from Eisenhower High School in Yakima. Fuerst (5-11, 195) was named the co-Most Valuable Player of the Columbia Basin Big Nine Cascade Division this past fall, helping lead the Cadets to the Class 4A state quarterfinals. Fuerst ran for more than 1,800 yards and 20 touchdowns as a senior for Ike.

"The best part of this signing class is the quarterback position," said Bennett, himself a former college quarterback. "We are very excited about the quarterbacks we signed. We try to get the best players available at all positions, and the top three quarterbacks we had rated all signed [NLIs] with us.

"We were also extremely pleased to get our top choices at almost every position on the board. We signed several athletes who could play either running back or linebacker for us. We signed several key wide receivers as well, and I think we added some speed in the secondary. As a whole, at every position, we signed players who can come in and compete for a championship."

Dodge and Fuerst were just two of the 10 White Chip prospects that signed with the Wildcats. White Chip prospects are defined by the *Seattle Times* to be among the top 100 prep football players in the state of Washington. Also earning White Chip status were wide receiver **Jason Bates** (Spokane, Wash./Joel E. Ferris HS), defensive back **Sean Coley** (Bellevue, Wash.), running back **Teddy Cotton** (Fort Lewis, Wash./Lakes HS), linebacker **Anthony DeMatteo** (Issaquah, Wash./Skyline HS), linebacker **David Eargle** (McChord A.F.B., Wash./Clover Park HS), defensive back **Cole Graves** (Kirkland, Wash./Juanita HS), defensive lineman **Martin Smitherman** (Lakewood, Wash./Lakes HS), and wide receiver **Christian Wesley** (Bremerton, Wash./Central Kitsap HS).

"I feel that our staff did a good job evaluating the entire state, and didn't try to focus on big schools or small schools," Bennett explained. "We wanted to shoot for between 25 and 27 signees, and we are very happy to sign 25 players from the state of Washington."

All 25 signees who played high school football in the Evergreen State prepped at schools classified with class 2A, 3A, or 4A in the Washington Interscholastic Athletic Association.

More than half of Central's signees hail from either Pierce or King County, with nine coming from Pierce County and five more from King County. Lakes High School in Lakewood had three players sign with the Wildcats, while Peninsula High School in Gig Harbor was the only other school with multiple signees.

Central Washington is the only NCAA Division II institution in the state of Washington to sponsor football. The Wildcats finished the 2009 season with a 12-1 overall record, including the only undefeated regular-season record in Division II. Central was ranked third in the final Division II national poll of the season and claimed the 32nd conference championship in the program's illustrious history.

Below is a list of the 26 high school seniors who signed National Letters of Intent to play football at Central Washington University beginning this fall.

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Hometown (High School)
Jason Bates*	WR	6-4	185	Spokane, Wash. (Joel E. Ferris)
Blaine John (B.J.) Bennett	WR	5-9	175	West Lafayette, Ind. (William Henry Harrison)
Sean Coley*	DB	5-9	175	Bellevue, Wash. (Bellevue)
Teddy Cotton*	RB	5-11	190	Fort Lewis, Wash. (Lakes)
Darrian Creamer	LB	6-1	205	Lakebay, Wash. (Peninsula)
Julian Cruell	RB	5-8	179	Tacoma, Wash. (Henry Foss)
Anthony DeMatteo*	LB	6-0	210	Issaquah, Wash. (Skyline)
Austin Dodge*	QB	6-2	205	Vancouver, Wash. (Skyview)
David Eargle*	LB	6-1	215	McChord A.F.B., Wash. (Clover Park)
Travis Erb	DL	6-3	235	Roy, Wash. (Yelm)
Joe Fuerst*	RB	5-11	195	Yakima, Wash. (Dwight D. Eisenhower)
Cole Graves*	DB	5-11	191	Kirkland, Wash. (Juanita)
Marshall Green	OL	6-5	310	Tumwater, Wash. (Black Hills)
Alex Griffith	DL	6-2	260	Bonney Lake, Wash. (Sumner)
J.R. Grosshans	QB	6-1	180	Gig Harbor, Wash. (Peninsula)
Leon La Deaux	WR	6-4	190	Port Orchard, Wash. (South Kitsap)
Shey Patton	LB	5-9	231	Spanaway, Wash. (Spanaway Lake)
Tyler Rogers	DB	5-11	175	Steilacoom, Wash. (Lakes)
Nick Rouser	OL	6-5	240	Oak Harbor, Wash. (Oak Harbor)
Saipele Siafuafu	DL	6-1	264	Kent, Wash. (Kent-Meridian)
Martin Smitherman*	DL	6-1	215	Lakewood, Wash. (Lakes)
Jake Steelhammer	DL	6-3	215	Rochester, Wash. (W.F. West)
Ethan Sterkel	QB	6-3	205	Ellensburg, Wash. (Ellensburg)
Levi Taylor	DB	6-1	195	Spokane, Wash. (Lewis and Clark)
Christian Wesley*	WR	6-4	210	Bremerton, Wash. (Central Kitsap)
Tyler Wright	DB	5-11	180	Covington, Wash. (Kentlake)

* Seattle Times "White Chip" prospect

Breakdown by position: QB – 3, RB – 3, WR – 4, OL – 2, DL – 5, LB – 4, DB – 5

Breakdown by county: Washington: Clark – 1, Island – 1, King – 5, Kitsap – 2, Kittitas – 1, Pierce – 9, Spokane – 2, Thurston – 3, Yakima – 1. Indiana: Tippecanoe – 1.

Breakdown by high school classification: WIAA 4A – 13, WIAA 3A – 9, WIAA 2A – 3, Indiana High School Athletic Association 4A – 1