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**Chadrad Communications, Inc.**  
226 Bordeaux St - Chadron, NE 69337  
308-432-5545 fax 308-432-5601  
E-mail: [kcsr@chadrad.com](mailto:kcsr@chadrad.com)

(Neb.)-Updated: Chadron State football adds 27 on National Signing Day



By: Andrew Lacy Posted at: 02/05/2014 11:24 AM

**CHADRON** - The Chadron State College football team has received 27 signed National Letters of Intent, head coach Jay Long announced Wednesday during National Signing Day.

Long, who guided the Eagles to an 8-3 record and a second place finish in the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference, is pleased with the incoming class.

"I am extremely proud of the hard work that our coaches, team, and Chadron State College staff committed to help sign this year's recruiting class," Long said. "When a recruit is choosing a school he is looking for a place that is the right fit for him. The Chadron State football family did a great job showcasing our school, program and community."

"Every year our goal is to sign top players at each position that will go to work every day and compete to make themselves and our team better. I feel that we did a great job addressing our team needs, and I can't wait to see this class develop into Eagles."

Long also said he expects more than a dozen student-athletes to join the Eagles as walk-ons. Those walk-ons have signed Institutional Letters of Intent and have verbally committed to play football this upcoming fall.

"In addition to the guys who signed an NLI we several student-athletes sign a Chadron State College Letter of Intent to commit to our team as a walk-on in the fall," Long added. "Our program has been founded on giving opportunities and I look forward to these student athletes taking this opportunity to make us a better team in the future."

The 27 commits hail from 10 states. Sixteen are defensive players and 11 are on offense.

Five players from Nebraska have signed NLIs. They include local products TD Stein and Tyler Regier, Hay Springs linebacker Steven Horrocks, Sidney offensive lineman Tucker Wintholz and Norfolk defensive lineman Kyle Temple. Stein, the son of Chadron State offensive coordinator Chris Stein, is a quarterback, while Regier is an offensive lineman.

The states of South Dakota and Wyoming combined to have eight recruits. Two of the South Dakota commits are Rapid City products - wide receiver Jacob Henderson and defensive lineman Aaron Beard. The other player from South Dakota is Kadoka running back Chandler Sudbeck.

The Wyoming recruits are Newcastle linebacker Merritt Crabtree, safety Kirk Durtsche, Casper offensive lineman Jake Geil and linebacker Brad Gillis, and Burns offensive lineman Travis Romsa.

Colorado has two signees. Leo Salcido is a defensive tackle from Greeley and offensive lineman Austin Roper is from Greenwood.

The other states with multiple recruits are California and Florida. Three are from California. They are defensive back Brandon Finona-Gardner of Monterey, defensive back Jevan Hogan of Turlock and offensive lineman Adam Fuselier of Encino.

All five Florida student-athletes are defensive players. They are Fort Walton Beach teammates Carl Pfeifer, a defensive lineman, and Gabe DeToro, a defensive back, Belleview defensive back Tamarus LeCorn, Fort Lauderdale cornerback John Mertilus and Haines City defensive tackle Eric Goll.

Four additional recruits are from Washington, Virginia, Wisconsin and Idaho. They are wide receiver Max Gray of Arlington, Wash., cornerback Zecharie James of Hampton, Va., wide receiver Matt Reader of Appleton, Wis., and defensive lineman Sam Smartt of Caldwell, Idaho.

#### **Bios:**

**Aaron Beard**, DL, 6-3, 285 pounds (Rapid City, S.D./Rapid City Central)  
First-team Class AAA all-state.

**Merritt Crabtree**, LB, 5-11, 205 pounds (Newcastle, Wyo./Newcastle)  
The two-time Wyoming 2A East Defensive Player of the Year ... Also a two-time first-team Class 2A all-stater for the Dogies ... Was chosen to play in the Shrine Bowl ... Had 225 defensive points to lead all of Wyoming.

**Gabe DeToro**, DB, 5-11, 185 pounds (Fort Walton Beach, Fla./Fort Walton Beach)  
He finished 2013 with 51 total tackles, one interception and two pass deflections.

**Kirk Durtsche**, S, 5-10, 170 pounds (Casper, Wyo./Kelly Walsh)  
A Casper Star-Tribune Super 25 selection ... Also named All-State and is a Shrine Bowl selection ... Named a team captain and earned four letters in football ... His coach, Jon Vance, called him "one of the fastest football players that I have seen who is able to read run/pass and trigger on it at the high school level." ... During his career, he was credited with 212 tackles, six pass break-ups, three interceptions and seven touchdowns ... Both of his parents, Shane and Marci, are CSC graduates ... His father played basketball for the Eagles and was selected as the school's outstanding male scholar-athlete in 1997-98.

**Brandon Finona-Gardner**, DB, 5-11, 178 pounds (Monterey, Calif./Monterey)  
Named the all-county defensive player of the year.

**Adam Fuselier**, OL, 6-3, 260 pounds (Encino, Calif./Crespi)  
Serra League All-Honorable mention ... He had 56 pancakes or 56 instances of when he knocked the defensive lineman to the ground.

**Jake Geil**, OL, 6-3, 245 pounds (Casper, Wyo./Kelly Walsh)  
A first-team all-conference choice and a second team all-state selection ... A team captain, he was also named his team's lineman of the year and the Tom Staffileno award winner ... Has been selected to play in the Shrine Bowl.

**Brad Gillis**, LB, 6-0, 205 pounds (Casper, Wyo./Natrona County)  
First-team Class 4A all-state.

**Eric Goll**, DT, 6-2, 310 pounds (Haines City, Fla./Haines City)  
Named all-county at defensive line after piling up seven forced fumbles and 78 tackles ... Also wrestled in high school, earning a varsity gold medal ... Strong for his age - benching 380 pounds and squatting 565.

**Max Gray**, WR, 6-0, 180 pounds (Arlington, Wash./Arlington)  
He had over 1,000 yards of offense in 2013 ... He caught 12 touchdowns and was named all-league and all-area.

Jacob Henderson, WR, 6-2, 195 pounds (Rapid City, S.D./St. Thomas More)  
A big wide receiver from St. Thomas More in Rapid City ... Also a talented basketball player.

**Jevan Hogan** , DB, 5-10, 185 pounds (Turlock, Calif./Turlock)  
He ran for 820 yards and scored nine TDs in 2013 but will play in the defensive backfield at Chadron State ... He has good hands - catching 28 balls for 285 yards and a TD.

**Steven Horrocks** , LB, 6-1, 240 pounds (Hay Springs, Neb./Hay Springs)  
Helped lead the Hawks to a 7-3 season and their first playoff victory ever in 2013 ... He carried the ball 156 times for 1,128 yards (7.2 per carry) and scored 23 touchdowns ... He also led the Hawks in tackles with 33 unassisted and 39 assisted tackles ... A two-time state wrestling tournament qualifier and a 300-meter hurdle placewinner at the state meet as a sophomore.

**Zecharie James** , CB, 5-10, 175 pounds (Hampton, Va./Kecoughtan)  
A fast and strong cornerback from Virginia who had an excellent senior season ... He returned two interceptions for touchdowns and broke up 14 passes ... He also had four forced fumbles and recovered two more ... He's been timed in the 40-yard dash at 4.48 seconds and has benched 290 pounds.

**Tamarus LeCorn** , DB, 6-0, 180 pounds (Bellevue, Fla./Bellevue)  
He's ranked as one of the top 150 corners in the 2014 recruiting class by Rivals.com ... He had 52 tackles and one interception in 2013 ... A three-year starter.

**John Mertilus** , CB, 5-11, 160 pounds (Fort Lauderdale, Fla./Stranahan)  
A cornerback teams respected in Fort Lauderdale ... He had 16 tackles and broke up six passes.

**Carl Pfeifer** , DL, 6-4, 235 pounds (Fort Walton Beach, Fla./Fort Walton Beach)  
Finished 2013 with 57.5 total tackles and eight sacks.

**Matt Reader** , WR, 6-5, 200 pounds (Appleton, Wis./Appleton West)  
A two-sport athlete at Appleton High ... He will also play basketball at Chadron State ... Named all-conference and the Post-Crescent's All-Area Tight End.

**Tyler Reiger**, OL, 6-6, 260 pounds (Chadron, Neb./Chadron)  
After never playing football previously, he was a starter on the line both offensively and defensive for the Cardinals in 2011 and 2012 ... He showed lots of improvement during that two-year span, and was the Cards' second-leading tackler in 2012 with 52 unassisted and 27 assists ... Often referred to as "the Big Rig."

**Travis Romsa** , OL, 6-4, 250 pounds (Burns, Wyo./Burns)  
First-team all-state in football and named the conference's outstanding basketball player following the 2012-13 season ... Also a Casper Star-Tribune Super 25 pick in 2013 ... During his career, he had 8.5 quarterback sacks, 18.5 tackles for loss, forced seven fumbles, recovered three fumbles and blocked six kicks ... He was a three-time all-conference football player and twice named all-state.

**Austin Roper** , OL, 6-3, 235 pounds (Greenwood Village, Colo./Cherry Creek)  
A three-year starter who was named all-conference as a senior.

**Leo Salcido** , DT, 6-1, 255 pounds (Greeley, Colo./Greeley West)  
He had 60 total tackles and three sacks in 2013 ... He also added two fumble recoveries.

**Sam Smartt** , DL, 6-2, 260 pounds (Caldwell, Idaho/Caldwell)  
A two-way player at Caldwell High ... He was named all-state and all-conference at both offensive and defensive line.

**TD Stein** , QB, 6-0, 185 pounds (Chadron, Neb./Chadron)

A three-year starter at quarterback for the Cardinals, and emerged as the school's all-time passing yards leader with 314 completions in 604 attempts for 4,573 yards and 46 touchdowns ... As a senior in 2013, he completed 89 of 179 passes for 1,463 yards and 18 TDs while also carrying 85 times for 360 yards and seven TDs ... Received honorable mention all-state as both a junior and a senior ... His maternal grandfather, Gil Nitsch of Chadron, was a three-year letterman (1962-64) and his father, Chris Stein, also was a Chadron High quarterback who became an outstanding tight end for the Eagles (1986-89) ... His father, CSC offensive coordinator Chris Stein, also was a Chadron High quarterback who became an outstanding tight end for the Eagles ... He's in the Athletic Hall of Fame ... TD's uncle, Kevin, also starred at QB for the Cardinals and played that position four years at CSC ... T.D.'s grandfather, Dick Stein, was the head football coach at Chadron for 21 seasons and retired with a 144-71 record.

**Chandler Sudbeck** , RB, 5-10, 185 pounds (Kadoka, S.D./Kadoka)

He averaged 8.9 yards a carry while rushing for 1,282 yards and 22 touchdowns as a senior ... He also caught 18 passes for 466 yards and seven TDs ... Had 5,460 all-purpose yards and 53 TDs ... First-team Class 9B all-state.

**Kyle Temple** , DT, 6-1, 220 pounds (Norfolk, Neb./Norfolk)

Named first-team Class A all-state at Norfolk High in 2013 as selected by both the Lincoln Journal Star and Huskerland Prep.

**Tucker Wintholz** , OL, 6-6, 290 pounds (Sidney, Neb./Sidney)

A first-team Class B all-state selection by the Omaha World-Herald and Huskerland Prep ... He helped Sidney average 420 yards per game in total offense and have two running backs combine to rush for more than 3,300 yards during its 7-4 season ... His older brother, Tanner, was a freshman defensive end on the 2013 Chadron State football team.